Improbable nationalists? Social democracy and national independence in Georgia 1918-1921

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Abstract:

The Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921) had the world's first ever elected social-democratic government. However, despite attempts then and later to present it as an exemplar of democratic socialism, the main tasks its leaders faced, in the context of post-imperial revolutionary chaos, were those of nation-building and consolidation. This necessarily led the state into conflict with its neighbours and national minorities, and to adopt a series of measures and compromises which both undermined the socialist aspects of the regime and fostered nationalism and even chauvinism, against the intentions and ideology of its rulers. This in turn weakened the regime, facilitating its eventual overthrow by the Red Army.

Keywords: Georgia, social democracy, Bolshevism, Zhordania

On 26 May 1918, Georgia, in Transcaucasia, declared its independence. Unlike many other 'states' which sprang up like mushrooms on the territory of the disintegrating Russian empire, only to collapse again within weeks, the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG) showed signs of viability. It survived innumerable internal and external attempts to overthrow it from 1918 until February 1921, when it finally succumbed to a massive invasion by the Red Army. Remarkably, this small, agrarian, economically underdeveloped country was led throughout this period by Marxists, social democrats aligned with the Russian Mensheviks, who had won – and retained throughout – the support of the greater part of the Georgian population. It had the first elected social-democratic government anywhere in the world. During this brief period of state independence, its social-democratic leaders made significant attempts at social, economic and democratic reform – against a background of continual conflict with their neighbours and their own national minorities,

a dislocated and declining economy, and a chaotic and often corrupt administration.

The Georgian story reverberated way beyond the Caucasus region, both at the time and afterwards. The DRG's tense relations with Soviet Russia reflected and encapsulated the split in the world socialist movement into social democrats and communists. Like Soviet Russia, but on a much more modest scale, the DRG tried to mobilise and organise support for its cause within the international labour movement. Using their wide network of contacts in the parties of the former Second International, Georgia's leaders tried to present their case to workers and activists abroad. The country became a cause célèbre for European social democracy, receiving visits in 1920 from various socialist leaders. Karl Kautsky stayed several months and sang its praises in *Georgia. A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic* (1921). He stressed the DRG's 'democratic' system, and claimed that 'in comparison with the hell which Soviet Russia represents, Georgia appeared as a paradise'.[1] The solidarity campaign did not cease with the Red Army takeover. Having escaped into exile in France, Georgia's social-democratic leaders continued to press their cause, both in the Labour and Socialist International and more widely.

In contrast, communist authors presented the DRG as internally tyrannical and externally obsequious to imperialism. Leon Trotsky's *Between Red and White* (1922), largely a polemic against Kautsky, set the tone. The DRG, Trotsky claimed, was a 'Menshevik terrorist regime', which unlike Soviet Russia 'aimed at preserving the institution of private property and the alliance with imperialism'.[2] Georgia's workers and peasants had overthrown it in a 'Soviet revolution', and the Red Army had merely provided fraternal assistance.[3] In this way, two incompatible narratives around the DRG arose and developed from the 1920s onwards. The communist narrative stressed the struggles of the local Bolsheviks, and from the 1930s became merged with hagiographies of Georgian Bolsheviks like Joseph Stalin, Lavrenti Beria and Sergo Ordzhonikidze. In contrast, the social-democratic accounts, greatly supplemented by the memoirs of the participants themselves, merged seamlessly into an émigré narrative of Georgia's national struggle for freedom and democracy against Muscovite imperialism.

These stories, however, lay largely dormant for decades, until Georgian nationalism gained political traction again as the USSR crumbled in the late 1980s. Since then, the story of those three years of independence, ending with Georgia's forcible reincorporation into the Russian fold, have become part of an officially-cultivated national mythology. In this new official version, the socialist aspects of the DRG are downplayed against the national ones.

