

US money and personnel behind Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution"

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The interim government established in Kyrgyzstan in the aftermath of the overthrow of the regime of President Askar Akayev is largely the product of US intervention.

Akayev, once hailed by the West as one of the few "democrats" to emerge out of the wreckage of the Soviet Union, fell out of favor with Washington and is now being targeted for removal. In this, he joins the ranks of a long list of former US assets, including such figures as Manuel Noriega, Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein—and, within the former territories of the Soviet Union, Georgia's Eduard Shevardnadze and Ukraine's Leonid Kuchma.

Using methods similar to those that proved successful in Georgia's "Rose Revolution," and most recently Ukraine's "Orange Revolution," in an effort to install a regime more amenable to its interests the Bush administration provided political and financial support to rival sections of the Kyrgyz ruling elite.

In Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004, the US was able to successfully orchestrate the installation of Mikhail Saakashvili and Viktor Yushchenko, respectively. The Bush administration financed opposition movements that manipulated the legitimate discontent within sections of the population over the undemocratic character of political rule in these countries in order to place in power pro-American regimes. In both cases, the new "democratic" leaders were former cronies of the displaced rulers and representatives of dissident factions of the same corrupt and wealthy elites.

In Georgia's "Rose Revolution" and Ukraine's "Orange Revolution," power was transferred to sections of the ruling elite more inclined toward the "free market" policies of the US and more abjectly subservient to Wall Street, but no less hostile to the

political and economic interests of the working class.

A similar situation prevails in Kyrgyzstan, where the new interim prime minister, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the new head of national security, Feliks Kulov, and several key interim cabinet appointees all once held leading government posts under the Akayev regime. While many of these figures were in office, the government in Bishkek was implementing IMF policies, which today are widely believed to be one of the main sources of the deepening poverty gripping the country.

The extent of Washington's meddling in Kyrgyz affairs was documented in a February 25 article in the *Wall Street Journal*. According to the report, Washington's support for the Kyrgyz opposition is largely funneled through pro-Western nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

One of the major NGOs working with the opposition, the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society (CDCS), receives the bulk of its funding from the National Democratic Institute in Washington, which is financed by the US government.

The head of CDCS, Edil Baisalov, recently returned from Ukraine where he served as an election observer in the disputed presidential contest. Yushchenko was able to secure a victory over his rival, Viktor Yanukovich, an ally of Kuchma, with the aid of mass protests staged by organizations financed by Washington. Describing his time in Ukraine as "a very formative experience," Baisalov told the *Journal*, "I saw what the results of our work could be."

Until recently, another Kyrgyz NGO, Civil Society Against Corruption (CSAC), received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, a US-government organization with extensive ties to the AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy that is well known for its efforts to topple governments deemed unfriendly to Washington.

The head of CSAC, Tolekan Ismailova, recently translated a pamphlet on the “revolutionary” methods used to bring down governments in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine. This pamphlet was printed on a press in Kyrgyzstan owned by the US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

The same press put out several publications critical of Akayev, including the primary organ of the opposition, the newspaper “MSN.” When government authorities cut off the electricity at the publishing house just prior to the first round of parliamentary voting on February 27, the US Embassy in Bishkek had two generators delivered to the facility.

Directed by an American, Mike Stone, the printing operations recently received an infusion of funds from George Soros’s Open Society Institute (OSI). The OSI played a major role in financing opposition activities during Georgia’s US-backed “Rose Revolution.”

The connections between the Kyrgyz opposition and the US extend beyond American funding of pro-opposition NGOs and printing presses. Roza Otunbaeva, who is the head of Ata Dzhurt and one of the leading spokespeople of the anti-Akayev coalition, has extensive personal and political ties with the US, and the West in general.

From 1991 to 1994, she served as Kyrgyz ambassador to the US and Canada, and in 1997 she served as Kyrgyz ambassador to the United Kingdom. As deputy special representative of the UN secretary general on the Georgian-Abkhazian border conflict, she lived in Georgia from 2002 until September 2004. Otunbaeva was working for the UN in Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital, at the height of the “Rose Revolution.” She routinely describes events in that country as a model for change in Kyrgyzstan.

Initially elected to office by the Supreme Soviet of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1990, Akayev, a physicist and the former president of the Academy of Sciences in Kyrgyzstan, was touted as a liberal leader with few political connections to the country’s communist past. This was despite the fact that he owed his political ascendancy to support from within the old Soviet elite. Confirmed by popular vote in 1991, Akayev’s backing from the West had much more to do with his support for the breakup of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism than it did with any genuine allegiance to democratic principles on his part.

Similarly, his recent transformation into a pariah had little to do with the increasingly autocratic character of his rule over the last several years, which pales in comparison to the brutal methods used by such key US allies as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Rather, US disfavor stemmed largely from his government’s efforts to cultivate and deepen its political and economic ties with Russia, as well as China.



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