
Andrew Wilson. *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 232p.

DANIEL C. VILLANUEVA
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA - LAS VEGAS

Recent political revolutions have had colors or symbols attached to them in the popular mind, such as Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, Georgia's Rose Revolution, or the Velvet Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia. Yet the most influential image over the past few years of political change in Central and Eastern Europe has been the color orange: the symbol of the opposition movement of Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko which defeated the entrenched post-Soviet regime in the Ukraine in November-December 2004. So durable a symbol has this color been that even the "Alliance for the Future of Austria" (BZÖ), the right-wing splinter party formed by Jörg Haider, chose orange as its signature hue when founded in April 2005. Andrew Wilson, senior lecturer in Russian and Ukrainian Studies at the University of London, provides a densely packed yet easily digested narrative of the Orange Revolution which will be of interest to political scientists, historians, and Slavic literary scholars alike.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution is an epic tale of anti-heroes, few unambiguously honest characters, and plenty of skullduggery including poisonings, kidnappings, contract killings, and numerous acts of other official intimidation and media deception. It begins *in medias res* with a description of the night of the fateful presidential election on November 21, 2004. The description of each of the individual cast of characters in the book's preface—Wilson uses the heading *Dramatis personae*—includes, among others, "The Opposition," "The Authorities," "The Oligarchs," "Their Puppets," "The Russians," and "Other Players." The central actors and their basic roles in the drama are as follows: Former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, supported by opposition-reformist movements including those of Yulia Tymoshenko, challenged then-Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych who was supported by the establishment regime under outgoing post-Soviet President Leonid Kuchma. Links to the more criminal elements of post-Soviet Ukrainian society abounded on both sides with massive, proven fraud handing the election to Yanukovych. Yet shortly thereafter, the Orange Revolution was underway as massive demonstrations, many pre-planned and orchestrated with Western help, shook the capital city of Kiev. Another round of voting was held in mid-December, with Yushchenko being declared the winner, and Tymoshenko becoming Prime Minister.

With revolutions in general and certainly those in the post-Gorbachev "near abroad," no event summary can be truly relevant for scholarship without significant background on the actors in their economic and social contexts. This Wilson

expertly provides at length. We are treated to biographies of not only the leading players Yanukovich, Yushchenko, Tymoschenko, and Kuchma, but also of each lead actor's primary advisors and helpers, nearly all of whom are painted in an unsavory though not inaccurate light. The economic, social, and personal connections between each major candidate, their advisors, and their adversaries are detailed, along with many transcripts of conversations which have been made public to illustrate the nefarious designs each group had on the other. Finally, the narrative returns to the present with a post-Revolution update as of late 2005, and of the implications for Ukraine's relations with its immediate neighbors as well as the EU and the USA. Predictably, Ukraine's pseudo-democratic, authoritarian, or emerging democratic regime neighbors remain skeptical of the reforms, with some wishing for success but most preferring they remain contained in Ukraine.

The book's blunt yet fair assessments provide a welcome perspective on both current events in the Ukraine and the context in which they have arisen. This candor is especially evident in his analysis of the revolution's short-term results: although it did not bring about a social revolution in the classic regime-transformation sense (Theda Skocpol), Wilson notes that it was profound in five ways: 1) there exists in post-2004 Ukraine a fundamental expectation of change; 2) there is a desire for change going beyond simply electing a new president; 3) Kiev is the epicenter for change (the previously change-averse center of historic Ukraine); 4) citizens are demanding solutions other than pseudo-democratic regimes as in Belarus; and 5) the revolution was in many ways kindled and nurtured by the internet and alternative media (199-203). To this, Wilson adds a sixth reason partially tongue-in-cheek, an aside to Slavophile cultural studies scholars: the Orange Revolution may be "the world's first Situationist revolution," referring to post-Soviet subversive political-artistic forms of action (203).

Wilson's mastery of the intricacies of Ukrainian politics and knowledge of the language and cultural geography of the Ukraine is apparent in every passage including the above. That Wilson was himself present to witness the events of the revolution in 2004 (as well as having been present when Ukraine first declared independence from the Russian Federation in 1991) lends his work an additional authoritative dimension. The book is also rich with anecdotes and explanations that give the narrative additional depth and relevance. A few examples include asides on the phenomenon of "electoral tourism" (6, 108-109) the story of a tv news signer communicating to deaf viewers that what was being read orally was a lie (131), the origin of the orange color of the opposition movement (72-73) or the poisoning of Yushchenko (96-103) which brought the crisis to many a Western eye for the first time. Sixteen pages of informative footnotes and a nine-page index of names, places,

and topics provide useful guideposts through the Byzantine political-cultural space that is modern Ukraine. These resources are especially useful, given that most actors in this drama are unfamiliar to all but well-initiated scholars. Illustrations include campaign posters and the secret written agreement between the opposition rivals Yushchenko and Tymoshenko to cooperate against establishment parties. Wilson also provides translations and explanations of many of the witty slogans, flyers, and Internet sites used to mobilize the opposition and establishment forces during the Orange Revolution. Impressively, the transliteration of Ukrainian names into English also follows the indigenous Ukrainian spelling and pronunciation rather than the Russified transliterations often seen elsewhere.

The book further contains a bibliography of scholarship in English on the politics and culture of Ukraine, works that are sadly few in number. Thus does Wilson's briskly narrated and well-researched text join the other scholarly volumes on post-Soviet Ukraine, taking pride of place not just due to contemporary relevance but also to its encyclopedic review of recent political and economic developments. Wisely, his conclusion states it is too early to tell which direction and with what permanence political reform and stability in the Ukraine may take in the near term. At the very least, states Wilson, the color orange has established "brand recognition" for the Ukraine for movements throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, both as inspiration and specter. However, the thorough contextualization of events of the Orange Revolution and the wealth of background information on the actors and their motives can allow others to imagine potential trajectories of future outcomes. ✱