

# Georgia: Soros, Stalin, And a Barrel of Wine

by Roman Bessonov

On Nov. 21, two correspondents of the Russian newspaper *Kommersant Daily* travelled from Gori, Georgia, the birthplace of Iosif Stalin, to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi—accompanying a column of opposition activists headed by Michael Saakashvili, an ambitious young man with an American education and economic views considered by Georgian businessmen to be “complete nonsense.” After a rally before the huge statue of Stalin, the marchers set out under a Crusaders’ banner with five white crosses on a field of red. A 40-liter cask of wine helped them along. By the time the buses were greeted by thousands at Rustaveli Prospect in central Tbilisi, Saakashvili had decided to introduce prohibition for a 24-hour period.

Next day, the square in front of the Parliament in Rustaveli Prospect was flooded with a huge crowd of enthusiastic supporters of Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, and Zurab Zhvania—three former top activists of President Eduard Shevardnadze’s Citizens’ Union of Georgia, now assembling to overthrow him. Shevardnadze was scheduled to open the first session of a new Parliament, elected on Nov. 2. The three opposition leaders, however, refused to take part, insisting that the election returns had been falsified. They had two arguments in support of this position: first, that the official results conflicted with exit polls; secondly, the U.S. State Department had just declared that the election returns had been falsified.

In fact, the official returns were not unfavorable to Shevardnadze’s young opponents. Saakashvili’s National Movement won 18%, the Burjanadze-Democrats bloc 9%, and the New Rightists over 7% of the vote. Shalva Natelashvili’s Labor Party, also regarded as a part of the opposition for its harsh criticism of Shevardnadze’s economic and social policy (but not working with Saakashvili, et al.), was credited with 12%. In the new Parliament, the President’s opponents could have prepared an orderly transition to a new state leadership, scheduled to take place with Presidential elections in 2005. Shevardnadze, now 75, had already promised Georgians and the world community that his current term was his last.

The election results had been forecast with great precision in an analytical article in Moscow’s *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in August. Its authors correctly noted the increased popularity not only of Saakashvili’s party, but also of the Revival Party of Aslan Abashidze, president of the Autonomous Republic

of Ajaria in Georgia’s West.

Meanwhile, the President’s Citizens’ Union, now without its former general secretary Zurab Zhvania (who had joined Mrs. Burjanadze in her brand new party project), had merged with several well-established parties—Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia’s National Democratic Union, and Vakhtang Rcheulishvili’s Socialist Party—into the Union for New Georgia. On the eve of the elections, the President’s bloc was gaining additional support from ethnic minorities, who fear Saakashvili’s nationalist banners. And even the remains of Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s movement expressed support for Shevardnadze, though the latter was first made President in the wake of Gamsakhurdia’s overthrow in 1991. Meanwhile, the Revival Party had almost unanimous support in Ajaria’s main city, Batumi, as well as growing influence in Tbilisi and in the Armenian-populated district of Javakheti.

But Saakashvili had proclaimed, months before, that he was organizing a “velvet revolution” to remove Shevardnadze. And the exit polls said the elections were a fakery. These exit polls were conducted not by the Georgians, nor by official observers from the United States, Russia, or the EU. They were provided by a Washington-based polling company, Global Strategy Group, which works for the U.S. Democratic National Committee and boasts of having run Al Gore’s campaign in 2000.

One more message, which activated the street campaign of Shevardnadze’s opponents, was a report from *The Times* of London, published by Georgian media the day before the expected opening of Parliament. Claiming that Shevardnadze planned to emigrate, the report came with a photo of a luxurious villa, allegedly purchased for Shevardnadze in Germany.

