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Timely analysis and commentary on geopolitical developments in Eurasia

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[Orange Revolution Erased from Ukrainian School Textbooks](#)



By Taras Kuzio

An [analysis](#) and [interview](#) with textbook author and historian Viktor Mysan published in *Ukrayinska Pravda* reveals the ideological orientation of the Ukrainian authorities who came to power in February. During the preceding five years, Viktor Yanukovich had never accepted the legitimacy of the Orange Revolution or his defeat in 2004, ignoring a Supreme Court ruling and parliamentary resolution, and, worse still, adhered to the Russian view that the mass protests were nothing more than ‘political technology.’ This is post-Soviet speak for a black ops conspiracy that was undertaken by the US through the rhetoric of democracy promotion pursued by the Bush administration.

It was always, therefore, a mistake to view Yanukovich in the 2010 elections, despite five years of ‘grooming’ by U.S. consultants Manafort and Davis, as a ‘re-born democrat.’ In order for this to be true, Yanukovich would have had to condemn the mass fraud committed in the 2004 elections, embrace the

authenticity and domestic origins of the Orange Revolution and accept his own defeat.

This unwillingness to accept responsibility casts a shadow over another aspiring politician – Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Tigipko – who seeks to refashion himself as a ‘re-born new face democrat.’ Tigipko has also steadfastly refused to condemn the 2004 fraud that took place when he was head of Yanukovich’s election campaign. Therefore, we cannot trust the genuineness of his democratic credentials until he acts like a democrat and condemns the 2004 election fraud.

The real Yanukovich (not the PR version of this year’s election that most Western newspapers such as the Financial Times accepted) has always had the same hostile view of the ‘orange nightmare’ (as he once put it) as Russian leaders. It is therefore no wonder that his Minister of Education, Dmytro Tabachnyk, has quickly taken the initiative to remove the Orange Revolution from school textbooks in a move that smacks of George Orwell’s famous novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Ukraine retains a Soviet-style centralization of educational policy and textbooks published in Kyiv are distributed in both Ukrainian and Russian throughout the country. The textbooks for the fifth class that are being published in a 506,000 print run have a new front cover void of the background containing the Orange Revolution protests that was included in the 2005 edition. The 2010 edition has only Cossack leaders on the front cover. In the 2010 edition the Orange Revolution is ignored and replaced by very brief information on the 2004 and 2010 presidential elections, the Viktor Yushchenko presidency and the election of Yanukovich.

Mysan places the removal of the Orange Revolution within the context of an overall new line in the 2010 edition that portrays the authorities as bowing to Russian pressure. ‘The majority of the Ministry’s recommendations (to the author) are [tied to the formation](#) of another, less aggressive, face of our eastern neighbor – Russia. Besides the Orange Revolution, other episodes that have been cut out of the new edition include when Ukrainians fought against Russia for independence. Also, the 1933 famine is no longer designated as ‘artificial’ and directed against Ukraine.

These twenty ‘recommendations’ of the Ministry of Education are the first that textbook writers such as Mysan have been forced to deal with throughout independent Ukraine’s fourteen previous governments. The 2010 edition edits out parts of Ukrainian history that are seen as ‘anti-Russian’ by Moscow, as reflected in the [condemnation of Ukraine’s humanities policies](#) under Yushchenko in President Dmitri Medvedev’s August 2009 open letter to the Ukrainian president.

The Orange Revolution followed the Serbian ‘bulldozer’ and Georgian ‘Rose’ democratic revolutions in 2000 and 2003 respectively. These in turn followed mass protests that had similarly removed post-communist leaders who had retained power after the collapse of communism in Romania (1996), Bulgaria (1997), Slovakia (1998) and Croatia (1999).

Of these democratic breakthroughs, Ukraine’s Orange Revolution was the largest (one in five Ukrainians participated), the most peaceful (in Serbia parliament was set on fire and in Georgia the parliament was stormed) and the longest (lasting 17 days). The Orange Revolution will continue to be seen by Western and some Ukrainian historians as an epochal event similar to Ukraine’s 1991 declaration of independence.

On a final note, optimism by Atlantic Council of the US Senior Non-resident Fellow Adrian Karatnycky that Tabachnyk is an aberration and on his way out is unlikely to materialize, as this ignores the ideological dimension of the Party of Regions and wrongly assumes that [‘pragmatic’ oligarchs run the party and Yanukovich](#). It was this view that led many in the West ([but not the Jamestown Foundation](#)) to believe that there was no difference between Yanukovich and Yulia Tymoshenko in this year’s Ukrainian elections. In reality, subsequent events have shown that Yanukovich represents a fundamental Russophile break in Ukraine’s post-Soviet trajectory from its Ukrainophile three former presidents, as predicted by Jamestown Foundation authors.

Karatnycky wrote in the [Kyiv Post](#) in a debate with Rutgers University Professor Alexander Motyl that, ‘On the matter of culture, I am in broad agreement with Motyl. We both disagree fundamentally with the

Ukrainophobic policies of Education Minister Dmytro Tabachnyk and with the naming of a Stalin apologist as head of the Institute of National Memory. I still believe that these odious appointments can and will be reversed. Nevertheless, I think that Yanukovich is right in trying to ensure a hospitable environment for Ukraine's Russian-speakers. Such steps, in my view, are likely to deepen their support for Ukraine's statehood'.

In reality, Tabachnyk is an integral ideological component of the Party of Regions and the Yanukovich administration, and he is in his position for the long haul because Russia demanded influence over government appointments in the humanities and security forces. With the expunging this month of the Orange Revolution from the textbooks used in schools, Ukraine's students will be left wondering why they are no longer taught about an event that many of their parents, uncles and cousins participated in and, more importantly, what country is being built where history is edited out for political purposes.

The Ministry of Truth is where the main character of the book Nineteen Eighty-Four, Winston Smith, works. The Ukrainian authorities' approach to history would permit the substitution of Winston Smith for Tabachnyk and the Ministry of Education for the Ministry of Truth.

Posted by Jamestown Foundation at [8:04 AM](#) 