



**Flower and
fruit
revolutions
are bringing
political
changes
in post-
Communist
states.
Are more
to follow?**

By Ajay Goyal



Almost 15 months ago, a reporter from Moscow-based newspaper Kommersant made a suggestion to Mikhail Saakashvili after he had taken power through street demonstrations in Tbilisi. "This could be a Rose revolution," the reporter said, referring to the highly controlled crowds carrying roses in protest against a purportedly rigged parliamentary election in Georgia in November 2003. Saakashvili liked the tag, and without any credit to the Russian source, the term, "Rose Revolution", became the brand name for the change of power in Georgia that year.

Eduard Shevardnadze - then President of Georgia, the Soviet despot-turned-post-Perestroika reformer in Tbilisi - had been on friendly terms with Washington, and on unfriendly terms with Moscow. In theory, the Kremlin could have seeded a revolution against him, but Russia is more afraid of grass-roots democracy than it is of Chechen terrorists, and therefore could not predict what it could unleash against itself in the process. On the other hand, the United States, which is largely credited with funding Saakashvili's Rose Revolution, relies neither on despots nor on homegrown democrats. It trusts only those who are on the take from it; the more they take, the more they are trusted to stay in Washington's pay. Under the U.S. funding terms, there are no stock options for local stakeholders. The

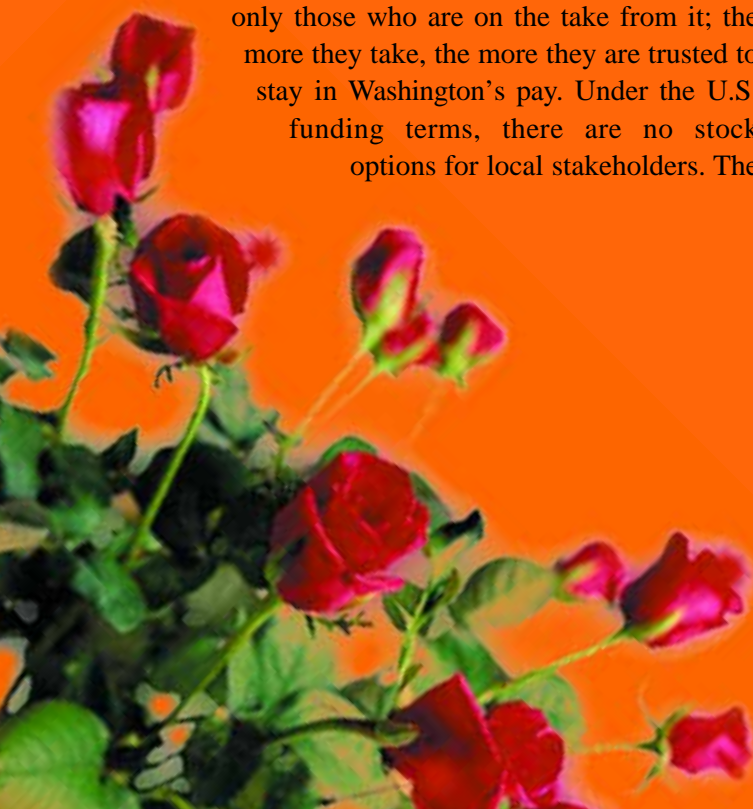
"The local and foreign financiers of Yushenko's Orange Revolution must, therefore, be expecting to be paid back for their efforts with the minerals and metals of Eastern Ukraine. Ask JP Morgan to do the valuation, and they will advise that there aren't enough oranges and beets in the entire world to fund an equity swap with the coal, iron-ore and steel of Dnipropetrovsk and Donbass."

new democracies are run as corporate colonies, with heavy repayments due quickly.

U.S.-backed floral revolutions started in Serbia, spread eastward

After direct warfare in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Lebanon was replaced with covert putsch making between 1960 and 1990, the United States has returned to its old techniques - with a success in Serbia three years ago. That was when the CIA's well-organized crowds refused to budge from downtown Belgrade until their target, President Slobodan Milosevic, was ousted from office. Compared to the pot-and-pan banging of the Santiago crowds rented to topple Chilean President Salvador Allende 30 years earlier, the Serbian rockers and car drivers who honked their rulers out of office, were relatively more effective.