It may have been true that Germany was prepared to provide political asylum for Shevardnadze. It is also true that the—now former—elected President of Georgia had very close relations with the German establishment, since, as Soviet Foreign Minister, he had played a crucial role in German reunification in 1989-1990. It was also true that this strong affinity of Shevardnadze towards Germany was a matter of permanent dissatisfaction for those in the Anglo-American oligarchy, who preferred their own, completely controlled and predictable stooge, instead of him. Such interests were out to undermine any productive political economic relations between Georgia and either Germany or Russia, using tradi-



tional carrot-and-stick methods. The carrots were mostly virtual, expressed in quite unrealistic, but heavily advertised investment projects, which especially irritated the Russian side, as well as neighboring Armenia. Sticks would come down on Shevardnadze's head, any time he even attempted to seek—never mind implement—an alternative to Anglo-American geopolitics in the region.

Western mass media compared Shevardnadze with King Lear. On the day of the well-prepared revolt, he found himself almost completely isolated. By the time Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov arrived in Tbilisi on the evening of Nov. 22, Shevardnadze had already lost access even to national television.

### The Old Fox and the Young Tomcats

Eduard Shevardnadze's relations with Moscow had been undermined in 1997 by a large and very attractive carrot from Britain. This was the scenario of a Caucasus Common Market, uniting Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia's breakaway Republic of Chechnya, and, potentially, the whole Caucasus. The headquarters of the project was to be in Tbilisi, involving Shevardnadze's nephew and then-President of Azerbaijan Haidar Aliyev's son. Its promoters were Lord Alistair McAlpine and a Polish adventurer named Macej Jachimczyk, who converted to Islam in London and took the name "Mansur." At the center of the project stood the Chechen gangster, former felon Hoxhmed Nukhaye, who did not speak English but controlled Russia's Post of Novorossiysk.

The Common Market scheme collapsed after a group of British engineers was decapitated in Chechnya, but Moscow would not forget this flirtation by Shevardnadze's circles with Chechen rebel leader Maskhadov, and reminded She-

vardnadze about it immediately after the Sept. 11, 2001 catastrophe in New York and Washington. President Vladimir Putin raised the issue of Georgia's Pankisi Gorge as a cradle of Chechen gangsters, whose links with Afghan narcotics- and arms-trade networks were being highlighted in international mass media at that time.

The chill in Russian-Georgian relations affected ordinary people, as well as top officials. A visa regime for travel between the two countries, introduced by the Russian side, hurt the popularity of both Shevardnadze and Putin within Georgia. Further feeding Georgians' disappointment with Russia was the haughty tone of the Moscow liberal mass media,

which bullied, offended, and ridiculed not only Shevardnadze, but Georgia as a nation. Stinkbombs blasted by *Izvestia*, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, and other Moscow papers—owned by Russia's foreign-tied *nouveaux riches*—echoed in the hearts of Georgians as painfully as did bombs dropped from Russian aircraft on Pankisi Gorge. No wonder Georgians felt offended, rather than inspired, when liberal *wunderkind* Anatoli Chubais, CEO of Russia's United Energy Systems, bought control over the Tbilisi electric power utility, Telasi. (The seller was the U.S.-based AES Corporation, specialists in electricity privatization, which had bought and exploited the Tbilisi power grid, and now wanted out.) Chubais declared himself a "liberal imperialist."

Georgians were no happier about the "secret protocols" signed earlier this year between Shevardnadze and CEO Alexei Miller of the Russian natural gas giant Gazprom. Secrecy arouses not inspiration, but suspicion. Moscow's "liberal imperialists," regarded by ordinary Russians as merciless and immoral privatizers, were perceived in Georgia as invaders, not as friends in need. Russia's offer to supply natural gas and electricity was seen as a Trojan Horse, and no wonder! In his comments on the purchase of Telasi, Chubais focussed more on the prospects for Russian energy sales to Turkey, than on bringing light and heat into homes in Georgia.

