

CATHERINE NEPOMNYASHCHY

Welcome back for the next session of the Rose Revolution. And it is my distinct pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker, Ambassador Richard Miles. It is hard to think of anyone more appropriate to address the issues raised then and now by the Rose Revolution. As most of you know, probably all of you know, Ambassador Miles was literally on the spot serving as US Ambassador to Georgia from April 19, 2002 to August 15, 2005. His posting to Georgia marked the culmination of a distinguished career in the Foreign Service, which began in 1967. He served in Oslo, Moscow, Belgrade, and as Consul General in what was then Leningrad, and as principal officer of the US embassy office in Berlin. After the fall of the Soviet Union, he served as US Ambassador to Azerbaijan from 1992 to 1993 and as US Ambassador to Bulgaria from 1999 to 2002. From 1996 to 1999 he served as Chief of Mission to Belgrade, so he has, indeed, been on the cusp of regime change in the post-socialist region on more than one occasion. And if you Google him, you'll find that he has been credited, or on occasion blamed for being very responsible for some of that regime change. Ambassador Miles has been awarded the State Department's Meritorious Honor Award and Group Superior Honor Award twice. In 1992, he was awarded a Presidential Meritorious, [UNCLEAR] Service Award, and a national award for reporting. In 2004 he was a recipient of the State Department's Robert C. Frazier Award For Peaceful Conflict Resolution. And I want to say that this is, in my experience, the second time that Ambassador Miles has spoken here. He was wonderful the last time, and I know he will be wonderful again today. So welcome back to the Harriman Institute.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Thank you very much. I'm going to remain seated, I wrenched my back out of the joint on Tuesday, and I have to sit down I'm afraid. If I say stupid things or give stupid answer to your questions, you can blame it on the Motrin. It's always kind of painful, Katherine, to

listen to all these things that I've done or allegedly done. It's the kind of thing that you should really only do at someone's funeral I think when they're no longer around to be embarrassed about it or feel like they ought to contradict some of the things that were said. But, I thank you for it and thank the Harriman Institute. I did enjoy coming the last time a couple years ago. I remember Governor Harriman very well. I was the Yugoslav desk officer when President Tito died. I'd already served in Yugoslavia and I served in Yugoslavia again after that. Tito's death took about six months, and Governor Harriman knew that he was going to be the President's representative to the funeral. He lived in Washington then, he had a home in Middleburg out in Virginia, horse country. He always wanted to go out to his country place for the weekend, so he would call me up. He was getting a little deaf. He would often do this on Saturday morning when hopefully I would be home. He would shout into the phone, "Is Tito dead yet? Is Tito dead yet?" I would shout back, "No, Governor, no, he's not dead yet, it's okay, you can go to the farm." The kids who were young at the time got a big kick out of it and would go around shouting, "Governor Harriman, Governor Harriman." They had visions of him being about 12 feet tall, out of a fairy tale or something, and I guess he was. In fact—and this has nothing whatsoever to do with my remarks—the very young Governor Harriman made an investment in Georgia back in the 1920s by investing in the manganese mine out there. It was about the only investment he ever made that he actually lost money on. The reason he lost money on it was that the authorities at that time very carefully carved out the most lucrative part of the mines, and they were not included in his contract. So, there's a funny little Harriman story for you.

Let me make just a couple of disclaimers which should be obvious but I want to state anyhow since I think this is being televised. One is that I am not with the government anymore, and the remarks that I make are my own. I haven't even checked with anyone in the government,

so it's just me you're hearing today. Most of the information I get is off the Internet, which you can also do. But I do stay in touch sometimes through seminars and conferences like this, and also with a few friends in Georgia who are in Internet contact and but also stop in to see us, usually my wife, to be blunt. We stay in touch, but I'm not as current now as I would have been as ambassador. Kenny knows that you kind of lose that finger in the air pretty quick.

Georgia—wow, what a place. We got a flavor of it this morning from the previous panel. To paraphrase Garrison Keillor, all the panel members I thought were above average, and in fact the questioners were above average. I'm going to hope to at least rise to the quality of that panel, but also I'm going to keep my remarks fairly short so that you can ask whatever questions you like, and I'll try to answer them as best I can.

In my career, as you indicated, I've dealt with many problems and personalities in many places, ranging from Mr. Putin when he was Deputy Economic Advisor to Mayor Sobchack in Leningrad, to the two coups that occurred in Baku during the time I was there. I dealt with Slobodan Milosovich and his merry band of lawbreakers and war criminals, some of whom were friends of mine I guess, and even a former king who returned to Bulgaria to become Prime Minister there and had his own political difficulties. But nothing really compares with Georgia, in terms of complexities and contradictions. I used to tell my staff that, in all my experience, there were more problems per square meter in Georgia than any other place I'd served, including Russia.

