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## The Puppet Masters Behind Georgia President Saakashvili

By F. William Engdahl

**21/08/08 "ICH" --** - The controversy over the Georgian surprise military attacks on South Ossetia and Abkhazia on 8.8.08 makes a closer look at the controversial Georgian President and his puppet masters important. An examination shows 41 year old Mikhail Saakashvili to be a ruthless and corrupt totalitarian who is tied to not only the US NATO establishment, but also to the Israeli military and intelligence establishment. The famous 'Rose Revolution of November 2003 that forced the ageing Edouard Shevardnadze from power and swept the then 36 year old US university graduate into power was run and financed by the US State Department, the Soros Foundations, and agencies tied to the Pentagon and US intelligence community.

Mikhail Saakashvili was deliberately placed in power in one of the most sophisticated US regime change operations, using ostensibly private NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) to create an atmosphere of popular protest against the existing regime of former Soviet Foreign Minister Edouard Shevardnadze, who was no longer useful to Washington when he began to make a deal with Moscow over energy pipelines and privatizations.

Saakashvili was brought to power in a US-engineered coup run on the ground by US-funded NGO's, in an application of a new method of US destabilization of regimes it considered hostile to its foreign policy agenda. The November 24 2003 Wall Street Journal explicitly credited the toppling of Shevardnadze's regime to the operations of "a raft of non-governmental organizations . . . supported by American and other Western foundations." These NGOs, said the Journal, had "spawned a class of young, English-speaking intellectuals hungry for pro-Western reforms" who were instrumental laying the groundwork for a bloodless coup.

### Coup by NGO

But there is more. The NGOs were coordinated by the US Ambassador to Georgia, Richard Miles, who had just arrived in Tbilisi fresh from success in orchestrating the CIA-backed toppling of Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, using the same NGOs. Miles, who is believed to be an undercover intelligence specialist, supervised the Saakashvili coup.

It involved US billionaire George Soros' Open Society Georgia Foundation. It involved the Washington-based Freedom House whose chairman was former CIA chief James Woolsey. It involved generous financing from the US Congress-financed National Endowment for Democracy, an agency created by Ronald Reagan in the 1980's to "do privately what the CIA used to do," namely coups against regimes the US Government finds unfriendly.

George Soros' foundations have been forced to leave numerous eastern European countries including Russia as well as China after the 1989 student Tiananmen Square uprising. Soros is also the financier together with the US State Department of the Human Rights Watch, a US-based and run propaganda arm of the entire NGO apparatus of regime coups such as Georgia and Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution. Some analysts believe Soros is a high-level operative of the US State Department or intelligence services using his private foundations as cover.

The US State Department funded the Georgia Liberty Institute headed by Saakashvili, US approved candidate to succeed the no-longer cooperative Shevardnadze. The Liberty Institute in turn created "Kmara!" which translates "Enough!" According to a BBC report at the time, Kmara! Was organized in spring of 2003 when Saakashvili along with hand-picked Georgia student activists were paid by the Soros Foundation to go to Belgrade to learn from the US-financed Otpor activists that toppled Milosevic. They were trained in Gene Sharp's "non-violence as a method of warfare" by the Belgrade Center for Nonviolent Resistance.

### **Saakashvili as mafioso President**

Once he was in place in January 2004 as Georgia's new President, Saakashvili proceeded to pack the regime with his cronies and kinsmen. The death of Zurab Zhvania, his prime minister in February, 2005, remains a mystery. The official version—poisoning by faulty gas heater—was adopted by American FBI investigators within two weeks of the killing. That has never seemed credible to those familiar with Georgia's gangland slayings, crime, and other manifestations of social decay. Zhvania's death was followed closely by a functionary of the Premier's apparatus, Georgi Khelashvili, who allegedly shot himself the day after his chief's demise. The head of Zhvania's research staff was later found dead as well.

Figures allied with Saakashvili reportedly had a hand in the premier's death. Russian journalist Marina Perevozkina quoted Gia Khurashvili, a Georgian economist. Prior to the fatal incident, Mr. Khurashvili had published an article in Resonans newspaper opposing the privatization and sale of Georgia's main gas pipeline. Ten days before the prime minister's body was found, Khurashvili was attacked and his editor-in-chief—citing pressure from 'security service' figures he refused to name—issued him a warning.

The late premier's position on the pipeline issue was believed the direct reason for the murder of Zhvania. Zhvania's brother, Georgi, also told Perevozkina that not long before Zhvania's death he received a warning that someone was preparing to kill his brother. Saakashvili was reportedly livid when the US State Department invited Zhvania to Washington to win a Freedom Medal from the US Government's National Democratic Institute. Saakashvili tolerates no rivals for power it seems.