The Gazprom projects that Miller and Shevardnadze discussed off the record were economically very promising indeed. Shevardnadze was losing faith in U.S. promises to build a gas pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Turkey's Erzerum, across Georgia. Experience told him Georgia might freeze before this project were completed. Miller promoted two more realistic projects, also undoubtedly much cheaper. The Russian gas monopoly proposed to refurbish two existing gas

pipelines—one connecting Vladikavkaz (the capital of North Ossetia, in Russia) with Tbilisi and Yerevan, Armenia, and another connecting the Blue Stream (Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea floor) with Tbilisi and Batumi. The latter project could be seen as a bridge between Georgia's central cities and Ajaria, which would benefit not only personal relations between Shevardnadze and Abashidze, but the integrity of Georgia.

The Russian side, as often before, overlooked the influence of the mass media on the population. The Rustavi-2 TV channel—financed by George Soros' Open Society Georgia Foundation as an “independent” media source—warned Georgian homes more efficiently than the dull, greasy moustache of Alexei Miller or the freckled nose of a newly converted imperialist Chubais, whose name in Tbilisi, as in Moscow or Vladivostok, is usually given to tomcats with a talent for stealing sausages.

Chubais and Miller, bold as they might be, realized they were trying to steal a juicy sausage from very powerful international interests. Months before, Gazprom had been forced to reduce prices of Blue Stream gas exports to Turkey—not only because of U.S. pressure on Turkey, but also due to Turkey's own economic problems, which made the original agreement with Gazprom unsustainable. If the talks were public, the Turkish side could become angry and close off Blue Stream altogether.

But, as the Russian saying goes, you can't hide an awl in a sack. It didn't take surveillance satellites to see that the Vladikavkaz pipeline was under reconstruction. Secrecy played into the hands of the new, Western-trained generation of Georgian politicians, who used these—economically reasonable—Russian gas and electricity infrastructure development proposals, as yet another reason for dumping She-

vardnadze—to whom they actually owed a great deal of their careers. Thus the Russian overtures, discredited by Miller's whispers and Chubais' chatter, turned into a real Trojan horse for Shevardnadze. “Georgia should not sell its independence for electricity”—these words of Speaker of the Parliament Nino Burjanadze became the motto of a new wave of anti-Russian sentiment, transforming the political scene of Georgia.

Two years ago, any Georgian official, told that Michael Saakashvili was a realistic Presidential candidate, would have laughed in your face: Who? This young, haughty demagogue with a wild mixture of ideas in his overheated brain? Today, Saakashvili is a not only a political star in the Tbilisi sky, but a person whose words and actions move masses, and directly affect the political mood throughout most of Georgia. Both Moscow influentials and their counterparts in Tbilisi government offices overlooked the steady rise of the new star, which started not in Summer 2003, but much earlier.

### The Ghost of the Fifth Rome

On Sept. 18, 2001, Justice Minister Michael Saakashvili arrived at the Parliament of Georgia with a pack of photos, depicting luxurious mansions owned by top police officials. Meanwhile, mass media reported that his flat was visited by “unidentified persons,” who tried to steal some documentation. This added heat to the media scandal, portraying the ambitious minister as a target of organized crime and corruption, and initiating his ascent to the exceptional popularity he enjoys today.

The engineers of his career had studied the psychology and moods of the Georgians—and not only Georgians. In a similar way, “anti-corruption careers” were made in other transitional or Third World countries, from Mexico to the

## Amb. Richard Miles: Man for Regime Change

The conviction that Washington engineered the overthrow of Georgia's elected President is widely held in the country, Tbilisi sources report, in part because the figure of U.S. Ambassador Richard Miles has been so visible. Flitting between opposition headquarters and government offices, making pronouncements on the quality of the electoral process, Miles and his intimate involvement in the events could not be missed.

When this career diplomat, with a strong Project Democracy profile, arrived in Tbilisi in early 2002, an analysis in the St. Petersburg paper *Chas Pik* (*Rush Hour*) reported that Miles said, “Georgia is faced with a critical period of transformation of political life, [at the end] of

which Eduard Shevardnadze will leave the post of President. In this period, the major priority of U.S. policy in Georgia will be to assist Georgian political leaders in the peaceful and democratic power transition.” At that time, Miles was ostensibly referring to the Presidential elections scheduled for 2005, when Shevardnadze will be 77 years old.