This of course can be fun for the diplomats. Andrew there said he would like to see boring politics, and I agree with that, but boring politics is also boring for diplomats. We like the

problems and the difficulties, and Lord knows they exist in Georgia and that's one reason we're having this conference. These frustrations though can also be exasperating for the big capitals, people in Washington and Moscow, who, if I can be blunt again, sometimes have bigger fish to fry—problems in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan, China, Russia itself. Russia of course has its own interests which are not always parallel with our own.

I'd like to mention what I'm *not* going to talk about in my remarks. I can't cover anything, and I don't want to sit here and bore you to death. You can ask about these things in your questions if you want and I'll try to answer them. But I'm not going to talk about the separatist provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. I'm not going to talk about the US role in training the Georgian military. I'm not going to talk about Georgia's desire for NATO membership. I'm not trying to avoid these subjects, but there's just not really time to talk about all of them in my remarks. You can ask about them in the questions if you want.

Why is Georgia important to the United States and, frankly, to Russia? It's a very small place as we all know. It's about the size of South Carolina, where I also work, and about the same population—4.5 million people. Why should the President of the United States visit Georgia? Why should the president of the Russian Federation get so worked up over Georgia that he really can't visit it, even though it lies on Russia's southern borders? There's really only one reason, and that is its location. It's strategically located, as we know, and because of this it has been colonized and fought over, though admittedly for different reasons, from the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans until today—and maybe even before that, when there was no recorded history. The Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, Persians, and Russians all had their different reasons and interests in the Caucasus, and particular in Georgia.

The previous panel brought out quite well that over the past 100 years a relatively new reason has entered the picture of Georgia's importance. That is access to Caspian energy resources—oil and more recently gas. Despite serious exploration efforts, significant oil and gas reserves have not been found in Georgia. The search goes on, however, and hopefully will be prove successful. American firms are in fact involved in that search. For now, Georgia's strategic importance has really been identified with access to the energy resources of the Caspian, first through the rail link from Baku to Batumi which has been a pipeline on wheels for 100 years or so. We sometimes neglect to mention that rail pipeline, and underestimate it though it still exists. Then there are small pipelines. I didn't learn this until after I left Georgia, but the first pipeline from Baku over to the Black Sea was built in 1906. It was a very small pipeline carrying, if you can believe this, kerosene, because the oil was refined into kerosene for lights and heating.

Then came, as was mentioned earlier, the Baku-Supsa maritime terminal line and most recently the 40-inch Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, and of course, the Baku-Erzurum gas pipeline. These links to Western markets independent of Russian control are of crucial importance to further development of the energy resources of the Caspian. They could even provide alternate routes to Western markets for the resources of Central Asia.

We all understand that oil and gas are strategic resources. What we don't always understand is that the accompanying rail and pipeline infrastructure is also a strategic resource. The Russians understand that very well, and I think it's one of the key reasons why the leaders of the Russian Federation remain about American and Western involvement in the Caucasus, and Georgia in particular. That's all the more so because it was US and British involvement

that brought about the existent pipelines. Not to sound grandiose, but I was involved in the starting of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline idea when I was ambassador there in 1992-93. It was really a personal pleasure for me to see that pipeline come into existence. It took a lot of effort, and without the direct involvement of the US government it wouldn't have happened. I think it's the only time the US and British governments have been directly involved in pushing and lobbying for the construction of an international pipeline. I'm certain without them that pipeline would never have been built.

Probably because of this, I have scarcely known a Russian who did not almost literally froth at the mouth over the fact of US influence in this process. These pipelines, independent of Russian control, are anathema to many if not virtually all Russian strategic thinkers. Added to that in the case of Georgia, is Western, and again particularly American, support for the development of democratic institutions. AMBASSADOR KEN YALOWITZ and I and our predecessors worked hard to lay the groundwork for democratic political and economic reform in Georgia, and this has not always been an easy process. Georgian people and their leaders have had to fight endemic corruption, nepotism, and outright criminality, sometimes successfully, sometimes less so. We were not able, despite arduous efforts if I may say so, to save the flagship American investment of the EES Company from going under and selling out to the Russian energy monopoly, Real UES. But with the somewhat untidy rise to power of Mikhail Saakashvili and his team of young reformers, we did see a great leap forward in reform efforts economically, financially, and certainly political. But because of Western and American support, this also did not sit well with the leaders of the Russian Federation.