Meanwhile, certain authors and scholars, mostly outside Georgia, have attempted to rediscover the DRG as a viable democratic socialist alternative to the horrors of Soviet rule. Eric Lee's book *The Experiment: Georgia's Forgotten Revolution* (2017) is the most recent contribution, and he spells out his political message clearly in the book's peroration: 'Look at the Georgian experiment. *That* was democratic socialism.'[4]

Although the democratic socialist ideology of the Georgian leaders played an important part in the DRG story, there were also other factors at work. The tragedy of the Georgian social democrats was that in 1918, contrary to their expectations and ideology, they found themselves leading a *national*, rather than a *social* revolution. This was not what they had intended. They had originally been the least nationalist political force in Georgia. As late as July 1918 they had still regarded themselves as an integral part of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP), a thoroughly internationalist party which was well aware of the destructive and divisive potential of nationalism. Yet at the end of May they had already taken the decisive step in breaking Georgia away not only from Russia, but also from its immediate neighbours in Transcaucasia – Armenia and Azerbaijan. This article examines how the logic of events pushed Georgia's social-democratic leadership towards a sometimes virulent nationalism, involving conflict with Georgia's neighbours and own minorities. It shows how these nation-building efforts shaped, distorted and ultimately did much to derail the democratic and social aspects of their revolution.

Before 1917 – Georgian social democracy and national consciousness

A democratically-minded national intelligentsia began to develop in Georgia from the 1860s, and from the 1890s its younger generation, like many in Russia proper, had begun to embrace Marxism on a large scale. Although Georgia had little industry and had very few proletarians, Marxism offered several things for a small oppressed nation in Georgia's position. Firstly, it was a modernising, European, ideology of progress which fitted the westward-looking orientation of the country's intellectuals. Secondly, the democratic demands of social democracy, such as full legal and political equality and civil rights for all citizens offered an attractive vision of social justice for a small nation within Imperial Russia. Thirdly, social democracy proposed a concrete programme of political action for a democratic revolution. And fourthly, its perspective of equal rights for all nationalities within a democratised Russian state offered a way around the

pitfalls of straight 'national independence'. Georgia's geographical position sandwiched between Ottoman Turkey and Russia, and the complex ethnic patchwork of Georgia and the wider Caucasus region, meant that 'independence' was not an easy option. Like the Jewish workers' Bund in the west of the Russian empire, the social democrats in Georgia saw the success of the Russian revolutionary movement as a whole as the best guarantor of their own national liberation. Unlike the Bund, though, the Georgian social democrats strongly opposed any ethnic particularism within the party, which they saw as a recipe for disaster in the Caucasian context.[5]

The social-democratic circles in Georgia of the late 1890s, led by the authoritative Noe Zhordania, linked up with RSDRP not long after its formal foundation in 1898. After 1903, when RSDRP split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, most – but not all – Georgian members took the Menshevik side. They rejected the narrow organisational model for the party proposed by Lenin, because they saw a potential for a more open and inclusive party in Georgia – the anti-colonial, national, dimension of their struggle allowed them to mobilise broader strata of the population than was possible in Russia. But they were only 'Mensheviks' in the all-Russia context. In Georgia itself, they pursued their own distinctive policies. Unlike most Russian Mensheviks, the Georgians actively involved themselves with the burgeoning peasant movement. In 1904, as one of the forerunners of the revolutionary wave which engulfed the Russian empire in 1905, peasants in the western Georgian district of Guria launched a mass uprising under the political guidance of the social democrats, and remained in control of the entire district until early 1906.[6] Georgia as a whole was an active centre of the 1905 revolution – besides the peasant risings there were strikes and assassinations, and in September that year the social democrats in Tiflis (present-day Tbilisi) organised a coordinated bombing campaign against the barracks of the Cossack troops sent to crush the revolution.[7] Despite this, in November 1905 the helpless Imperial authorities in Tiflis found themselves obliged to appeal to the social democrats for help. As the revolutionary events were reaching their climax, there was a serious threat of intercommunal pogroms, and the local administration permitted the social democrats to mobilise armed workers in to help keep the peace.[8] But as the revolution across Russia went down to defeat, an attempt at a general strike in Georgia in December 1905 was crushed, and martial law was imposed. Nonetheless, the social democrats had firmly established themselves as one of the leading political forces in Georgia. In all the elections to the newly-created State Duma (parliament), no matter how far the Tsarist authorities tried to restrict or rig the franchise, there were social democrats elected from

Georgia. Two of these deputies, Nikolay Chkheidze and Iraklii Tsereteli, were among the most influential Menshevik leaders in Petrograd in 1917.