Saakashvili, who cleverly marketed himself as “anti-corruption,” appointed several of his family members to lucrative posts in government, giving one of his brothers a position as chief adviser on domestic issues to the Baku-Ceyhan Pipeline project, backed by British Petroleum and other oil multinationals.

Since coming to power in 2004 with US aid, Saakashvili has led a policy of mass-scale arrests, imprisonment, torture and deepened corruption. Saakashvili has presided over the creation of a de facto one-party state, with a dummy opposition occupying a tiny portion of seats in the parliament, and this public servant is building a Ceausescu-style palace for himself on the outskirts of Tbilisi. According to the magazine, *Civil Georgia* (Mar. 22, 2004) until 2005, the salaries of Saakashvili and many of his ministers were reportedly paid by the NGO network of New York-based currency speculator Soros—along with the United Nations Development Program.

### **Israel US military train Georgian military**

The current military assault on South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in violation of Saakashvili’s pledge to seek a diplomatic not military solution to the territorial disputes, is backed by US and Israeli military “advisers.” Israel’s Haaretz newspaper reported that on August 10, Georgian Minister of Reintegration, Temur Yakobshvili, “praised the Israel Defense Forces for its role in training Georgian troops and said Israel should be proud of its military might, in an interview with Army Radio. ‘Israel should be proud of its military which trained Georgian soldiers,’ Yakobashvili told Army Radio in Hebrew, referring to a private Israeli group Georgia had hired.”

One of the targets of Russian bombs near Tbilisi was, according to IsraelNN.com, “a Georgian military plant in which Israeli experts are upgrading jet fighters for the Georgian military... Russian fighter jets bombed runways inside the plant, located near Tbilisi, where Israeli security firm Elbit is in charge of upgrading Georgian SU-25 jets.”

Israeli Foreign Minister and candidate to succeed ousted Israeli Prime Minister, Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, proclaimed on August 10 that “Israel recognizes Georgia’s territorial integrity,” code for saying it backs Georgia’s attempt to take South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The reported 1,000 Israeli military advisers in Georgia were not alone. On July 15, the Reuters news wire carried the following report: “VAZIANI, Georgia - One thousand U.S. troops began a military training exercise called “Immediate Response 2008,” in Georgia on Tuesday against a backdrop of growing friction between Georgia and neighboring Russia. The two-week exercise was taking place at the Vaziani military base near the capital Tbilisi, which was a Russian air force base until Russian forces withdrew at the start of this decade under a European arms reduction agreement... Georgia has a 2,000-strong contingent supporting the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq, and Washington provides training and equipment to the Georgian military. The United States is an ally of Georgia and has irritated Russia by backing Tbilisi’s bid to join the NATO military alliance... “The main purpose of these exercises is to increase the cooperation and partnership between U.S. and Georgian forces,” Brig. Gen. William

B. Garrett, commander of the U.S. military's Southern European Task Force, told reporters.”

With Russia openly backing and training the indigenous military in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to maintain Russian presence in the region, especially since the US-backed pro-NATO Saakashvili regime took power in 2004, the Caucasus is rapidly coming to resemble Spain in the Civil War from 1936-1939 where the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and others poured money and weapons and volunteers into Spain in a devastating war that was a precursor to the Second World War.

In a curious footnote to the actual launch of military fighting on the opening day of the Olympics when Putin, George W. Bush and many world leaders were in Beijing far away, is a report in IsraelNN.com by Gil Ronen, stating that “The Georgian move against South Ossetia was motivated by political considerations having to do with Israel and Iran, according to Nfc. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili decided to assert control over the breakaway region in order to force Israel to reconsider its decision to cut back its support for Georgia's military.”

Ronen added, “Russian and Georgian media reported several days ago that Israel decided to stop its support for Georgia after Moscow made it clear to Jerusalem and Washington that Russia would respond to continued aid for Georgia by selling advanced anti-aircraft systems to Syria and Iran.” Israel plans to get oil and gas from the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline from the Caspian.

Although as of this writing Russian President Medvedev has announced Russia is halting its military response against Georgian targets, the situation is anything but stable. The insistence of Washington in bringing Georgia into its geopolitical sphere and backing an unstable regime around Mikhail Saakashvili may well have been the straw which broke the Russian camel's patience if not his back.

Whether oil pipeline disputes or Russian challenges to Israel are the proximate trigger for Saakashvili's dangerous game, it is clear that the volatile Georgian and his puppet masters may have entered a game where no one will be able to control the outcome.

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