I may say this now that I'm out of the government. It takes extremely maladroit diplomacy to be on the outs with the leader of a country, that is to say, Mr. Schevardnaze— who was not

at all liked or respected by the Russian leadership—and to remain on the outs with the leadership which replaced him through a process which they did not necessary approve of. But they managed to do it. We on the other hand did the opposite. We were friendly and supportive of former president Schevardnaze, a very decent man and one to whom I think all of us in the world both East and West owe a great deal. We remained friendly and supportive with President Saakashvili and his team of reformers. We've also tried to stay in touch with the opposition, which has not always been easy in Georgia.

It was quite easy when President Schevardnaze was in power, because the opposition included the late Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, and until a few days ago the President Saakashvili and the president of the parliament, Ms. Burjanadze. Then they became the government, basically, and so it was a little less easy after that. But some of the players remain players, and some are now running for president in this special election which will be held on January 5th. I know that the embassy has remained in touch with them. I've been in touch with a couple of them, and won't comment on the specifics of the election. But every country needs and opposition and I wish the opposition well.

I expect we'll all have a lot to say during the course of this conference about Georgia's most recent move, to paraphrase Lenin, two steps back from the onward progress of democratic development. I won't dwell on this in these remarks. We're in a new phase now with Mr. Saakashvili resigning his presidency and the new president being elected on January 5th, or thereafter in a run-off election which is perhaps likely. But the process has been a bit messy, and we have seen some things that we would all have preferred not to see.

Just the other day, Assistant Secretary of European Affairs Freed spoke with the Georgian

Foreign Minister to raise our concern about the way in which the situation regarding Imedi TV station has been handled. We've made a few other critical comments as well. But we'll see how things work out. It's going to be a considerable test I think for the strength of Georgia's relatively young democratic institutions, and its relatively young leaders, both in the government and out of the government. In fact I would say that Georgian democracy is going to be somewhat tested between now and January 5th. I'm personally optimistic about this process, and I'm glad to see that some of the panelists expressed some of that pessimism [sic]. I think we can be realistic about Georgia and appreciate Georgia warts and all, and still retain an affection for it, with not just a hope that things will turn out well but an anticipation of it. I put myself in that category.

I think it's very useful for all of us who care about Georgia, and about US policy toward Georgia, and about US policy toward Russia in this context, to sit down and discuss these matters. It's still possible for Georgia's friends, I believe, to influence developments there in a positive manner. I would hope that we will continue to do so, and I'm sure we will. We have an obligation to do it. But we also have an obligation to do it wisely. I think this conference represents a realistic way in which wise people who care about Georgia and know something about it can discuss these issues and come to some conclusions in their own minds, contact their represents in the Congress, Senate, State Department, or National Security Council. Hopefully we can continue to influence things in a positive direction. That would be my hope from this conference. I think that Harriman Institute and the other organizers of this conference for inviting me here to speak to you today about it. I'd be glad now to answer any questions that you might have.

WOMAN

I want people on this side to have a chance to ask questions. We have a little more than a half-hour for questions. May I ask people to go up to the microphone? I'm sure there are questions out there.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

By the way, I'm not very good at three- or four-part questions. I tend to forget the first two or three. I'd advise you to keep it to maybe two.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Good afternoon. My name is Becker Tovardzuladze [PH], I'm from World Education Services. Being Georgia, I have this question. Is Georgia falling under the oil curse? What I mean is this. Is Georgia's stability and the uninterrupted flow of her energy resources from the Caspian to Georgia in danger? Does it put Georgia in the situation Azerbaijan was in three to four years ago, when the criticism of Western authorities was muted when there were shortcomings in the development of democracy? Is Georgia in this situation right now as get closer to the elections? Thank you.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

I don't think so. I just mentioned the concern which high-level US State Department officials registered yesterday with the Georgian foreign minister. During the visit of both Assistant Secretary Freed and Deputy Assistant Secretary Briza, concern was expressed. No, I don't think so. I think virtually any government in Georgia is going to be supportive of the continued utilization of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. It's absolutely in Georgia's

interest to do so. Someone asked earlier about the revenue which is shared with the Georgia government, and the employment it offers. The fact is that it does make Georgia of strategic importance and therefore of even greater interest to countries like the United States, Britain and others than it would otherwise be. I don't think that's going to change at all.

As for a muting of our criticism in Azerbaijan, I have had Azari opposition leaders come over to Tbilisi and say the same thing. My response to them is this. The United States will support the democratic process, including opposition to a government in power. But everything has got to be done in a legitimate manner. We will not support force and violence to overthrow an existing government. There should also be a degree of unity on the part of any opposition, if they intend to gain election victories in either a presidential or a parliamentary election. If the opposition in Azerbaijan, Georgia, or anyplace else is all over the map— as we are in this country at the moment, but that'll sort itself out—then that's necessarily good for the democratic process. So those were the points which I made to Azari opposition leaders, and I think they took that in stride. But if you think that the United States government representatives are going to say, you, Mr. X or Miss X, are our anointed children and we want you to become the next president, we're not going to do that. That's not a game that would be successful, even if we wanted to play it, and frankly we don't want to play it.

