

# Shadow of Anti-Semitism over Ukraine's Disputed Election

By [British Helsinki Human Rights Group \(BHHRG\)](#)

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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Western television viewers and newspaper readers are being fed on a diet of propaganda about the current crisis in Ukraine. The orange flags and uniforms of the opposition fill our screens and decorate the front pages. "People power" and Western-orientated democrats are on the march against evil ex-communist oligarchs. Good is battling against evil for the soul of Ukraine.

Sadly it is not so simple. Western media and governments may have edited out the manifestations of extreme nationalism and anti-Semitism which disfigure the Ukrainian opposition's rabble-rousing but history will record that in the run up to the disputed presidential elections, key opposition leaders, including Viktor Yushchenko, Julia Timoshenko and Alexander Moroz, defended anti-Semitic publications and accepted the backing of neo-Nazi groups as well as US and EU and so-called "civic society" NGOs. Nor were the anti-Semitic apologetics of the Ukrainian opposition unknown to key OSCE observers and EU parliamentarians who nonetheless ignored the dark shadow across Yushchenko's campaign preferring instead to abuse his rival.

A key media outlet which has backed Viktor Yushchenko's long march on the Ukrainian presidency published an extraordinary anti-Semitic rant in 2003 which claimed that 400,000 Jews fought alongside Hitler's invading army in 1941!

Inserted as an advertising feature, "Jews in Ukraine Today: Reality Without Myths," appeared in Silski visti (Village News). The newspaper was one of the largest in Ukraine with a circulation of around 500,000. It was a prominent backer of Viktor Yushchenko and his Our Ukraine party.

In late 2003, Alexander Shlayen, the head of the Ukrainian Anti-Fascist Committee and a prominent member of the post-Holocaust Jewish community in Ukraine, initiated a prosecution of the newspaper, Silski visti for promoting inter-ethnic discord in the country which was the site of the infamous Babi Yar massacre along with countless other Nazi atrocities against Jews.

On 28th January, 2004, the court ordered the closing of the newspaper but it defied the ruling with the vocal backing of the opposition Our Ukraine party and its allies. In August, 2004, Alexander Shlaven died suddenly and unexpectedly.

In an interview with JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency) , the paper's editor, Vasily Gruzin, defended the newspaper's decision to publish the piece: *"Although we published the Yaremenko article as a paid advertisement and not as a position we ourselves endorsed, I happen to believe the figure of 400,000 Jews taking part in the German invasion of the Ukraine is not far from the truth,"* he said.

*"I personally have nothing against common Jews, but rather against a small group of Jewish oligarchs who control Ukraine both economically and politically. I believe the point of Zionism today is Jewish control of the world, and we see this process at work in Ukraine today."*

Shortly after this anti-Semitic diatribe by Yaremenko, Victor Yuschenko – who our media always apostrophises as “the pro-Western presidential candidate” and who enjoys the open support of the Bush administration — and another prominent opposition leader, energy oligarch Yulia Timoshenko and Alexander Moroz of the Socialist Party issued a statement headed “Hands Off Silski Visti”!

[ [http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/092104JTA\\_Ukraine.shtml](http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/092104JTA_Ukraine.shtml) ]

Mr Moroz has been a prominent figure on the opposition in tribune in Kiev and as recently as 21st September, 2004, he insisted,

*“I have defended Silski Visti and will continue to do so,”* Moroz said. *“I personally think the argument of the author of the article, Vasily Yaremenko, citing 400,000 Jews in the S.S. is incorrect, but I am not in a position to know all the facts.”*  
[[http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/092104JTA\\_Ukraine.shtml](http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/092104JTA_Ukraine.shtml) ]

What kind of ally of the West needs to learn more about the Nazis to refute Yaremenko's claims about a Jewish-Nazi alliance? Yet this is the sort of politician who gets unconditional backing in Washington and Brussels.

One of the so-called “independent” election observers whose denunciation of the Yanukovich camp for fraud has been a central part of the propaganda battle is the British Conservative MEP, Charles Tannock, who has appeared in recent days on opposition platforms egging on the protestors. Before the elections Mr Tannock wrote several articles openly backing Viktor Yushchenko's candidacy, but Mr Tannock's best known intervention in Ukrainian politics before the disputed presidential election was his criticism of the courts for banning the anti-Semitic newspaper, Silski visti.

Like Viktor Yushchenko and Julia Timoshenko, MEP Tannock condemned the ban saying in an interview in the Our Ukraine party newspaper on 12th March, 2004: “the closure of the newspaper went a step far too far” according to Mr Tannock’s own web-page. He goes on to admit that as a backer of Our Ukraine “I don’t think it does your party any good to be associated with *extreme* [*emphasis added*] anti-Semitic articles”! [ <http://www.charlestannock.com/pressarticle.asp?ID=360> ]

Sadly the Silski visti affair was not unique.

In western Ukraine in particular (as in Britain and North America) there is an aging cohort of elderly veterans of the Waffen SS’s Galician division. They are anxious to revise their country’s history and re-habilitate their wartime service on behalf of the Third Reich. In Ukraine these old Nazis parade protesting their patriotism and demanding equal rights with Red Army veterans. A younger more aggressive and openly racist and neo-Nazi cohort of historical revisionists has also appeared. They have their “intellectual” spokesmen whose anti-Semitic and white supremacist writings have produced scandal in Kiev not only in Silski visti.

In western Ukrainian towns like Ivano-Frankivsk, the uniformed bully-boys of the UNSO movement, so-called Ukrainian Self-Defence forces, act as enforcers for Our Ukraine in effect. Mr Yushchenko scored well over 90% in western regions like Ivano-Frankivsk – results at least as improbable as any for Mr Yanukovich in the east of the country. How much does Mr Yushchenko’s near unanimous support in western towns depend on the storm troopers of the Ukrainian new right?