In a recent *New Statesman* article, Oriel College, Oxford Prof. Mark Almond dubbed Miles “a veteran of regime change in the Balkans,” alluding to his 1996-99 posting as U.S. chargé d'affaires in Belgrade, not to mention an earlier assignment in Azerbaijan. “When he proffers his credentials, any head of state should make sure their Swiss bank account is well stocked,” wrote Almond. The British analyst opined that the ouster of Shevardnadze was a project of the most fanatical neo-cons in Washington, demonstrating how the latter turn on someone who only recently was considered “one of ours.”—*Rachel Douglas*

Philippines. The Georgian brew was cooked to a recipe tested many times before, especially where luxury and misery live side by side, and the physical economy is ruined. The country Shevardnadze took charge of in 1992 was actually in worse shape than it is today; but progress has been very slow, due to his trust in the West. Joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) with a ruined economy, Georgia, like Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, expected a huge flow of investments. Instead, money fled the country. Saakashvili and his ilk, however, avoid the real background of the economic problems, instead blaming particular figures in the landscape. Economists from the New Rightist Party, later his ally against Shevardnadze, admitted that Saakashvili's economic views are a wild mix of unrealistic assessments.

Saakashvili resigned as Justice Minister, with complaints that the state leadership (to which he owed his party and government career), was impeding implementation of his demagogic National Anti-Corruption Plan. This project had received ample attention from megaspeculator George Soros, who promised assistance in the effort to cleanse the Georgian establishment. Soros appreciated the earlier reform of the law enforcement bodies, whereby the Penitentiary Authority was transferred from the Internal Affairs Ministry to the Ministry of Justice. As Saakashvili's partner, Soros was going to become a benefactor of Georgian jails, to improve the conditions there. In Georgia's destroyed economy—especially after its WTO entry—the penitentiary industry, with George Soros' help, would become an island of prosperity.

But that was not enough for the megaspeculator: The next step was supposed to be a sound whipping of the Georgian police, replacing its top cadres with "decent persons" selected by him and Saakashvili. Though the effort ostensibly failed, the discredited Internal Affairs Minister Kakha Targamadze was forced out, replaced by Koba Narchemashvili. The website of Soros' Open Society Georgia Foundation was not indifferent to this change of figures. Earlier, as head of the Customs Authority, Narchemashvili had been blamed by Tax Minister Michael Machavariani for "not opposing crime." But Soros' site explained that Machavariani, in attacking Narchemashvili, was motivated purely by personal ambition, intending to introduce his own crony to the lucrative customs post! In addition, the site warned that the new Internal Affairs Minister would have difficulty fighting crime, because of the resistance of Targamadze's old staff.

This excessive sympathy of Soros towards Narchemashvili may explain the unexpectedly easy surrender of the police to the crowd under the Crusaders' banners, on Nov. 21. For the whole period from September 2001 till November 2003, Saakashvili was under ardent tutelage from George Soros. The latter's Open Society Georgia Foundation co-founded the Liberty Institute of Georgia, and launched a "youth assistance program." Its young disciples were promptly organized into a movement entitled Kmara! (Enough!), which took lessons in organizing protest actions from professionals in former Yugoslavia and Ukraine.



*George Soros groomed and financed the Georgian opposition figures and media outlets who overthrew President Shevardnadze. St. George's Day was celebrated with gallons of wine in the central squares of Tbilisi—but the celebration will prove short-lived.*

The broad-shouldered young guys in leather jackets, who mounted the tribune of the Parliament on Saturday, Nov. 22, smashing tables and chairs, belonged to Kmara! As the BBC's correspondent said, these persons "hissed out" the elected President from the Parliament building. The social-populist phraseology of Saakashvili and the choice of Gori as launch-place for the decisive move into Tbilisi, represent nothing new in this sort of "regime change" operation. Anywhere George Soros appeared in the post-Soviet area, he would mimic the character of the local protest mood. In Lviv, Ukraine, his magazine *Derzhavnist* (*Statehood*) introduced the idea of "Ukraine as the Fourth Rome," and published an article saying that the execution of Jews in Babiy Yar, near Kiev, in 1941, was actually an execution of Ukrainian patriots by Jewish commissars. The local Jewish community was shocked, as were, no doubt, survivors of Stalin's prisons in Georgia, but such details have never bothered Soros, for whom the end seemed to justify any means. After all, Stalin's image might serve as a suitable symbol of a "Fifth Rome."

