

The Ukrainian parliamentary elections and the fraud of the “Orange Revolution”

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The Ukrainian parliamentary elections, held March 26, have thoroughly deflated the myth of the “Orange Revolution.” Just 15 months after Victor Yushchenko was elected president in what his American and European backers proclaimed an epochal popular and democratic revolution, his party has been routed, with a strong plurality voting for the purported vote-rigger and despot whom he ousted.

Yushchenko’s “Our Ukraine” party garnered only 16 percent, while Victor Yanukovich’s “Party of the Regions” emerged as the clear winner with more than 30 percent of the vote.

The party of Yulia Timoshenko, Yushchenko’s ally in the pseudo-revolution of December 2004, is expected to register some 23 percent in the final vote tally. She had a falling out with President Yushchenko over economic policy and, amidst corruption charges directed against her, was removed as prime minister last September.

In a chain of events that had already, by the time of the November 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, assumed a stereotypical character—having been played out previously in Serbia and Georgia—Yanukovich, the favourite of outgoing Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma and Russian President Vladimir Putin, was declared the winner, only to be accused of electoral fraud and subsequently ousted.

The US and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe had for some time been financing and promoting a so-called “democratic opposition,” settling on the former Ukraine central banker and prime minister under Kuchma, Yushchenko, as its unlikely standard-bearer. His attraction for the West had little to do with democratic values, and far more with his espousal of the right-wing “free market” policies of privatisation and deregulation which Washington and Wall Street

have been seeking to impose throughout the former Soviet Union.

He had, moreover, signed onto Washington’s agenda of splitting the former Soviet Union’s republics and allies from Russia and bringing them under US domination, championing Ukraine’s admission to the European Union and NATO.

Even before election day, the opposition of Yushchenko and Yulia Timoshenko—then the richest woman in Ukraine, having made her fortune as energy minister under Kuchma—launched a campaign denouncing the election as rigged and illegitimate, a campaign that was backed enthusiastically by the American government and media. European election monitors, openly in league with opposition groups, declared the election null and void; large demonstrations were held daily in Kiev; new elections were held bringing Yushchenko and the “Orange Revolution” to power.

It has taken little more than a year for this “revolution” to expose itself before the Ukrainian masses for the reactionary fraud it always was. From the beginning, Yushchenko and Timoshenko based themselves largely on middle-class, anticommunist layers that opposed the old Soviet system and its remnants in the Kuchma regime not out of hostility to Stalinist repression and corruption, but because it limited their strivings for wealth and privilege. Those who took to the streets out of genuine hatred for Kuchma and the oligarchs were cynically manipulated by the “democratic” impostors and their Western sponsors.

In the final analysis, moreover, Yushchenko, Timoshenko and Yanukovich all represent rival oligarchic clans—some, mainly in the east of the country, more closely tied to Russia and the remnants

of the state economy; others, mainly in the west, more closely linked to US and European interests.

Yushchenko's initial steps in his "free market" policy only intensified the social crisis facing broad masses of Ukrainian working people. In 2005, the economy grew by a mere 2 percent, compared with 12 percent in 2004. Inflation is averaging 13 percent. Poverty and inequality have reached record levels.

The social crisis reached a high point last December when Russia for a time cut off gas supplies to Ukraine, and only restored the flow of energy on the basis of a new and far higher price scale. This crisis evidently brought home for many workers the economic damage caused by the breaking apart of Russia and Ukraine, whose economies were closely integrated within the Soviet framework.

Meanwhile, Russian President Putin sought to take advantage of the breach between Yushchenko and Timoshenko by making overtures to the rabidly pro-market and pro-Western multi-millionaires. Moscow withdrew an outstanding indictment against Timoshenko, which alleged she had bribed Russian government officials in the years 1998-2000.

These manoeuvres underscore the absence of any principled differences between Yushchenko, Timoshenko and Yanukovich. They are all prepared to push ahead with economic policies that will intensify the social misery of the people.

In the aftermath of Sunday's parliamentary elections, Yanukovich, whose party lacks a majority of delegates, has offered to form a government in coalition with Timoshenko. To this point, she has rejected the offer. She is seeking to revive her former alliance with Yushchenko, under conditions where the elections have strengthened her hand and put her in a position to reclaim the post of prime minister.



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