

Evgeny Chossudovsky: Writer with a distinguished UN career

By [Global Research](#)

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Throughout his UN career and until his death, Evgeny Chossudovsky expressed his firm support for the Palestinian cause. He supported the Centre for Research on Globalization from the outset. Global Research will continue in his footsteps to support the causes of social justice and World peace. (Michel Chossudovsky)

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OBITUARY

Dr Evgeny Chossudovsky, who has died aged 91, was a Russian Jewish émigré who had a distinguished career with the United Nations following the second World War. In Dublin, in the late 1970s, he continued another role as a prestigious writer on international relations.

He was a trenchant, knowledgeable and dogged participant in internationalist discussions at the Royal Irish Academy and in many publications, including The Irish Times. “Chossy” to his friends, he was well known too for a fine sense of humour.

His family had been displaced by the civil war that followed the 1917 Russian Revolution and by the first World War.

The Irish connection was made in the 1930s when, as a student, he met his wife Rachel Sullivan, then studying at Queen’s University Belfast, at a Geneva summer school. She was from a Co Antrim Protestant family. In 1939 they were married in a Belfast registry office. In the late 1970s they settled in Baily, Howth.

Chossudovsky “decided he wanted to be in the UN before it even existed”, his son Michel, professor of economics at the University of Ottawa, said at his funeral. In 1947 he became one of three special assistants to the distinguished Swedish economist, and later Nobel laureate, Gunnar Myrdal, director of the UN’s Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

As the Cold War deepened, Myrdal and his “ECE trinity” pushed the concept of East-West co-operation and peaceful coexistence between conflicting economic systems, in which Chossudovsky believed passionately.

He served the UN Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) under the Argentinian former central banker, Raúl Prebisch. Intended to embrace the aspirations of poor countries,

Unctad was a Non-Aligned Movement initiative. Chossudovsky was secretary of its Trade and Development Board and his considerable diplomatic skills as a consensus-maker emerged at international conferences. He worked behind the scenes, often into the small hours, agreeing resolutions with delegations in a determination to achieve global social justice.

But as the toothless Unctad became undermined by the “neo-liberal” agenda and the later Uruguay Round and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt), Chossudovsky moved to become director of the UN Institute for Training and Research (Unitar) in Geneva. Later, in semi-retirement, he became a special fellow of the institute. All his life Chossudovsky retained a patriotic attachment to Russia and a sympathy for socialist ideas. But at the end he expressed disappointment that the spirit of the UN was being undermined, saying only weeks ago to his son that the world was now “in an awful situation”.

He was born in 1914 into an affluent Jewish merchant family in Rostov-on-Don near the Sea of Azov. His grandfather traded in wheat. The family went to Berlin in 1921 during the civil war. Their property had been confiscated.

His father was a gifted actor who had trained as a lawyer but as a Jew was unable to practise. In Rostov-on-Don he ran a Shakespearean theatre and in Berlin various jobs included selling ice-cream on the street. But Chossudovsky’s beloved rich maternal uncle, Moses Gorfman, stepped in to “look after” the family, particularly as it became dispersed.

In Berlin Chossudovsky resumed school, and studied Goethe. He became equally fluent in German and Russian – and later English and French. After school, he applied to universities abroad. As a Jew, there was little question of studying in Nazi Germany.

He was accepted by the University of Edinburgh, where he studied economics and earned a PhD.

As Chossudovsky’s studies started in 1934 his uncle Moses, a businessman who traded in the stock market, was living in London. He later left for Paris, where Evgeny’s parents joined him. During the war, on the night French police came to take uncle Moses away for extermination at Auschwitz, his parents were overlooked.

Chossudovsky received no news of them until after the war. He worked for the Co-operative Movement, first in Wales as an adult education officer for miners giving evening courses in international affairs, and then in London. Highly committed to its ideals, he worked for the movement until 1947.

A year earlier, he had applied to the UN. He had a Soviet passport and the UN wanted Russians. After a brief stint in New York (which he judged no place to bring up children) he transferred to the Europe office of the UN in Geneva. Ever since falling in love in Geneva he had wanted to live there.

Chossudovsky was author and co-author of several books including *The Helsinki Final Act Viewed in the United Nations Perspective*. He co-edited *The United Nations System at Geneva – A Working Guide* and contributed to the *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde Diplomatique* and the journal *Foreign Affairs*. He was also a frequent participant at disarmament conferences of the Pugwash group.

His Irish Times contributions were on a wide range of issues, including the North. He also contributed to the Royal Irish Academy's Irish Studies in International Affairs. Dr Ronan Fanning, professor of history at UCD, said Chossudovsky was "an outside voice" at the academy who "played a role broadening our perspectives" at a time when objective discussion was difficult in Ireland. He loved Wilde, Beckett and Joyce.

He was predeceased by his wife Rachel in 1996; is survived by his daughter, Eugenia, son Michel and his wife Micheline; and two grandchildren, Natacha and Maya.

Dr Evgeny Michel Chossudovsky: born August 15th, 1914; died January 4th, 2006

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