It was St. George's day on Sunday, Nov. 23, when Shevardnadze resigned. George Soros' day was celebrated with gallons of wine in the central squares of Tbilisi.

## Backing the Georgian Opposition

George Soros may have found his disciple, Saakashvili, at the offices of Patterson, Belknap, Webb, and Tyler LLC in Tbilisi, where the young lawyer started his career after coming home in 1992 from study at Columbia University. A professor there, R. Scott Horton, combines the careers of human rights defender, and privatization consultant in the former U.S.S.R. In the 1980s, he was the lawyer for aging Academician Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner. Today, Horton represents the Ukrainian intelligence Major Mykola Melnychenko, whose peddling of audiotapes of President Leonid Kuchma's private conversation launched a political crisis in Ukraine in 2001.

At a 1998 Columbia University conference on Caspian oil reserves (co-sponsored by Exxon), this friend of dissidents presented a report astronomically remote from human rights—on the juridical implications of the division of the Caspian Sea. By that time, Patterson, Belknap, Webb, and Tyler had been in Kazakstan for ten years, and in Moscow for five. In Russia, the firm is a partner of Alpha Group's Tyumen Oil Co. (TNK), recently merged with British Petroleum, and the largest Russian telecommunications company, Svyazinvest, co-privatized by George Soros, Boris Jordan, and Vladimir Potanin in 1997.

Another "permanent nomenklatura" figure, now operating for the Carlyle Group (defense contractors), is ex-Secretary of State James Baker III. He turned up in Tbilisi in August, to present urgent amendments to the Election Code, which became known in Georgia as "the Baker Plan." Implementation of the demands foundered in a brawl among opposition forces, seeking seats on the Electoral Commission. James Baker III arrived not merely to advise. He expressed his opinion that the next leader of Georgia should be Nino Burjanadze, Speaker of the Parliament.

Shortly before his arrival, PA Consulting, the American management company for Georgia's United [Electricity] Distribution Authority, disconnected 23 districts for non-payment of debts. And at the same time, a International Monetary Fund mission was pressuring Georgia's government to impose new austerity measures. Though the economy has been controlled by criminal clans for years, the President alone was blamed for the increasing economic problems.

One can imagine President Shevardnadze faced with such massive sabotage and permanently bullied by the inviolable "human rights" mouthpiece, Rustavi-2; he appeared to be close to real depression. But this was what was expected of him: Should he have been reluctant to resign, a "grateful" Burjanadze reserved for herself the option of declaring him incompetent. If Georgia's King Lear had not resigned on St. George Soros' Day, he might have faced an Anglo-American mental examination.

## Georgia's 'Lady Thatcher'

The scandal around the Russian energy proposals was a real political gift to Mrs. Burjanadze, whose reputation in

Tbilisi was far from perfect. A series of spicy articles had followed the 2002 appointment of her husband, Badri Bitsadze, to the post of Deputy General Prosecutor. (A day before the revolt, he resigned, complaining of "pressure" from the already powerless Shevardnadze.)