In Georgia itself between 1905 and 1917, even though the RSDRP as a party was illegal, social democrats remained active in education, co-operatives, trade unions, journalism, and local administration. Their Duma representatives raised the profile of both Georgia and social democracy on the all-Russia level, and provided a legal, public face for social democracy which coexisted with the clandestine party organisation. Unlike many other Mensheviks in this period, the Georgian social democrats resisted the idea, then known as 'liquidationism', of dissolving their underground groups.[9] Their organisational strength allowed them to extend their influence more widely into Transcaucasia. Although social democracy remained very weak among the Muslim (largely Azeri) population while among the Armenians the nationalist Dashnaktsutiun party predominated, Tiflis was the multi-ethnic administrative centre of the whole region, and the social democrats were the only socialist current present among Georgians, Russians, Armenians and others. This greater reach put them in a very strong position, even with the massive decline in all revolutionary activity in the post-1905 years of reaction.

The experience of World War One on the Russo-Turkish front was different from that of Russia's western front. Russia's southern armies were quite successful, and most of the fighting took place on territory seized early on from the Ottomans. At the same time, following the large-scale Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1915, few people doubted what a successful Ottoman invasion would look like, at least, for the non-Muslim peoples in Transcaucasia. This very much shaped the local socialists' perspectives on the war – an 'internationalist' abdication from the war may have made sense to some Russian Marxists looking across their western front to Germany, but on the southern front – for Georgians and particularly for Armenians – maintaining the front against the Turks pending a peace agreement was literally a matter of life and death.

Revolution breaks out

When the news of the fall of the autocracy reached the Caucasus in early March 1917, there was little doubt that the RSDRP would emerge as the dominant party, at least in Georgia. Noe Zhordania – then living in hiding in Tiflis – was summoned to the palace of the Vice-regent of the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolaevich, to be told that the Grand Duke was relinquishing his powers and was confident that the social democrats would be

able to establish the necessary order.[10] The end of tsarism, however, produced an explosion of all sorts of political and social activity across the Caucasus. In Georgia, as elsewhere on the periphery of the empire, both social and national claims were advanced, sometimes simultaneously. Nationalistically-minded Georgians gravitated to the Georgian Party of Socialist-Federalists and the newly-formed National Democratic Party. But these were minority parties. The dominance of the RSDRP ensured that developments in Georgia were initially broadly in step with the all-Russia movement.

The all-Russia Provisional Government created a Transcaucasus Committee (OZAKOM), with local representatives, to replace the Tsarist vice-regency, while a network of soviets quickly formed across Georgia and other centres in Transcaucasia. The most important was the Tiflis Workers' Soviet, founded in early March on the initiative of the Bolshevik Filipp Makharadze, but dominated throughout by Menshevik-oriented social democrats and chaired by Noe Zhordania.[11] The soldiers garrisoned in Tiflis were organised in a separate soviet, dominated at first by the (all-Russia) Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs), but the two soviets organised a common presidium, again chaired by Zhordania. Although the Tiflis Soviet did not formally seek to usurp OZAKOM's authority, it rapidly proved itself to be the most powerful organisation on the ground. The ruthlessness with which the dominant social democrats exercised their power locally was recalled by Zhordania later in his memoirs.

