

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*