WOMAN

Ambassador Miles, thank you very much for your presentation. I myself was a witness of how your efforts contributed to the Rose Revolution actually being peaceful. So thank you very much for those great times.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Thank you.

WOMAN

I have a question. Considering that the optimistic prognosis for the January 5th elections will be realized and elections will be conducted in a fair and universal manner, and the current incumbent government will stay in power, what would be your top three policy recommendations to this government?

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Well, I don't know if the incumbent government will stay in power or not.

WOMAN

If they do so.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Well, that remains to be seen. The important thing is free, honest and open elections. My guess is that the authorities will really do a lot to bring that about. I did make the same remarks about the Schevardnaze approach to the parliamentary elections in 2003 and I was quite wrong in that regard. But I don't think I'm going to be wrong this time. The people involved are different people, they have a different orientation, they understand better I think than the Schevardnaze government did that really the eyes of the world are on Georgia at this time. There will also be hundreds of election observers. There were hundreds of election observers in 2003 as well, and they observed a fraudulent election, with the results which we

saw—the ousting of the democratically elected president of the country and his replacement by Mr. Saakashvili in another election.

So these are big stakes. There's a lot of transparency in that basic process, and I would certainly hope that in the electioneering and in the vote-counting, there would also be transparency and honesty. I think a lot does depend on the independence of the media, and in that regard, the State Department's comments about Imedi TV are very important. The Georgian print media I know has been very critical of these events that have occurred recently, and I would hope that they would continue to remain objective and to remain the news as they see it so that people are informed. I hope for a large turn-out and I'm sure there will be a large turn-out.

MAN

Ambassador Miles, thank you for your presentation.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Thank you.

MAN

It was very interesting and informative. I have one question. You have tremendous diplomatic experience, including experience of serving Georgia. My question is somewhat related to the previous question. How would you assess the prospect of political stability after the January 5th presidential election? 22 presidential candidates entered the race. The majority of opinion coalesces around the prediction that Saakashvili is going to win, but that this time around he is going to win with a narrower margin. Some outside analysts predict

more troubles to come as a result of this. What would be your assessment? How do you see the prospect of political stability in the country? Thank you.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Well, this now is purely my opinion. It's not based on any informed analysis or any information from our embassy, the State Department or anything. My guess is that many of these opposition candidates who are running for President will drop away, as the process continues. Either they won't get the fifty thousand signatures necessary to put their name on the actual ballot, or, they would not have the finances, or the organizational background to be able to handle a campaign of that sort. So you're going to wind up with fewer candidates. And then, I've read this in the media, so again, it's not my own opinion, it's someone else's opinion, but there would most likely be a run-off, which would have, then, a narrow range of candidates. and so again, I'm not predicting who's going to win this, but it is as the 2003 parliamentary election could have been, it is kind of a school of democracy, it's a sort of rehearsal for parliamentary elections to come, for example. And the opposition itself, and one of our previous panelists mentioned this, um, does need to overcome what I would call some of the ego problem, where it is difficult for them to form coalitions, even temporary in nature, of an election nature, and everyone seems to, representing a political party, feel that they have to run themselves as president, which of course weakens the opposition field. So I would hope that the, process, similar in a way to the process of the primary elections in the United States, would begin to winnow down the number of candidates, to the point where people would have a genuine choice, and they could then make that choice. My guess is, after the presidential election is finally resolved, there will be a little more difficult relationship between the presidency and the parliament. My guess is, this whole process will strengthen parliamentary government, to some extent, and will weaken presidential

government to some extent, in Georgia. But again, this is just my personal opinion. And then that would be resolved a little bit further. And these, these things go on and on in a democratic country. They're going on in the United States right now after more than two hundred years of our democracy. My guess is that after the next parliamentary election, the role of parliament might be strengthened even further, as opposed to the role of the presidency. But, this is just my speculation. Georgia is Georgia, and the Georgian people will determine these, the way these institutions develop.