"The Landlady of a Big House," as Tbilisi papers called her, had figured in press accounts of a scandal around the Tbilisi office of Maskhadov's unrecognized Chechen government. This office was headquartered in the building on Gulua Street, where the company of Mrs. Burjanadze's father, Anzori, a former Communist Party official and big grain trader, was also located. The head of the Chechen office, Hizri Aldamov, claimed that his mission in Georgia was unofficial, but Russian sources listed him among the ambassadors of the independent Ichkeria (Chechnya), most of whom had criminal backgrounds. Aldamov had twice been in jail for economic wrongdoing. When Ichkeria's office was caught smuggling pharmaceuticals from Turkey, Aldamov threatened to release compromising information on Georgia's customs agency—and was immediately forgiven. His son, caught in Pankisi with drugs, was also safely released. He continued issuing more than eccentric statements; Radio Liberty quoted him naming Russia's Vladimir Putin as global terrorist No.1, and Osama bin Laden as an agent of the Russian special services.

When in Summer 2002, Hizri Aldamov was forced to leave his office in Gulua Street (so as not to compromise Mrs. Burjanadze's family), he declared that he really had been working for Maskhadov—contradicting Maskhadov himself, as well as Georgia's Foreign Security Chief Avtandil Ioseliani. When he participated in a later international human rights event in Tbilisi, however, Aldamov was identified by a Chechen website as "the general representative of Ichkeria in Georgia."

Mrs. Burjanadze's family connections with Chechen separatists well correspond with her international career. The case of Chechnya, as well as other Caucasus insurgencies, and many other "indigenist" movements across the globe, was inherited from Lord Palmerston's 19th-Century Foreign Office, by today's top figures in "human rights" and "anti-corruption" circles of the British oligarchy. It is quite natural that Nino Burjanadze's political ideal is Margaret Thatcher. In 1995-98—the heyday of the Caucasus Common Market project—Mrs. Burjanadze chaired Georgia's Permanent Parliamentary Delegation in Great Britain.

Burjanadze's mission in Britain was obviously the starting point for her career in European institutions. In 1998, she was selected as a Rapporteur of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Issues of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, and two years later became a vice president of OSCE's PA. This status played a decisive role in her election as the Speaker of Georgia's Parliament. Immediately thereafter, she also became an officer of the Black Sea Community of Economic Cooperation.

During the parliamentary elections, several candidates protested that Burjanadze was using her Speaker's staff and facilities for her personal needs. And she was a candidate, the leader of an election bloc named after herself, at the same time as representing an international institution that supervised the elections. Such a combination of roles and functions fits the classic definition of corruption, as does Saakashvili's simultaneous employment in the Parliament and a U.S. law firm internationally known as a lobbyist for powerful transnational corporations.

Burjanadze was a professor of law in the Tbilisi University. Before becoming the Speaker, she headed the Law Committee of Parliament. In that capacity, she participated in IREX's international conference "Black Sea Region: Priorities and Prospectives for the XXI Century." Among the other speakers, we find a familiar name: R. Scott Horton, professor of Columbia University, partner of Patterson, Belknap, Webb, and Tyler, president of International Human Rights Fund, director of the Sakharov Fund, etc., etc.

### The Stolen Alternative

Since the major Russian TV channels, obediently bowing to the generally accepted version of the events in Tbilisi, describe them as a "velvet revolution"—concealing the tragic truth from Russians on the eve of their own Dec. 7 parliamentary elections—the only source of detailed information from Georgia for the Russian audience is Aslan Abashidze's Ajara TV. This channel was disconnected from Tbilisi on the day of the revolt, along with the state TV company, giving Soros' Rustavi-2 a monopoly. For months before, Rustavi-2 had been slandering the leader of Ajaria, describing the aged Aslan, a Georgian nobleman, as an old Communist apparatchik and potential dictator—though Abashidze never danced around the statue of Stalin, and his highly professional TV company broadcast not only the best classic Soviet movies, but also the masterpieces of European and American cinema art.

Abashidze's mass media relied upon the feelings and tastes of a thinking intellectual and an industrious peasant, not just following their expectations, but trying to upgrade their education. For several years, it had been a source of hope for a decent life, in which human happiness was associated with productive labor. It had been a very strong alternative to Rustavi-2, which played on the impulsive instincts of poorly

educated youth to revolt against alleged "corruption."