And, not too many people in the Kremlin at the time were sorry to see Milosevic go to the Hague detention facility as most believed that the United States had bought itself fresh problems on the Balkans. The Serbs are not as good at taking U.S. orders as Georgians. For a start, they are not so poor, and so the U.S. cost of buying their loyalty is several times higher. The Georgian revolution could



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be produced out of fully imported rosewood from the nurseries of McLean, Virginia. But in Serbia the imports have failed to take root, and are dying off.

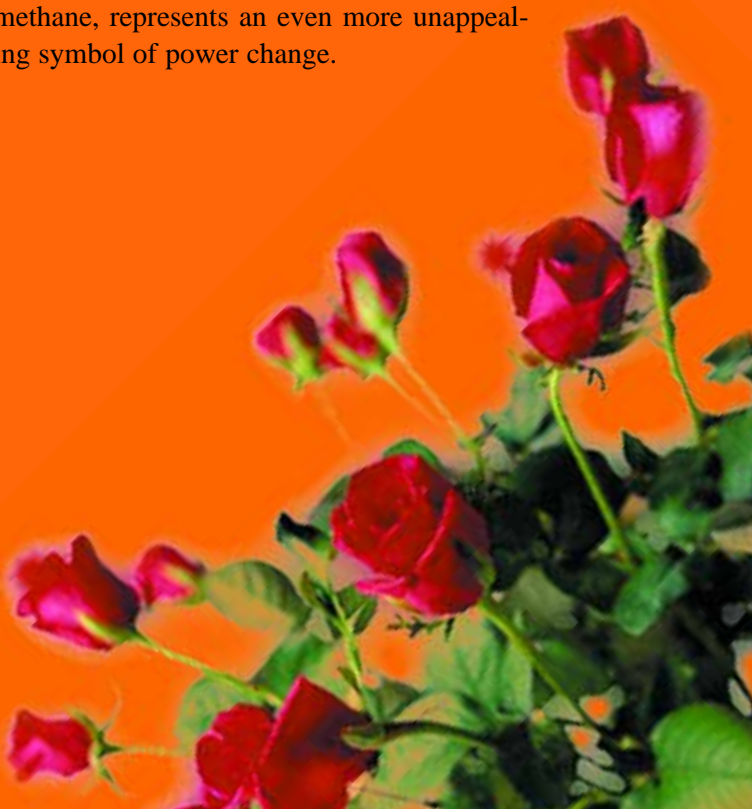
Now comes the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine. There is plentiful evidence that through democracy, union, media and other fronts - read any John Le Carre novel if you lack the imagination to spot how they work - the United States and its traditional European allies have thrown their weight behind Viktor Yushenko, the former banker whose alleged poisoning has given him a Frankenstein appearance. Arm in arm with the bandit queen of Ukraine, Yulia Timoshenko, Yushenko took control of downtown Kiev with thousands of mostly young people bedecked in orange scarves, the new trademark color. The 'demonstrators' were nightly bussed into the city center for three weeks prior to the first presidential election runoff on November 22.

The Kremlin misled into supporting Yanukovich

Yushenko, like Sakashvili, and especially with Timoshenko by his side, is far more presentable as a mascot for change than Viktor Yanukovich, the twice convicted prime minister of Ukraine, whom outgoing President Leonid Kuchma thought he could make his heir - much as Boris Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin in 1999.

At Kuchma's prompting, and having no alternative, the Kremlin threw its weight behind Yanukovich. With an ambassador like Viktor Chernomyrdin, was it any surprise that Putin found himself locked into supporting men of the only qualities, comparable in unsavoriness and incompetence that Chernomyrdin respects? Instead of a candidate with impeccable reputation nationwide, Putin found himself supporting a highly questionable figure, whose power is based on the gangster clans of Eastern Ukraine, which houses the nation's depots of mineral riches. Who better than Chernomyrdin, the original Gazprom 'thief,' sorry, chief, to appreciate how the sub-soil riches spawn gangsterism, racketeering and extortion.