MAN

Ah, [SPEAKS ARABIC] Ah, Mr. Ambassador, ah, before the November events, there were some countries, several countries in NATO, not the United States of course, which kind of were cautious about granting Georgia membership, a NATO action plan, in April of 2008, here at the Bucharest Summit. Because of the concerns of Russia's aggressive reaction to it, this was the basic concern of there's. Do you think that in April 2008, November events will effect the judgement and decision of the summit? Or it won't be influenced by it? Thank you.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Well, I was asked that question a lot when I was in Georgia, of course long before these recent events. And my answer was always a cautious one, because I've been through this process in Bulgaria, when I was Ambassador there. And when I went to Bulgaria in the year 2000, I personally thought the chances for Bulgarian membership in a short period of time were less optimistic than some people in the State Department thought. But I was wrong, and Bulgaria did become a member as Romania did, and they've been good partners for NATO. With Georgia, of course, it does depend not just on the United States, and President

Bush has indicated American support for Georgian membership, but it depends on all the member countries of NATO, and that includes some of the older members, and also some of the newer members. And I think you indicated yourself that there was some concern on the part of some of these members, and so that would have to be addressed. And the way the elections will proceed, I think, will be an indicator for those countries. But also Russia's attitude, and Russia's approach, it was mentioned earlier also that I think all of us desire that Georgia have a better relationship with Russia. I always advocated that when I was there, I never responded in a positive manner to the Russia-baiting which did go on, and which still goes on, a lot to do with the relationship between Russia and Georgia has to do with the Russian leadership itself, which sometimes has not always acted in the way, really, in which a great power should act toward a smaller neighbor, but it also has to do with the Georgian authorities, and as we all know, sometimes intemperate remarks have been made, and difficulties have entered into the situation, leaving aside the situation in the separatist provinces, but just in terms of trade between Georgia and Russia, Russia is Georgia's natural trade partner, although if you actually remove the energy sector from the statistics, Turkey would actually be Georgia's largest trading partner. But Russia remains an important trading partner, and, I would hope that in time, with the ending of this silly boycott over Georgian mineral water and Georgian wine, and whatnot, that normal trade relations would be restored. I would hope that normal political relations and security relations, especially easy I would think now that the Russian forces have basically been withdrawn from Georgia proper, and I would look forward to that day, frankly, but until that occurs, Russian influence is not only going to be of a positive nature. I rambled a bit in that answer. You can blame it on the Motrin, but I hope it did answer your question.

AMBASSADOR KEN YALOWITZ

Ah, Ken Yalowitz, director of Dicky's Center for International-

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

I won't ramble the way you can, I'll answer you straight.

AMBASSADOR KEN YALOWITZ

Okay, at Dartmouth. Dick, first of all, I just wanted to use this public opportunity to congratulate you on not only your talk today, but your wonderful service in Georgia. You were there at a very critical time, and it was a great source of satisfaction to me and many others knowing that you were there.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Can I get into that Groucho Marx routine, thank you, thank you, I appreciate your remarks.

AMBASSADOR KEN YALOWITZ

What I wanted to ask you about is the following. The unfortunate events of November Seventh, by contrast, 2003 was peaceful. Nobody was killed, nobody was injured. What I wanted to ask you though, is if you can just go back to those months, and help answer why that process remained peaceful throughout. Why it was that police or military were not called out, and what was the recipe that led to the success of the Rose Revolution, because it's, I think a very interesting development in that part of the world, and I would just like to have your thoughts on it.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Well, thanks. I think almost everyone, except perhaps President Shevardnadze realized in

2003 that the mantle of authority had fallen away from his shoulders, so that he did not have the kind of public support that any leader would need to remain in power in that country, in a democratic country. So there's that as a basic statement. Police were involved, actually, in the protection of the buildings, and of the person of the President, of President Shevardnadze, in 2003, but at that time, the police did not have adequate, or really any, non-lethal means of crowd control. The only means they had were the shields, which they could hold up, and the rubber batons, and after that they had to resort to real bullets. They didn't have tear gas, or pepper gas, they didn't have water cannon. So it was a little bit of a different situation. And I think there was a reluctance on the part of the authorities to use force and violence, and particularly, there was a great degree of discipline that was organized and maintained by the opposition, by Saakashvili, Burjanadze, with the demonstrations, so that they themselves were never violent. They did borrow from the ideas of Otpor, the student resistance movement to Mr. Milosevic, there were training sessions that had been held, not under our auspices, but on their own, in which they learned how to remove provocateurs from the crowd, rowdy elements from the crowd, drunks and so forth, they'd just be picked up in a car and taken to the outskirts of town and dropped off. And it was made clear there'd be no overturning of police cars and burning of cars and busses, no breaking of windows and so on. So the authorities, even those who might have wanted to use force and violence, lacked a provocation to do so. I and others in the embassy did spend a good deal of time going around and talking, not just to the leaders of the opposition, and other people of the opposition movement, and urging them to maintain that kind of discipline, but also to the people responsible for the power elements in the Georgian government. The State Minister, the President himself, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Defense, the General in charge of the internal troops, and so on, just to pass on what we believed to be true on the part of the opposition, that they were going to avoid violence, and to urge them to avoid

violence as well. And if force had to be used, it should be commensurate force. Commensurate with the degree of force that was being used by the opposition. Well that worked. And I think it worked for two reasons. One was the fact that here was this loss of personal authority on the part of Mr. Shevardnadze; he realized, I think, that he just didn't have the support of the people. Second, on the fact that there were no non-lethal methods of crowd control, it was either push people back or shoot them. And third, there was no desire on the part of the power ministers to shoot their own people. And so I think that's the real reason for it.

