

# The creation of the Ukraine “democratic” opposition

Justus Leicht  
2 December 2004

If one were to believe the Western media, one would conclude that the Ukrainian opposition movement developed independently as the result of a spontaneous popular movement for liberty and democracy against a corrupt regime. In fact, what has characterized the media coverage of recent events in Ukraine is the absence of any critical journalism. Virtually none of the media outlets has bothered to investigate who is behind the so-called democracy movement and the nature of its political program.

For their part, the driving forces of the opposition movement make little secret of their backers. The relevant information is for the most part available on their own Internet sites.

Once one begins to examine the various organizations involved, it rapidly becomes clear that the movement did not develop spontaneously. A right-wing, neo-liberal network, developed largely by US organizations, exploited widespread dissatisfaction with the authoritarian regime of President Leonid Kuchma to implement a plan prepared well in advance. Its purpose was to bring Ukraine more firmly under the control of the US and open up the country more fully to international capital.

The most active opposition grouping is the network that bears the name “Pora” (“It is Time”). It consists mainly of university students and has considerable influence in the staging of demonstrations, rock concerts and other events organised against the government camp and its presidential candidate, Viktor Yanukovich.

According to its self-portrayal, Pora has its origins in a decision by the “Freedom of Choice Coalition” of Ukrainian non-governmental organisations “to create a broad volunteer network for the implementation of a nation-wide informational and educational campaign,

aimed at securing the voter rights of citizens”.

Pora expressly refers to the “successful activities of volunteer networks” in Serbia (“Otpor” in 2000), Georgia (“Khmara” in 2003), and other countries. Pora proudly affirms that it has been advised by these groups.

Freedom of Choice is an umbrella organisation founded in 1999, ostensibly consisting of over 300 different groups. According to its own sources, it is supported by the following institutions: the American, British and Canadian embassies; the National Democratic Institute, which is chaired by the former US secretary of state (under Clinton) Madeleine Albright; the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF), which is the Ukrainian offshoot of the George Soros-financed Open Society Institute; the Eurasia Foundation, which is likewise financed by Soros and the US government; the World Bank; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the US Agency for International Development; Freedom House, chaired by ex-CIA director James Woolsey; and the right-wing Konrad Adenauer Institute of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

The political model for Pora is neo-liberalism. Pora praises the brief reign of Viktor Yushchenko as Ukraine prime minister because he took measures to open up the country to international capital and implement a radical privatisation program. Pora declares: “During its brief period of government power, the team of reformers in 2000 brought about a reduction in the shadow economy and contributed to the establishment of equal access to the Ukrainian market not only for Russian, but also for Western companies... Furthermore, Ukraine expanded its Euro-Atlantic cooperation and adjusted its business relations with Russia (in particular, with regard to the transport of energy resources).”

The most prominent members and activists of Pora were trained by the US-backed elements. A report by the Jamestown Foundation, a think tank whose executive committee includes James Woolsey and former US national security adviser (under President Jimmy Carter) Zbigniew Brzezinski, states: “Otpor has been training Pora members under the auspices of the Citizen Participation in Elections in Ukraine (CPEU) program which is run by Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute and funded by the US Agency for International Development.”

In 2000, the Serbian organisation Otpor organised the demonstrations that led to the fall of Slobodan Milosevic. Now the same organisation is being used to bring about regime change in Ukraine, supported by one institute close to the US Democratic Party, and another close to the Republican Party, and financed by an American government agency.

The Center for Political Education and the Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research have also trained political activists of the “democracy movement.” The Center for Political Education acknowledges that it cooperates with the Young Entrepreneurs Association of Ukraine and the US Republican Party-run International Republican Institute, while, according to its own pronouncements, the Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research has been financed for many years by the American National Endowment for Democracy, George Soros’ IRF, and the British and Canadian governments.

Together with the activists of the opposition, numerous election observers were also sponsored by American institutions. This should be sufficient to indicate their complete lack of impartiality in the Ukrainian elections.

A large number were organized by the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), under the chairmanship of Igor Popov, and by New Choice-2004. The latter organization was founded by the CVU and built up by Soros’ IRF. The driving forces behind the CVU are the Eurasia Foundation and the National Democratic Institute. In February of this year, New Choice held a working meeting with Madeleine Albright.

According to its own figures, the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) has since 1990 pumped over \$50 million into the construction of various

Ukrainian non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Over the past few years, IRF admits to supporting NGOs with over \$5 million annually.

Not surprisingly, the election polls, which showed a clear lead for opposition candidate Yushchenko immediately after the closing of the voting stations, were financed by the same sources. The polls were initiated by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation and jointly carried out by the Razumkov Centre for Political and Economic Research (financed by the IRF) and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. The Democratic Initiatives Foundation is affiliated to New Choice-2004 and the World Democracy Movement, an offspring of the National Endowment for Democracy. One of their most recent projects was providing support for the attempts to overthrow the government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

The national exit polls were also financed by IRF, the Eurasia Foundation and the embassies of the US, Great Britain, Canada, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Switzerland.

The fact that those conducting the election polls and serving as poll observers were financed by the same forces who sponsored the opposition and backed the campaign of its candidate makes a mockery of their claim to impartiality. Whatever fraud was committed—and there is good reason to believe there was vote-rigging on both sides—the entire election and its aftermath were a grotesque exercise in US and European manipulation and provocation. The attempt of the opposition leaders and their Western sponsors to wrap themselves in the mantle of “democracy” is deserving of contempt. In any event, none of the claims being made by the opposition camp can be accepted on face value.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**