> In the summer of 1917, there began to be mass robberies and other serious crimes. In response, the [Soviet] Executive Committee instituted courts-martial, and those found guilty were shot. From this time on the power of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies was in fact confirmed, and all the highest institutions, for example OZAKOM, the city authorities and so on would turn to the Soviet to carry out various decisions. There were occasions where these decisions were not carried out, because we disagreed with them.[12]

The Tiflis soviet organisation remained Zhordania's main power base throughout 1917 and for the first part of 1918, from which he guided the work of his comrades in state and other institutions, ensuring that his party dominated Georgian political life.[13]

The Bolshevik faction was so weak in Georgia that for the first two months after the fall of the Tsar, it attempted to work in common RSDRP organisations with the Menshevik-oriented majority, until political divergences made this impossible to continue.[14] The relative strength of the two

factions was reflected in the elections to the Tiflis City Duma at the end of July 1917, where they stood on separate lists: the (Menshevik) social democrats gained 42 per cent of the vote, compared to just under 5.5 per cent for the Bolsheviks.[15] Bolshevik support was stronger among ethnic Russians and certain other national minorities, and in the course of 1917 it grew particularly significantly among the soldiers of the Caucasus army.

At this stage, between February and October 1917, the Georgian social democrats' main political horizons were the Russian empire as a whole, rather than Transcaucasia or just Georgia. They envisaged national autonomy for Georgia within a democratic, parliamentary Russian republic, but the essential precondition for this was the transformation of Russia itself. The parties which oriented their politics to Georgia alone, such as the National Democrats and the Socialist-Federalists, remained much less influential. Vladimir Voytinsky, a Russian Menshevik propagandist for Georgian social democracy, could later claim, without too much exaggeration, that:

> In 1917 Georgia was perhaps the only peripheral country where separatist tendencies were unknown. Although imbued with the national spirit, its people remained not only fundamentally loyal to the Russian central authorities, but were also prepared to make the greatest sacrifices for the cause of the Russian revolution.[16]

In the first months of the revolution, the Mensheviks were the dominant force in both all-Russia and Georgian soviet politics. On the question of the war, they generally agreed that the front had to be held until a democratic peace could be secured. They looked forward to the election of an all-Russia Constituent Assembly, which alone would have the right to determine the future shape of the Russian empire. Moreover, Mensheviks from Georgia, notably Nikolay Chkheidze and Iraklii Tsereteli were playing leading political roles in the Petrograd Soviet. From May 1917, Tsereteli also served as a minister in the Provisional Government, although at this stage his comrades in Tiflis disapproved of socialists joining coalitions with bourgeois parties.[17]

This relative harmony was, however, short-lived. In the course of 1917, a growing gulf developed between the well-organised and well-entrenched Georgian social democrats and their rapidly disintegrating comrades in Russia. As the political chaos in Petrograd worsened in early autumn 1917, the ineptitude and helplessness of the central Menshevik leadership became obvious to Zhordania, and he began to take the view that 'the only way to save us is by strengthening local power'.[18] The implications of this would only gradually become clear.

Since March 1917, the new authorities at all levels, not least in Georgia, had been fully occupied trying to deal with the ever-worsening immediate problems they faced. Bigger decisions – in particular, land reform – had been put off until an all-Russia Constituent Assembly had been elected and convened, on the grounds that only such a body would have the authority and resources to resolve such questions. The Caucasus Regional Congress of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies in May 1917, for example, had adopted a detailed resolution on the agrarian question which mostly amounted to recommendations for the future Constituent Assembly.[19] However, by the time the assembly elections were eventually held across the Russian empire, including Transcaucasia, in November 1917, the political context had changed fundamentally. The Provisional Government had already been overthrown, Lenin's Bolsheviks had taken power in Petrograd in the name of the soviets, and had immediately issued far-reaching proclamations on peace and land reform. The tacit consensus that these questions would be the preserve of the Constituent Assembly had been broken.

After October

It was the October Revolution which set the Georgian social democrats on the road to independence. Lenin had proclaimed 'soviet power' – but 'soviet power' already existed in Georgia. Zhordania's party controlled the most important soviets, as well as most state institutions on Georgian territory, and had no intention of recognising Lenin's Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) in Petrograd as a legitimate 'soviet government'. Like most non-Bolshevik forces across the empire, Zhordania's party did not at first expect the Sovnarkom to last very long. At a combined meeting of the regional and Tiflis soviets on 26 October/8 November to consider the events in Petrograd, a Bolshevik motion welcoming the actions of the Petrograd Soviet was overwhelmingly defeated, with just 16 votes in favour, 147 against, and five abstentions.[20] A Bolshevik demand at the same meeting that all soviets in Georgia be reelected was also rebuffed without difficulty.[21] Following this failure in Tiflis, the Bolsheviks concentrated on organising and agitating among the soldiers in the garrisons and on the front. Meanwhile, in Baku, Azerbaijan, a boycott by other parties left the Baku Soviet in the hands of the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries, led by the very capable Bolshevik Stepan Shaumyan.[22] The struggle for power was far from over, and was about to enter a more violent phase.