It is shocking that any link could exist between such neo-Nazi muscle men and their propagandists and politicians usually presented in the Anglo-American media as the harbingers of Western democracy and universal humanitarian values in Ukraine. Even more bizarre than the defence of the right of an anti-Semite to disseminate his wares by “pro-Western” Ukrainian politicians like Yushchenko, Julia Timoshenko and Aleksandr Moroz is the fact that Mr. Yushchenko’s candidacy for president of Ukraine is openly backed by the famous American billionaire philanthropist, George Soros, himself a survivor of the Holocaust.

Although ten years ago in 1994, Mr. Soros put his influence and money behind Leonid Kuchma, the democracy-promoting philanthropist has since turned against the outgoing Ukrainian President and his preferred successor as candidate for president, Viktor Yanukovich. As far back as 1st March, 2001, the American billionaire had written an editorial page piece in the Financial Times making his support for Yushchenko clear when he demanded , “If Mr Kuchma cares about Ukraine’s survival as an independent democratic

state, he must take responsibility for his actions and hand over duties to the prime minister, [i.e. Yushchenko] the constitutionally designated successor, pending the results of the investigation. The West must take a clear position, denouncing Mr Kuchma's behavior and his actions. There is no way for the international community to continue to do business with Mr Kuchma until an impartial investigation [into the Gongadze murder case] has been completed and those responsible are held to account."

Mr. Soros's concern for human rights and due process does him credit, but his tone does not suggest the assumption of innocence! Moreover at precisely the same time in early, 2001, his own local Ukrainian foundation was supporting media which were the antithesis of democratic decency. In Germany, Neue Solidarität's Roman Bessonov reported from the western Ukrainian city of Lvov on 4th April, 2001, that a Soros-funded "Renaissance" foundation was backing the nationalist monthly, "Derzhanist" ("Independent Statehood") commenting "Whoever reads it would conclude that Kiev is the Fourth Rome and that Babi Yar wasn't where umpteen thousands of Jews were murdered by the Nazi SS but rather where the Chekists murdered Ukrainian patriots."

[See <http://www.bueso.de/nrw/Aktuelles/ukraine.htm> ]

In Ukraine, in the presidential elections, Soros's people back Yushchenko but he is also supported by Andrei Shkil's ultra-nationalist UNSO. Vyacheslav Likhachev of the European-Asian Jewish Congress noted the unsettling links between Mr Soros's preferred candidate for Ukrainian president, Yuschchenko, and the neo-Nazis there after the 2002 parliamentary elections

"the former leader of the UNA-UNSD Andry Shkil was elected to the parliament in a single-ticket election in the Lviv region, with the support of Our Ukraine, led by Viktor Yuschenko (Victor Yuschenko is a former prime minister and one of the quite probable presidential candidates). At the time elections were held, the leader of the nationalists had been in jail for a year, accused of organizing mass anti-government riots. Having been elected, Andry Shkil was granted immunity to criminal prosecution. Thus, the moderate national-democrats form unions with the radicals."

[See Vyacheslav Likhachev, "Anti-Semitism in Ukraine", [http://www.eajc.org/program\\_art\\_e.php?id=10](http://www.eajc.org/program_art_e.php?id=10) ]

Some idea of Mr Shkil's pro-Western reform-minded ideas is available on his web-page: "Inside, an article appeared, entitled "Nationalism in the World: Past, Present, Future," written by Andriy Shkil', editor-in-chief of Natsionalist, chairman of the Dontsov Supporters' Club, and head of the Lviv branch of UNA. Mostly devoted to the New Right, it also mentioned their precursors, including Gobineau, and "his worthy student Walter Darre, who developed the idea of artificial selection [eugenics] to improve the human race." Mein Kampf and its author (whose name is not given) are praised for "re-examining these ideas on the highest level." Several of Darre's ideas are applied to the Ukrainian situation: Christianity's mistaken view of the equality of human beings, the necessity for the revival of

paganism as an essential spiritual feature of the nation and as a precondition for the creation of a new national elite, with eugenics as a means of cleansing and renewing the people. Thus, the UNA values the experience of the European Right, and other radicals regardless of their political orientation.”

[See [http://www.una-unso.org/av/mainview.asp?TT\\_id=17&TX\\_id=402](http://www.una-unso.org/av/mainview.asp?TT_id=17&TX_id=402) ]

Belatedly in the run-up to October’s presidential elections, Mr Yuschchenko tried to distance himself from radical nationalists like Shkil \_ at least in the English-language version of his web-page. [ See “Yushchenko advises «fascist thugs» to support Yanukovych” 15:25, 2 July 2004 @ <http://www.yuschenko.com.ua/eng/present/News/838/> ] But they were not prepared to denounce him: “It was reported that last Saturday in Kyiv there was a «parade» of the «UNA-UNSO» party that has nothing in common with the «UNA-UNSO» organization headed by Andriy Shkil, YTB member. During this meeting Kovalenko’s «UNA-UNSO» declared the support of Yushchenko with the fascist signs, «SSS» symbols and gestures in Hitlerite manner.”!

[See [http://www.una-unso.org/av/mainview.asp?TT\\_id=17&TX\\_id=402](http://www.una-unso.org/av/mainview.asp?TT_id=17&TX_id=402) ]

With friends like these Mr Yushchenko may feel he has all the People Power he needs to seize the presidency, but should OSCE observers, European parliamentarians, Colin Powell and George W. Bush be undiluted in endorsing a candidate with backing from neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers? What kind of West is being created if the Euro-Atlantic elite openly endorses a president of Ukraine whose domestic supporters at senior levels as well as at street level don’t know who invaded the country in 1941 and defend publications which say Jews were the culprits?

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