On the other hand, Western Ukraine, the support base of Yushenko, is rich in beetroot, but the purple beet does not make a good mascot. Imagine a CNN anchor leading with the top story of the day, "The beetroot revolution took the color purple to the steps of the Supreme Rada today." No rallying point there for youngsters who one ex-communist Canadian journalist reports as having sworn off sex and alcohol for the month in tents that just happened to be left over from a demonstration of two years ago. Therefore, it goes without saying that the black coal of the East, with its lethal partner methane, represents an even more unappealing symbol of power change.



But if coal and minerals are Ukraine's real, only source of wealth, is it not obvious that the financing for all the oranges that have been showered on Kiev cannot be repaid in beetroot? The local and foreign financiers of Yushchenko's Orange Revolution must, therefore, be expecting to be paid back for their efforts with the minerals and metals of Eastern Ukraine. Ask JP Morgan to do the valuation, and they will advise that there are not enough oranges and beets in the entire world to fund an equity swap with the coal, iron-ore and steel of Dnipropetrovsk and Donbass. Those who live there understand, therefore, that what is intended is a steal, not a swap. What is more, the East is dependent on Russian energy. Its coalminers, steel and pipe makers want to trade their products duty-free across the border, speaking Russian as they go. Their memories are not so foggy to have forgotten that the last invasion of

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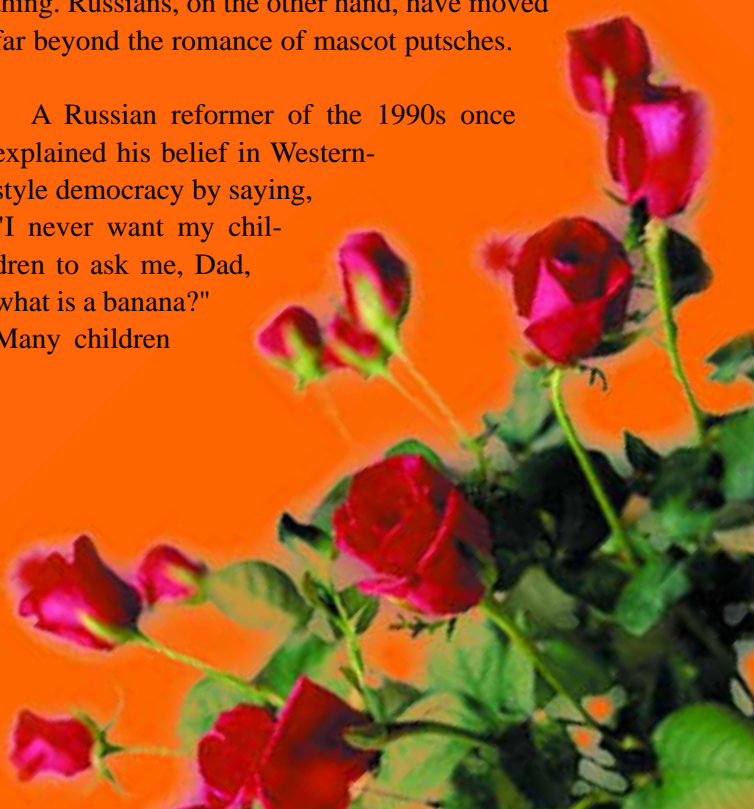
Ukrainian-speakers, who wanted their wealth without paying for it, came riding in on board Adolph Hitler's Panzers.

And if thug rule is the most accurate characterization of the clans supporting Yanukovich, and propping up Kuchma, Putin should understand by now why he was so badly advised, and why the envoys he dispatched had performed so badly. Could Putin have gotten anything but money and bad advice from Oleg Deripaska, the Ukrainian turned Russian oligarch who depends on Eastern Ukrainian alumina; or Russian steel oligarchs, Alexei Mordashov and Alexander Abramov, who wanted control of Krivorozhstal, Ukraine's largest steel mill in the East?