The fall of the Russian Provisional Government meant that OZAKOM lost its raison d'être. On 15/28 November 1917 the political leaderships

in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, none of which recognised Lenin's government, voted to replace OZAKOM with a new Transcaucasian Commissariat. This was an unnatural coalition of, among others, Georgian social democrats, Armenian nationalist Dashnaks and Azerbaijani Islamic reformists from the Musavat party. Its brief was to take care of purely regional affairs until the all-Russia Constituent Assembly could convene, although one of its first acts went way beyond this remit – on 5/18 December 1917 it approved an armistice concluded between the Russian and Ottoman commands on the southern front.[23] In a memoir of the period written in 1956, the veteran Georgian social democrat Grigol Uratazde argued that the creation of the commissariat marked the point when Transcaucasia 'de facto split away from Russia'.[24] That was not how Uratadze and his comrades presented it at the time – it was their Bolshevik rivals who denounced the formation of the commissariat as a 'plan to separate Transcaucasia from Russia' in cahoots with 'Armenian, Georgian and Muslim chauvinists'.[25]

The commissariat, uniting nationalities and political forces with very different perspectives and interests, was inherently unstable, and was largely held together by the hegemonic position of the Georgian social democrats.[26] Although they had only two of the twelve commissars on this body, they held the two key positions – Evgeniy Gegechkori as chairman and foreign affairs commissar, and Akaki Chkhenkeli as internal affairs commissar. Chkhenkeli in particular would later use his position in the commissariat to advance purely Georgian national interests.

Georgia starts creating national institutions

Days after the formation of the Transcaucasian Commissariat, there was a large conference in Tiflis of representatives of political parties, social organisations and institutions, and national minorities in Georgia. On 20 November/3 December 1917, this conference established a National Council of Georgia, chaired by Chkhenkeli.[27] At first it had no formal institutional power, but over time, as the social democrats began to rely less on class organisations like the soviets, and as Transcaucasian structures faltered in 1918, the importance and competence of the National Council expanded.

From the outset, the question of defence was a key priority for the Georgian leaders. By the end of 1917 many Russian soldiers on the Caucasus front were very receptive to Bolshevik peace slogans, and even the more 'patriotic' among them had no interest in fighting to defend a quasi-independent Transcaucasia against the Ottomans. Attempts to form 'national' regiments of locals towards the end of 1917 also failed: Bolshevik

anti-war agitation rapidly rendered these unfit for purpose.[28] The armistice with Turkey meant that with the fighting apparently over, Russian soldiers abandoned the front positions. Discipline had broken down and Tiflis was host to large numbers of restive, Bolshevik-inclined soldiers. Many of them were from other parts of the empire and were keen to return home, but in the meantime they were actively participating in local political struggles. At the Second Regional Soldiers' Soviet Congress in December 1917, they passed resolutions calling for 'soviet power' and undertaking to obey the authorities in Petrograd.[29]

To secure its position in Georgia, Zhordania's party needed to disarm and remove these soldiers, and create an armed force of its own under its firm control. The latter task was entrusted to Valiko Dzhugeli, a young and very radical social democrat who had only recently defected from the Bolsheviks. On 29 November/12 December, with authorisation from the Tiflis Soviet, he led a poorly-armed band to take control of the Tiflis arsenal. The soldiers guarding it, disoriented by the fact that this takeover was at the behest of the Tiflis Soviet, offered little effective resistance. Along with the arsenal, Dzhugeli and his comrades also captured the local Bolshevik leaders Nikolay Kuznetsov and Kote Tsintsadze and delivered them to Zhordania, who released them.[30] With their newly-acquired weapons, Dzhugeli organised and led the 'People's Guard' – a paramilitary group answerable to the Tiflis Soviet and Noe Zhordania personally. This gave the Georgian social democrats a serious armed force for internal policing. It could resist and disarm Bolshevised soldiers, and deal with other disgruntled elements on Georgian territory. As Dzhugeli later boasted at the People's Guard's second anniversary celebration, 'the seizure of the arsenal finally protected Tiflis against being sacked' by marauding soldiers.[31] The People's Guard was to play a central – and fateful – role in Georgian politics between 1917 and 1921.

