

Student 'glasnost' chilly

By **DON RETSON**
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Chrystia Freeland is thrilled to be back in Edmonton after a student-exchange program in Ukraine — that goes double for Soviet authorities.

One Soviet newspaper vilified the Harvard University scholarship student as an "anti-Soviet bourgeois nationalist."

Soviet authorities also complained to the Canadian embassy in Moscow that Freeland, 20, was "a well-known trouble-maker."

That's not how it began, though, for the feisty, free-spirited daughter of Halyna Freeland, New Democrat candidate for Edmonton Strathcona in the last federal election.

Freeland said Soviet officials couldn't say enough good things about her when she arrived in Kiev last October to study Russian history and literature.

But her personal "glasnost" with Soviet authorities cooled after she accepted an invitation to speak at a Ukrainian language conference in February.

Handsome young Russian men started showing up at her door unannounced: one night it would be a blond hunk, the next night a suave, dark-haired man.

They'd gaze into her eyes, she chuckled, then start talking about Western technology, or inquire what she knew about certain Ukrainian nationalists.

A trip outside Kiev by the aspiring journalist to interview a Ukrainian dissident turned into a particularly chilling experience.

When she left the man's home, a local militia man was waiting outside his door wanting her to sign some sort of statement. Free-



Harvard University exchange student **Chrystia Freeland**
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land talked long enough to find out what he wanted, then excused herself saying she didn't want to miss her bus.

Police were waiting for her in the next town, but Freeland avoided them by jumping off the bus in the middle of nowhere, hitch-hiking part of the way back to Kiev. Before getting off the bus, Freeland said she handed notes of the earlier interview to a travel companion, who stuffed them down her bra.

Back in Kiev, Soviet authorities began phoning her, demanding she come in for an interview. Freeland politely told them to get lost.

Her scariest encounter, she said in an interview, was also her last night in Kiev. Four men, two of

them KGB officers, showed up at her dorm demanding that she answer their questions.

Again, Freeland refused to talk, ignoring threats that she wouldn't be allowed to leave for Moscow the following day.

The four Soviet agents also threatened to confiscate her passport, but Freeland said they backed off when she told them it was the property of the Canadian government.

"I was incredibly nervous," she recalled of the lengthy stalemate.

Despite her numerous run-ins with police and authorities, and despite the fact university courses were spiced heavily with Marxist dogma, Freeland said she gained a great deal from the exchange program.