Floral revolutions thrive on political and democratic backwardness

Observers have always noted that, in the calendar of economic and democratic development, Kiev is ten years behind Moscow, and Minsk further back by twenty years. It should be no surprise, therefore, that most Ukrainians really believe that a flora and fruit revolution - carried out by stooges of the United States and the European Union - is a good thing. Russians, on the other hand, have moved far beyond the romance of mascot putsches.

A Russian reformer of the 1990s once explained his belief in Western-style democracy by saying, "I never want my children to ask me, Dad, what is a banana?" Many children



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in the Soviet Union had seen bananas only in textbooks. The 1991 putsch in Moscow changed that when all kinds of exotic fruits appeared on Russian streets. Naive Russians, then, did not know that their precious metals, oil and gas, nickel, copper, aluminum, timber and other natural resources were being sold at throwaway prices for the importation of kiwis and passion fruits - Russia was being robbed for the love of bananas and other exotic fruits. But it took time before the 1998 economic meltdown brought home the reality that the system of governance imported by the fruit reformers of Yeltsin administration had bankrupted the country. Five years have gone by since a new revolution started in Russia to rectify that wrong. Russians have understood that it is time to stop the grand larceny, and return some of the national wealth back to the people.

Perhaps, Putin thought he could sell the same idea to Kiev. He should be more worried about an apple, papaya or mango revolution in Moscow, instead. The West-orchestrated fruit and

flower revolutions taking place on Russia's borders today might be in Moscow tomorrow. What Putin should have recognized, before he started, was that there was no one he could trust to convey the message to the Ukrainian voters. Putin has struggled for five years now to rid his own government of people on retainer to the oligarchs, and has yet to complete that job.

Putin needs to watch out for a possible 'floral revolution' in 2008

Putin should be watching out, lest he slips on banana peels left over and rotting from the last decade by his predecessors in the Kremlin and the Russian White House. Or perhaps for the possibility that some place west of Moscow, some exotic fruit cocktail is being mixed for Russia, 2008.

It looks inevitable now that the Ukraine should go through its own banana revolution first. The Yushenko-Timoshenko alliance is no different from Russia's fruit reformers of the 1990s. The alliance will try to sell most of Ukraine's wealth to Western corporations so that west Ukrainians can have the orange juice they think right now they badly want. Whether Ukraine ends up in an orange split - between the East and West in the process - is a different matter. And Russia has the time, gas and the electricity, to wait.

Putin should bid his time, if he is genuinely committed to democratizing Russia and its resource wealth, and liberating it from oligarchs trying to sell it to the West. Imported exotic flowers and fruits will not last long in the Ukrainian harsh climate. The Kremlin backed rotten tomatoes and poisonous mushrooms when it should have been pickling cucumbers, aiming for elections in the Ukraine, four years from now. Cold necessity will market the cucumber more effectively, when the imported roses, oranges and bananas will have lost their tastes.



Winter hotspots for skaters and skiers in and around Moscow

By Ani Shemesh

Wealthy Russians usually take their families out of the country to expensive, and at times, exotic recreational winter resorts in foreign countries that have long become default destinations among rich people as venues for celebrating Christmas and New Year festivities.

These include popular and exclusive winter resorts in the Austrian, French and Swiss Alps, where the so-called 'new Russians' have won a reputation for their legendary tipping habits and burning thousands of euros with the ease of lottery winners. It is largely rumored that the size of their generous tips and inexplicable love for extravagance have long surpassed those of petrol-dollar-padded Arab sheiks, making 'Russia's nouveaux riches' the new darlings of hotels and restaurants' staff in those facilities.

However, other winter-sports-loving Russians with less cash to burn, and who for one reason or the other will not be able to make it this year to expensive and exotic winter resorts in other countries, will readily find a good consolation in winter sporting facilities in and around Moscow. It is true that the quality and standard of services in most of these homegrown facilities are far below those available in similar facilities across the globe. But there are some - especially the newly built and/or renovated ones that cater for the society's upper class - which offer services that are commensurate with, or at times, even supersede, those in other countries with a longer history of commercial winter sporting and other recreational activities.