Up to early January 1918, all the state-building efforts in Transcaucasia had been conceived as provisional measures, until the all-Russia Constituent Assembly could meet and devise new constitutional arrangements for the whole empire. This orientation towards the assembly was particularly strong in Georgia, given the all-Russia horizons of the dominant social-democrats at that time. Consequently, the dispersal and abolition of the Constituent Assembly on 6/19 January 1918 by Lenin's government in Petrograd destroyed the Georgian social democrats' political road map. The future shape of Russia was more unclear than ever, and although the ceasefire with the Ottomans was still holding at this point, the ongoing disintegration of the Russian state and the southern front did not bode well.

In early 1918, even as the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaderships were trying to secure their own positions politically, economically and militarily, they still felt the need to try to stick together – for the time being.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks were still keen to try to incorporate Transcaucasia into their fledgling Soviet state. Although they had been comprehensively out-manoeuvred in Georgia by their erstwhile RSDRP comrades by the end of 1917, the struggle for control and influence continued. On 16/29 December, Lenin had appointed Shaumyan 'provisional extraordinary commissar for Caucasus affairs',[32] giving him the Petrograd government's authority over any body, or group of soldiers, which chose to recognise it. The local Bolsheviks resisted all measures aimed at developing regional non-soviet state institutions. Consequently, they were vehemently opposed to the decision, in February 1918, to establish a regional legislature, the Transcaucasian Sejm, on the basis of the local Constituent Assembly results. Led by Shaumyan, the Bolsheviks organised a mass protest rally in Tiflis to coincide with the opening of the Sejm on 10/23 February 1918. Fearing that they planned to storm the parliament building and and seize power, the Tiflis authorities banned the demonstration. When the crowd refused a police order to disperse, Commissariat forces, supported by the People's Guard, opened fire with machine guns. Speaking immediately after the event at the Tiflis Soviet, Zhordania claimed that he had been opposed to using force, but since the 'regional authorities had deemed it necessary to arrest Shaumyan and Kuznetsov',[33] they had put the People's Guard at the authorities' disposal. He promised a commission would investigate thoroughly, although in his later memoirs he remarked that 'we knew in advance that we would ignore its findings'.[34] Shortly afterwards, the Bolshevik party was outlawed on Georgian territory. Unable to seize power in a frontal assault, and deprived of the chance to agitate openly, the Bolsheviks in Georgia went underground and sought to exploit any manifestations of unrest or discontent. These were never in short supply, not least among Georgia's national minorities.

Ottoman pressure and Georgian independence

For the first two months of the Sejm's existence, it continued to claim that Transcaucasia had not broken away from Russia, merely it did not recognise the Bolsheviks as Russia's legitimate rulers. This proved to be a costly fiction. From the time of the December ceasefire the Ottomans had been trying to nudge Transcaucasia towards declaring independence,[35] hoping thereby to get a weak buffer state as a neighbour. Clinging to their imaginary

status as an integral part of Russia while refusing to recognise Bolshevik rule, the Transcaucasians had refused an Ottoman invitation to attend the Brest-Litovsk peace conference between the Bolshevik government and the Central Powers. Consequently, Lenin's negotiators reached agreement with the Turks regarding the southern front without having to consult the locals. In the meantime, in February 1918 the Ottomans had found a pretext to break the ceasefire and start advancing across the now scarcely defended front line.