MAN

Thanks.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Yeah.

MAN

Mr. Ambassador, my question relates to Abkhazia, which remains with open wounds, at least thirty-five thousand people dead, and three hundred fifty thousand Georgian refugees expelled from Abkhazia. As long as the Kosovo case is hanging in the air, and it is widely expected that in March they're going to unilaterally declare independence, and at the same time Russia threatens to recognize Abkhazia as a state, how real do you think is this happening, on the background of increasingly tense ethnic relations in Russia's North Skorkhozis [PH], and what do you think it will result in? Thank you.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

I'm probably one of the few people in this room who have spent a lot of time in both Kosovo and Abkhazia. And while there are some parallels, there are so many differences that it would take a long time to outline them. Russian leaders of various sorts have made ambiguous statements indicating what's good for Kosovo is good for other areas, like Abkhazia, South Ossetia. They've never gone quite so far as to repudiate official Russian policy, which is support for the territorial integrity of Georgia and its sovereignty. And so what would they do if independence is declared in Kosovo, which is a very real possibility, and that independence is recognized by serious countries? Well, I don't know. It would get into the area of prediction, and I've always been very reluctant to make predictions. I don't quite see why these events would cause the Russians to execute a 180-degree turn in their stated policy. My feeling is, and it's only a feeling, and it's a personal feeling, is that efforts would be made to increase the closeness of the relationship between the Russian Federation, and our Abkhazia, and perhaps South Ossetia, trade relations, etcetera, cultural relations, who knows what. But to not take the final step of somehow, recognizing Abkha's independence, or South Ossetian independence, or, much less any sort of adoption into Russia or something, I don't, I don't think, really, that people in South Ossetia, despite some comments to the contrary, and I'm pretty sure about the people in Abkhazia, want to be part of Russia. They state they want to be independent, well, I'm sure they do, but in the real world, sometimes you don't always get what you want. And it's taken the Kossovars a very long time to get the independence which they very clearly want. So, my own guess is, and it's only a guess, is that despite the statements which the Russians have made, and they've been somewhat ambiguous, they would not go so far as to actually recognize the independence of those two entities, and I hope that they don't, but we shall see.

WOMAN

[UNCLEAR] of Syracuse University. I have two questions. One is related to Imedi TV will be opened, but if it will not reopen until January Fifth, can we then question the results of the election in terms of pre-election campaign will not be covered by any opposition, on TV, because you know that now there are only TV companies that are somehow controlled by the government? And the second question is related to US foreign policy, because I was also involved at the time, and I remember very well the role of US Embassy and US organizations during revolution period, and I can say that, and everyone says that this was a success of US foreign policy. And can we say that what happened of November 7 is a failure of US foreign policy, because all the questions that were raised by the opposition during these demonstrations, were raised by them two, three years ago, and there were always the saying the US embassy, or US organization, or other countries, are not putting enough pressure on government to change the election legislation, and so on and so on, because all these changes were related to the legislation, and also they say when they postpone their- because the major request was to move elections back, and when the elections were postponed, also there were concerns by the opposition, because it's not good Constitution, but there was no pressure put on the government. So these are my questions.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

What a cruel question. Well, I don't have a good answer for that question, and I'm very reluctant to criticize the action or inaction of the American Embassy, or the American Authorities after I left Georgia in 2005, it would really not be appropriate for me to do that, and frankly I don't have the information which would allow me to do that. So much- and I saw some of this in Azerbaijan also, where the Azerbaijani opposition was very critical of the