After years of personal conflict, Abashidze found a common language with Shevardnadze, when the President of Georgia, realizing the menace to his own career and to the Georgian nation, tried—unsuccessfully—to crack down on Rustavi-2 TV. Abashidze's Agordzineba (Revival) Party was the only political force that came out into the streets of Tbilisi to protect the President, and the city's industries, from Saakashvili's crowds. Abashidze's own TV channel, Ajara TV, strongly opposed the National Movement, labelling it as "fascist."

Within Ajaria, Abashidze is the undisputed authority. The 93% vote for the Revival Party, questioned by "independent" mass media, is regarded by informed Russian observers as probably genuine. Ajaria has a functioning physical economy and relatively acceptable standard of living—lower than in Moscow, but higher than anywhere else in the Caucasus.

In 1992, Abashidze did not allow Gamsakhurdia's paramilitary squads to enter Batumi, and established his own army. However, he did not separate himself from Georgia like the leadership of Abkhazia (where the central authorities have next to no power), though Ajaria's port facility, fruit plantations, and vast trade operations with Turkey gave him the perfect opportunity to do so. Instead, he has tried to influence the rest of Georgia with the example of his economic success, probably hoping to inherit power on a national level, through a legitimate election. Abashidze's efforts to establish his party with organizations in all the districts of Georgia, were evidence of that.

Through the Mayor of Batumi, an ethnic Abkhaz, and a number of his military aides, Abashidze had established his own relations with influentials in breakaway Abkhazia. It was no surprise that after he and Shevardnadze shook hands in Summer 2002, Abashidze acquired special responsibility for Georgian-Abkhaz diplomacy.

While Aslan Abashidze, step by step, was developing a scenario for the reunification of Georgia, Saakashvili, and the TV channel created for him by George Soros, were threatening Abkhazia with a new war, simultaneously slamming Abashidze as a potential "dictator." His behavior reminded Abashidze of the late Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who eliminated Abkhazia's autonomy, triggering a separatist war eagerly exploited by organized crime, with its traditional interest in having quasi-independence for the area and complete control over the Sukhumi port.

As soon as the opposition declared its victory, forcing Shevardnadze to resign, Abkhazia and South Ossetia confirmed their independent status, while Abashidze, as he had warned in advance, closed the borders of Ajaria to Georgian forces.

The effect of Soros' activity is always the same. As we well know from the experience of Eastern Europe, anywhere his foundation was rooted, anti-industrial "indigenist" movements raised their heads, including the movement for separation of Transylvania from Romania. Separatism of this kind

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is habitually tied up with a decay of the real economy, to be replaced with a post-industrial “smuggling economy,” to the profit of the international drug trade. No wonder Abashidze’s economic success is something ideologically unacceptable for George Soros. And it will be no shock, if the banners with Crusader crosses will soon be seen along the road to Batumi—this time with weapons.

## Guns, Drugs, and Flowers

“It is not a velvet revolution,” Abashidze said in his Nov. 24 interview, broadcast by Ajara TV. “Velvet revolutionaries don’t turn upside down party offices, as these guys from Kmara! did with the Revival Party office in the very heart of Tbilisi, in the famous Lagidze building. We hardly saved our co-chairman from death on Saturday.” Revival’s co-chairman, Jemal Goghitidze, was not accidentally most hated by the Kmara! guys. He had co-chaired the press conference providing the evidence that Rustavi-2 and Kmara! were directly financed by George Soros. Days later, Kakha Lomaya, head of the Open Society in Tbilisi, had to confirm that the Kmara! project “was coordinated in New York.”

One more speaker at that press conference, Giya Topadze, head of the Industry Will Save Georgia party, also became a target of Saakashvili’s fanatics. In a fit of “velvet revolutionary rage,” they rampaged through Tbilisi, smashing bottles of beer and lemonade produced by Topadze’s company. Woe to those who untimely mention the name of Saint George!

