The April 21, 2019 presidential election in Ukraine: Analysis by University of Ottawa researcher Ivan Katchanovski

The following text by Ivan Katchanovski is based on an interview he gave to the daily Expresso newspaper in Portugal on April 21, 2019. The text appears in [Katchanovski's Facebook page](). The text below has been slightly edited by A Socialist In Canada website.

Official results of three exit polls show that in the second round of the presidential election in Ukraine on April 21, voters chose comedian Volodymyr Zelensky by 73 to 75 per cent, while 25 to 27 per cent voted for incumbent president Petro Poroshenko.

This is a crushing defeat for Poroshenko, his divisive policies concerning language, religion and the war in Donbas, and the economic hardship during his five-year rule as president of 'Maidan' Ukraine. Ukrainian voters demonstrated that Ukraine is not the same as Poroshenko and his policies.

Poroshenko has admitted defeat. The very large margin of victory by Zelensky makes it impossible to falsify the results of the second-round vote. Four publicly known attempts to cancel the election failed. The latest one was on the eve of the second round involving a frivolous lawsuit by a Poroshenko-aligned election observer arguing for cancelling Zelensky's registration as a presidential candidate. The lawsuit claimed that Zelensky bribed voters by offering them, via Facebook, free tickets to a stadium debate with Poroshenko.

Official exit poll results and early official vote counting confirm significant regional differences in the vote. According to one exit poll, Zelensky received 88 per cent in eastern Ukraine [not including the territories of the people's republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, which govern themselves independently from Ukraine], 86 per cent in the south, 72 per cent in the center (including Kyiv) and 56 per cent in western Ukraine.

Zelensky won in all regions with the likely exception of Galicia in the west of the country. This former Austrian and Polish province is traditionally the most nationalist, pro-Western and anti-Russian region in Ukraine.

Zelensky's vote percentage is impressive but the fact is that many Ukrainian voters voted for him in order to stop a re-election of Poroshenko. Zelensky is a popular TV comedian and is new to Ukrainian politics. His policies and key appointments are as yet unknown. During the election campaign, he promised to end the war in Donbas, but his interviews suggest that he lacks a deep understanding of this conflict and ways to resolve it.

It also remains to be seen whether Zelensky will be willing to investigate the political assassinations of Ukrainian journalists and politicians that occurred during the five years of Poroshenko's rule. Likewise for the massacres by right-wing paramilitaries that took place in central Kyiv on February 20, 2014 [1] and in the city of Odessa on May 2, 2014.

Zelensky's promises to fight corruption and to crack down on big business interests ['oligarchs'] also look like election rhetoric because his television comedy broadcast as well as his presidential victory owe much to an exiled oligarch, Ihor Kolomoisky. He and his popular television channel backed Zelensky's successful election campaign.

Zelensky has publicly stated that he supports membership by Ukraine in the European Union and in the NATO military alliance. These would be decided by referendums. But memberships in the EU and NATO are unlikely in the foreseeable future, whereas conflict with Russia and the military conflict in Donbas are likely to continue even if their intensity might lessen if Zelensky fulfills his promises to that effect.

Note by A Socialist In Canada website:
1. Ivan Katchanovski has just published a special report to *Consortium News* (April 22, 2019) summarizing his pioneering research into the killings of more than 50 protesters and police by sniper fire on Kyiv's Maidan Square on February 18-20, 2014. The killings were immediately blamed by Western media and governments on the then-government of President Viktor Yanuovych. He fled from Kyiv to eastern Ukraine on February 21 fearing for his life, following which a right-wing coup government was formed with NATO and Western blessing. Katchanovski's research has documented that the sniper fire those days came from buildings controlled by the right-wing protesters and paramilitaries. Western media and governments, however, have shunned his findings and instead promoted the false narrative of Yanukovych and his government being responsible. Inquiries by Ukrainian courts into the killings have on occasion cited Katchanovski's findings, but court deliberations have otherwise led nowhere.