

Box 16.3 (Continued)

Rallying around Saakashvili's claims, Georgia's main opposition parties united to demand Shevardnadze's ouster and the rerun of the elections. In mid-November, massive anti-government demonstrations erupted in the central streets of Tbilisi, and they soon spread to nearly all of Georgia's major cities. A youth organization called *Kamara* ("Enough!") and several prominent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) helped to organize the protests, which reached their peak on 22 November, when Shevardnadze attempted to open the new session of the parliament. Led by Saakashvili, protesters burst into the session with roses in their hands, prompting Shevardnadze to flee the building. He declared a state of emergency and attempted to mobilize military and security forces, but they refused to support the government. Recognizing the inevitable, Shevardnadze reached out to opposition leaders Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania on 23 November in a meeting arranged by then-Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov. After the meeting, Shevardnadze announced his resignation. New presidential elections were held in January 2004, in which Saakashvili won an overwhelming victory.

NGOs had played a significant role in monitoring the parliamentary elections, organizing opposition groups and protesters, and financing their activities. A former Georgian parliamentarian claimed that in the three months prior to the Rose Revolution, the Soros foundation had spent some \$42 million in support of Georgian NGOs.ⁱ Soros himself downplayed the role of his foundation in the Rose Revolution, however, saying that he was "pleased and proud of the work of the foundation in preparing Georgian society for what became a Rose Revolution," but that "the role of the foundation has been greatly exaggerated."

i. K. R. Bolton, "Russo-Georgian Conflict Originates with Soros Subversion," August 14, 2008, <http://www.rense.com/genera183/soros.htm>.