

# The Color Revolutions

Common elements in the so-called color revolutions include a symbolic color or image, as recommended in Gene Sharp's manuals, and a one- or two-word slogan. Michael McFaul (*Advancing Democracy Abroad*) lists among "factors for success" a united opposition movement; timing around an election, with the use of exit polls and foreign observers as a basis for claiming vote fraud; media ability to publicize the vote fraud claims; and demonstrations against vote fraud.

Funding by U.S. Project Democracy agencies (National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and the USAID) and George Soros's Open Society Institute is typically targeted to enhance those factors. McFaul and others have identified several of these elements in the 1986 People Power overthrow of President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, during which NED and NDI funds were aimed at exposing vote fraud; the demonstrators wore yellow ribbons, leading some to call it the first color revolution—the Yellow Revolution.

The color revolutions in Eastern Europe and Eurasia also featured the special role of Sharp's trainees.

**Serbia, October 2000—Bulldozer Revolution.** Regime-change: President Slobodan Milosevic replaced by Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) leader Vojislav Kostunica. Timing: After disputed election. Key group: Otpor! ("Resistance!"). Symbol: Clenched-fist logo. Funding and advice: Up to \$40 million in foreign support for Otpor! from

sources including the NED and its subsidiaries, the British Foreign Office's Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), and Soros's OSI. Freedom House paid for printing Sharp's books; the NED and NDI worked to unify the DOS behind Kostunica, and the IRI sponsored training of Otpor! cadre by Sharp's associate Col. Robert Helvey.

**Georgia, November 2003 — Rose Revolution.** Regime-change: President Eduard Shevardnadze replaced by Mikhail Saakashvili. Timing: After disputed election. Key group: Kmara! ("Enough!"). Symbol: Red rose. Funding and advice: NED and USAID funding went to "civil society" NGOs and exit polling, while the outstanding intervention was the OSI's sponsorship of travel by Serbian Otpor! activists to train young Georgians.

**Ukraine, December 2004—Orange Revolution.** Regime-change: President-elect Victor Yanukovich forced out in favor of Victor Yushchenko. Timing: After disputed election. Key group: Pora! ("High Time!"). Symbol: The color orange. Funding and advice: Similar to Georgia, including training of youth activists by guests from Otpor! and Kmara! The post-Orange Revolution leadership disintegrated in multiple disputes and Yanukovich was elected President in 2010.

**Kyrgyzstan, March 2005—Tulip Revolution.** Regime-change: President Askar Akayev was ousted, but a new leadership failed to consolidate, and the country has experienced clan warfare and several leadership changes since. Timing: After disputed election. Symbol: Pink tulip. Funding and advice: Similar to above, with on-the-scene consultations from Georgian NGO activists.