1. Facility: Sorochany

Location: Kurovo Village, Dmitrovsky District, Moscow Oblast

How to reach there: By bus or taxi to 46th kilometer from the MKAD along Dmitrovskoye Shosse.

Contact: Telephone - 095-788-85-44.

Working hours - 10:00-02:00.

Profile and services

Sorochany - named after Leonid Sorochan, who died in a tragic car accident in 2002 - has one of the longest skiing paths in and around Moscow, whose rich greenery landscape is second to none in the region. It offers 10 rolling slopes, some of which are about 850 meters long, to both professionals and amateurs. There are Italian and Austrian-made elevators, Doppelmayr and Leitner, to take people onto skiing platforms. Other services include two cafes, Panorama and Pechki-Lavochki, and two restaurants, Viradz and Izbushka and a service, called Ski Service, for repairing ski equipment and utilities and a free-of-charge-parking slot for 2,000 vehicles. Services of instructors and trainers are

also available. Outfits, skating and ski equipment are available on rent at varying tariffs.

Lifting charges: weekdays - 30 rubles (grown-up) and 15 rubles (children) for one elevation during weekdays and 70 rubles (grown-up) and 35 rubles (children) during weekends and public holidays. Or, 250 rubles for 10 elevations (grown up) and 125 rubles (children) during weekdays, and 600 rubles and 300 rubles, respectively, during weekends and public holidays.



2. Volen

Location: Dedenovo Settlement in Moscow Oblast.

How to reach there: Access by cars, trains from Savyolovsky train station from Savyolovsky metro station (about 1.15 hour), or special buses with registration numbers H395MH and M059HC from Altufyevo metro station (about 1 hour). Bus fare - 80 rubles.

Contact: Telephone - 095-993-95-02

Working hours: Monday - from 18:00-24:00, Tuesdays-Thursday - 10:00-24:00, Fridays - 10:00-02:00, Saturdays - 10:00-01:00 and Sundays - 10:00-23:00

Entrance fees: weekdays - free, weekends/holidays: 100 rubles for cars, 200 rubles for vehicles with carriage or microbus and 300 rubles for buses.

Profile and services

The facility has 13 skiing paths, with seven lifts for adults and three specially adapted lifts to take children to the peak of the jumping platforms. Rental services are available for those without personal skiing outfits at varying costs.



3. Leonid Tygachyov's Ski Club

Location: Shukolov Village.

How to reach there: By private, public transport, about 40 kilometers from Moscow along Dmitrovskoye Shosse.

Contact: 095-980-79-79.

Working hours: Mondays to Thursdays - 10:00-24:00, Fridays - 10:00-02:00, Saturdays - 09:00-02:00 and Sundays - 09:00-01:00.

Ski-pass fares: weekdays - 200 rubles for one hour, 300 rubles for 2 hours, 400 rubles for 3

hours and 750 rubles for a whole day; lifting charges: weekdays - 10 elevations for 300 rubles, 20 for 500 rubles, 30 for 600 rubles and 800 rubles for a whole day.

Profile and services

The facility is named after Leonid Tygachyov, the legendary Russian champion in several winter sports and renowned trainer who currently heads the nation's Olympic Committee. The facility's Shukulov Sport Park has seven well-lit skiing paths of varying degrees of difficulties. A novelty in the facility is the Snowboard Park with steep slopes for training amateurs and professionals specializing in extreme forms of skiing. Other services include rental, sports shop and a restaurant offering Russian, European and Oriental cuisine.

4. Yakhroma

Location: Stepanovo Village.

How to reach there: By bus or taxi to 46th kilometer from the MKAD along Dmitrovskoye Shosse.

Contact: Telephone - 095-792-8622, 799-3890.

Working hours - 10:00-02:00.