This irrational rage, intentionally fed during months of preparations for the coup, requires a target. In order to keep the crowd around him during the Presidential campaign, Saakashvili will have to invent one image of evil after another. According to Ajara’s last reports, “velvet revolutionaries” are already taking aim at local mayors, who did not take the side of the National Movement on their way from Gori to Tbilisi, and at the director of Tbilisi University.

As was easy to foresee, the ascent of a crowd waving nationalist banners, dating back to olden times, more troublesome than glorious, is more likely to destroy the integrity of Georgia than to reunify the shattered country. Abashidze’s closing of the borders of Ajaria paralyzed Georgian-Turkish trade operations. Simultaneously, the leaderships of Abkhazia and South Ossetia enforced their border regimes.

In Javakheti, the Armenian-populated province, Saakashvili’s ascent is also viewed with anxiety and disgust. Javakheti’s Armenian community has close ties with Yerevan, which has found itself between two potentially hostile regimes, and Iran, which is an official target of the United States—of George Bush and George Soros, John McCain and Joe Lieberman. McCain, one more “specialist” in human rights and Kazak oil (as well as Turkmenian natural gas), visited Tbilisi a month and a half before the coup.

The remaining Russian military facilities are mainly based in Javakheti, and provide jobs for a significant part of the population. The prospect of using this territory as a stronghold for “containing” and eventually attacking Iran,

hardly inspires the population, but it warms the already overheated fantasy of U.S. neo-conservative and anti-Islamic lunatics of all types. The same geopolitics suggests the complete isolation of Armenia from any kind of support from Russia. This isolation, in its turn, will be used for pushing the long-discussed exchange of territories between Armenia and Azerbaijan, designed to eliminate Armenia’s border with Iran.

## Terra Incognita

Regarding the declared plans for a natural gas route from Baku to Turkey, the next likely target of the authors of the Georgian coup d’état may be Turkmenistan, the major source of gas in the Caspian basin. President Niyazov recently survived an assassination attempt. One more obvious target is Ukraine’s President Leonid Kuchma. Ex-KGB dissident Melnychenko, like a gun in the first act of a Chekhov play, is hanging on the wall till a suitable moment.

A global empire is most dangerous in the period of agony. For its real masters in the Anglo-American permanent *nomenklatura*, it is desperately important to keep the American minds under control. The coup d’état in Tbilisi will be presented there as a new victory of democracy. The real Tbilisi may starve, but the virtual Tbilisi is going to be presented as one more model democratic state, with no electricity and gas, but with medieval banners, Stalin and all.

In his latest interview to *Kommersant*, Saakashvili already moved away from the label “velvet revolution.” “It is something else,” he said. “Maybe a flower revolution?” suggested a helpful author. Saakashvili accepted the new definition.

Saakashvili’s supporters, their brains full of Soros’ populist propaganda, are happy that their legitimate President has gotten the Milosevic treatment—without an attempt to look at the map of the former Yugoslavia, crumbled into small parts, some of them with a still unclear status of statehood. Exactly such a future, corresponding with the “divide and conquer” principle, is the most probable future of Georgia under Saakashvili’s rule. The specific kind of business, advocated by George Soros across the globe, benefits from unrecognized states with destroyed economies. Arms and drug traders traditionally use such territories as their bases of operations. Therefore, Saakashvili’s easy victory and the state of emergency in Abkhazia may be parts of the same plan.

Global organized crime will definitely thank Soros for his success in Georgia’s destruction. Meanwhile, the U.S. oil and gas corporations, serving as tools in a more lucrative game, will express their gratitude with injections of cash into the liberal empire-pushing (Soros-funded) faction of the U.S. Democratic Party, on the eve of the American Presidential elections. Why else was the coup d’état needed before the scheduled change of power in Georgia, granting it, under the cover of the “Fifth Rome,” the fate of a “flower province”—an economically doomed territory, whose citizens, instead of going to the university, will survive by selling flowers in the bazaars of Moscow and Istanbul?