United States government, because they felt we were too close to the existing government, as someone else asked about earlier. Well, our official relationships with governments around the world are with those governments. The ambassador is the president's representative to the president or the chief of state of those countries. And so, naturally, and especially in the case of friendly governments, and doubly so in the case of countries where we have strategic interest, there is a tendency to be very supportive of the government. And that should not mean lessened criticism when things don't always go the right way, when human rights are violated, or when the opposition is ignored, but sometimes it does, admittedly. So having said that, I do think we, in the United States Government, do have an official policy of support for human rights, and democracy, and we dislike it when those rights are violated, and when the process of democracy is set back. And we have seen a certain setback in Georgia, I think it can be overcome, but it was a setback, and American officials were critical of it. The question was a subtle one, and it was like, should we have been doing something more along those lines in the last couple years? I prefer not to answer that question, not that I want to avoid it, but I don't have the information which would allow me to answer it. Now a lot depends also on the cohesion and the objectivity of the opposition. I remember when I went down to Kosovo for the first time in 1996, before I called on the Serbian sort of, governor down there, I called on the head of one of the leading Kosovo Albanian human rights organizations, and I said, tell me about the situation. And he gave me a list of alleged violations of human rights of the Kossovar Albanians in the last year, like three hundred specific violations, with names and places and so on, and I read down the list, and I said, well, what does this mean, traffic? And they said, well, he went through a red light. And I said, well, I don't know if he went through a red light or didn't go through a red light, it might have been harassment, but on the other hand he might have just gone through a red light. So we whittled this list down a little bit, and we got it down to I don't know, a

hundred, or a hundred and fifty or something like that, in other words, about half. And I then took that list to the Governor, and I said what do you do about the allegations of violation of the rights of the Kossovar Albanians? And he said, there are no such violations. That's a long way from three hundred or something. And I said I believe there have been violations, there are violations in every country, including in the United States. What do you mean there have been none? And he said, none have been brought to my attention. And I said, do you have a citizens review board? Do you have something like we set up in Los Angeles, after the Los Angeles riots? When a Secretary of State, in fact former Secretary of State headed the commission? And he said, no, no, we don't need anything like that, if anyone has a violation, they can bring it to me. And I said how many people have come to you since you've been governor, you've been governor for two years? How long, how- how many people have come to you in those two years? And he said none, because there haven't been any violations of human rights. So, you know, you get into that kind of a conundrum with the authorities and the opposition, and, ambassadors have got to try and weave their way through that thicket. We generally are pretty good at it, I'm not saying we're perfect, I'm not saying we don't pull our punches from time to time, but I am saying that sometimes we land a really good punch. And I'm sure Kenny has too. I personally have gotten people out of jail, I've kept people from being arrested, hopefully I've done some good in that regard, but you do have to pick your fights, and you have to be sure of what you're doing, and you have to be sure that whatever it is you're doing in that regard is not going to have a backlash and cause more difficulty than before you started, so it is kind of an art form, and we do try our best, and it is US policy to do that. So when we fail, you should let us know. Write to the State Department, write to your Congressman, or whatever, and that will have some result. I can assure you.

WOMAN

We're coming up on the four minute mark, and I see all of a sudden the line has gotten long at the microphone.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

I'll be around all afternoon too, so, people can ask privately.

WOMAN

Would you be willing to take a-

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Oh sure.

WOMAN

In other words, we don't have a lot of time for lunch, so I'm wondering if people could ask their questions, would you take three questions all together?

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Yeah, sure.

WOMAN

Okay, so maybe we could do it that way.

STEVEN JONES

Steven Jones, Mount Holyoke College, good to see you again, Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

We have an elaborate dance, you and I.

STEVEN JONES

I'm going to keep my question pretty short, and as a political scientist it's a pretty abstract question, as they often are. You may know that one of the demands of the opposition was to put themselves out of a job if they actually win, Ledon Gadgiladze [PH] was saying, as soon as I become President, I am going to create a parliamentary system and then leave the job. Do you think that the system itself, the presidential system, there's a lot of argument in the field about the differences, and the impact, of parliamentary systems and presidential systems, on developing countries like Georgia that are beginning the process of democracy. And one of the points very often made, is that the presidential system tends to polarize, and create stalemate between very often, not in Georgia's case, but very often between the legislature and the executive power. Do you see the presidential system itself, and the way that it operates in Georgia, as part of the problem?

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

Not intrinsically. Tsakas really has a very strong personality, ego as big as a house, and he has brought a huge dimension to the presidency which probably others would not bring to it. And so you just have to keep that in mind. My first tour of duty was in Norway, and in Norway, it's a monarchy, technically, there's a king, believe it or not, but they also practiced for years, what was known as minority government, in which the Labor Party, being the largest single party, getting about thirty-two, thirty-three percent of the vote, would actually

