

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*