Profile and services

This facility boasts nice rolling slopes such as the Dlinnaya, Goy-goy, Zigzag and Welcome to Finland routes. However, two other routes stand apart. These are the so-called Kamikadze Route where skiers and snowboarders literally 'fly' at neck-breaking speeds within few inches of one another, and the "Extremal Route." Flying down along these routes at a maximum speed is enough to pump so much adrenaline as to choke any cardiovascular system, but not for professionals, to whom the routes mean having fun at full volume, as the Russian names of the paths entail. Rental services are available for those without personal skiing outfits.

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5. Facility: Kant Ski Base

Location: Elektrolitny Proezd, 7B.

How to reach there: Five minutes' walk from Nagornaya metro station toward the direction of the Moscow Alps.

Contact: Telephone - 095-317-61-01.

Working hours - 9:00-24:00.

Profile and services

This is one of the largest skiing centers in Moscow. There are four rolling slopes of different degrees of difficulties and lengths varying between 200 meters and 400 meters with fluctuations of about 55 meters between the lowest and the highest spots on the routes. Seven to 11 elevators lift people to the starting platforms for the rundowns, and modern snow-preserving technological gadgets have been installed to keep snow

in the required conditions, even when prevailing temperatures are far above zero. Good lightening allows people to continue sporting activities - skiing and sliding down the rolling hills - till midnight. Services are affordable - an hour of ice skating during weekends costs 80 rubles in the mornings and 120 rubles in the evenings and 60 rubles and 100 rubles, respectively, on weekdays. To use the lift to climb onto the platforms for downward runs costs between 100-120 rubles per hour for grownups and 50-60 rubles for children. There are rental services for those without sporting outfits at varying costs.



6. Krylatskiye Hills

Location: Ulitsa Krylatskiye Kholmy.

How to reach there: Take metro to the Krylatskaya or Molodyozhnaya metro stations, or public transport from Sokol and Oktyabryaskoye Polye metro stations and disembark at the Krylatsky Most bus stop.

Contact: 095-149-78-60.

Working hours: 9:00-22:30 (weekdays) and 24:00 (on weekends).

Profile and services

This is one of Muscovites' most popular skiing and skating facilities within the city limits. Ski paths are generally shorter and less steep than those located outside the city. The lengths of the paths vary from 150 meters to 300 meters, with fluctuations in height of about 40-60 meters between the lowest and highest spots along the paths. There are five elevators, which help people to climb onto the platforms. Rental for skating and skiing equipment starts from 300 rubles per day.

7. Facility: Vorobyovy Hills

Location: A few minutes' walk from the Universitet and Vorobyovy Gory metro stations.

Profile and services:

This is the oldest skiing and skating facility in the capital. Skiing paths have lengths varying between

150 meters and 200 meters and fluctuations of about 40 meters in some places along the paths. There are four lifts, which help people to climb onto the skiing platforms. Other facilities include a restaurant, dressing room and services of professional trainers. There are no rental services, so one needs to come with his/her equipment.

8. Facility: Uskoye Ski Club

Location: Yasenovo metro station, and further by bus to Uskoye bus stop along the Sevastopolsky Prospekt.

Profile and services

Skiing paths have lengths varying from 150 meters to 200 meters with fluctuations in height between the lowest and highest spots reaching about 40 meters in some places on the paths. There are four lifts, which help people to climb

onto the skiing platforms. There are no rental services.



9. Facility: Kolomenskoye

Location: Kolomenskoye metro station.

Profile and services

Skiing paths have lengths varying from 130 meters and fluctuations between the lowest and highest spots reaching about 35-40 meters in some places on the paths. There are two lifts, which help people to climb onto the skiing platforms. Each climb costs 10 rubles. There are no rental services.

10. Facility: Zvyozdochka Base

Location: Orekhovo metro station.

Profile and services

Skiing paths have lengths varying from 150 meters and fluctuations between the lowest and highest spots reaching about 40 meters in some places on the paths. The facility has one lift, which takes people onto the skiing platforms. There are no rental services.