become the government, would rule, and the other majority opposition would let them do that. Because otherwise, they would have to form a fragile coalition. So that worked. In Serbia there was presidency run amuck. But even there, Slobodan Milosevic, when I went there in 1996, was not the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, he was the President of Serbia, and only later did he decide, because he wanted to, no other reason, he decided he would leave the office of President of Serbia, and would become President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. What did that mean to either the office of the President of Serbia, or the Presidency of the Federal Republic? Nothing whatsoever. Power followed him like a little cloud right over his head, it depended on his personality. In Bulgaria, there was a very strong President, and a very strong Prime Minister, and it caused difficulties. They had problems in that regard. But it functioned, it worked. So I've seen all these different methods of doing it, and I don't know that any one is any more perfect than the other, but I have seen the importance of personality, when it's brought into a position of power, and of public support for that personality. Without the public support, you're not going to really get very far. If you have a strong personality, and you have public support, you can almost go too far. So there are problems in all of these. That's a very fuzzy answer to your question, but after all these years of observing other governments, and even our own government, that's the way I see it.

WOMAN

Hi. My name's Ann Shiff. [PH] I have another one of these general questions addressing your overall political experience.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

[LAUGHS] We may never get lunch.

WOMAN

You spoke a fair amount about the concept of a loyal opposition, and the need for such a group in Georgia. Now, people power revolutions get criticized as being populist, but not democratic. And this is something we've seen in the Philippines, where there was [UNCLEAR] for social change there. To what extent do you think today's problems in Georgia are a logical and perhaps inevitable follow-on to having had a revolution in 2003, and when do you think people power revolutions are desirable as a tool for social change?

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

I can't answer the last question, I'm just not going to try and answer it. And the first part of the question, it was unfortunate, I think, when the opposition, which was on the streets, in Tbilisi, took power, and began to function as a government, that the opposition which remained off of the streets, and there were some significant parties. The labor party never joined the opposition in demonstrating, for example, they gave carte blanche to their followers to do what they wanted to, but they never appeared on the [UNCLEAR] and they never spoke publicly, they never really supported the Rose Revolution in a sense. And others as well. And yet they just sort of fell apart for awhile, because of the power of the Rose Revolution which occurred, it was people power in a sense, and it sort of overwhelmed them, I think, psychologically, and they all went in to kind of a funk for quite awhile. And it was difficult for us in the embassy, while we wanted to, of course, be supportive of the new government, and to develop our relations with it, we did try to remain in touch with the opposition, and we found it difficult, because they themselves were in such a state of disarray, and in a way, maybe these events will help them to become more cohesive, to hone their position, so that they say something to the people, that there are some differences which

they can explore in the election process, and that would be good for democracy, I would think, and even if it is an imperfect process at this time, because of the urgent nature of what is happening, that it might help in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. That's my hope, at any rate. But the last part of your question is a very useful and intriguing one, but it would take a long time to answer that, I'm not going to try to do it. Thank you. That's an easy way to say I don't have the foggiest idea.

WOMAN

If you can ask a very short question.

WOMAN

Yes. Along the lines of [UNCLEAR] question about US foreign policy, I think one of the major contributors to things having developed so unfortunately is the fact that USAID has cut its support drastically, to the development of NGO's, civil society, and media programs, back in 2004. Along, along the fact that there is MCC now, and we are very thankful for it, because it develops infrastructure, do you think there's a chance for the United States to pay attention, as in the past, to the support of development of media, and NGO's back in Georgia?

AMBASSADOR RICHARD MILES

It's a good question, and kind of a painful answer, because the truth is, as you indicated, we were all told by quite high-level officials in Washington, that when Georgia and the other countries were able to participate in the Millennium Challenge Program, that this would not result in a reduction of the US assistance money. But in fact it did result in some reduction of that money, and therefore some programs had to be trimmed. It was also and entirely

unrelated to that, true that the public affairs programs, including some support for the media, were cut, not just in Georgia, but really all over the new independent states, and the reason is because of the need for these programs in the Muslim world. And again, there's only so much money to go around, and the people that set up the budgets have to find that money somewhere within existing budgets, and so they did, and the result was a cutback in some exchange programs, and a cutback in some of the media programs, and was very unfortunate, and people who were in the Embassy at that time, and I personally, and other ambassadors, complained to Washington about that, but Washington was driven by budget realities, and needs, quite obviously, in the Arab world, we all appreciate that. So the result was an unhappy compromise which resulted in the loss of some budget money in the new independent states for exactly those purposes that you outlined. It may be that the difficulties in Georgia will force some readjustment in favor of those programs in Georgia, I would certainly hope so, but I'm not that involved with present Government affairs, and so I don't know for a fact. The logic would be that it would have that effect.

WOMAN

Well, please join me in thanking Ambassador Miles. You now all have fifty-three minutes to get lunch. For those of you who need recommendations for restaurants in the area, there is a list out, I believe at the registration table, for where you can get, if not fast food in the traditional sense of the word, fast enough food so that you can be back here on time.