While a representative and therefore unwieldy Transcaucasian delegation was trying to negotiate with the Ottomans in March and April, it was presented with new demands that it accept the territorial concessions agreed at Brest-Litovsk and evacuate those mainly Armenian areas forthwith. When it tried to resist, the Turks advanced. Every new concession by the almost defenceless Transcaucasians was met with new demands by the Ottomans. To make things worse, the Azerbaijani leaders began to make it clear to the Georgians and Armenians that they had no further interest in fighting Turkey. They also began to push for Transcaucasia to declare its independence.[36]

On 22 April 1918 the Sejm bowed to the inevitable and announced the creation of a 'Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic'. But this unstable and unwanted formation could not withstand the relentless Ottoman pressure. Resumed peace talks at Batum in May 1918 foundered on the intransigence of the Ottoman delegation, and became instead, as Tadeusz Swietochowski out it, 'a hub of behind-the-scenes maneuvring and intrigues'.[37] One of the chief intriguers was the Georgian Akaki Chkhenkeli, ostensibly there as head of the Transcaucasian government, foreign minister and delegation leader. Sensing the futility of his official brief, with Armenia almost completely occupied and the Azerbaijani delegates at Batum welcoming Ottoman tutelage, Chkhenkeli opted instead to exploit the differences between Germany and Turkey on the future of Transcaucasia, and to preserve Georgia by cutting a deal with Germany. On 22 May he sent a confidential telegram from Batum to the National Council of Georgia in Tiflis, outlining his discussions with the German representative, General von Lossow. In effect, Chkhenkeli presented a fait accompli – he had agreed with von Lossow that Georgia would declare independence and immediately request German protection, which would be granted in the form of a contingent of German troops. Furthermore, in a foretaste of future developments, Chkhenkeli insisted that 'Georgia's independence shall be declared *without listing* its borders', on the grounds that if some were listed and others not, that might constitute renunciation

of those territories. 'These matters', he continued, 'shall be left to the confidential actions of the Foreign Minister and an agreement with the German government'.[38] He clearly relished the prospect of independence, ending his telegram 'Who has ever created a state, without taking a risk?', and citing Danton's celebrated call for 'audacity, audacity and more audacity still'.[39]

Some other Georgian social democrats, aware that seceding from Transcaucasia was being mooted but generally unaware of the secret diplomacy, were less enthusiastic. A discussion article published in the party's Russian-language paper *Bor'ba* on 26 May, the very day the Sejm voted for its own dissolution, argued that a German-backed 'independent Georgia' would just be something 'written on a scrap of paper', that Georgia would be seen as 'acting on the principle "sauve qui peut"', and that it would create 'a deep chasm between the peoples of Transcaucasia'.[40] These observations were prescient.

Independence declared

The coup de grâce to the Transcaucasian Federation was delivered, with characteristic aplomb, by Iraklii Tsereteli at the Sejm's final session on 26 May. 'Does the Transcaucasian Republic still exist?' he asked rhetorically, before addressing the Georgian nation: 'At this moment you are alone, left to your own devices... Know that if you would defend your interests, you must create your own state...'.[41] With only two dissenting votes, the Sejm abolished the Federation and itself. Later that day, in the same building, Zhordania opened a session of the Georgian National Council. He declared that 'the new state of Georgia which is founded today will never act against the interests of any nation, any people, or any state ... no people inhabiting our country, or living outside its borders will ever experience distress, moral pain or offence at our hands...'.[42] The session ended with the unanimous adoption of a seven-point declaration of independence. The National Council, supplemented with representatives of ethnic minorities, was now mandated to function as a Georgian parliament until a Georgian Constituent Assembly could be elected and convened, and it was to select a provisional government answerable to itself.[43] The government, headed at first by the social democrat Noe Ramishvili, was a coalition of all the main Georgian political forces. The traditional social-democratic objections to coalition with non-socialist parties, expressed so forcefully a year previously, were forgotten.

The country's long-established German minority seemed to welcome the turn of events: its paper *Kaukasische Post* led with a whimsical celebratory

piece 'Hoch Georgia!!!' depicting the country as Sleeping Beauty waking after being kissed by the (German?) prince.[44] The paper was pleased that the social democrats had, at long last, come round to the position of the other Georgian national parties, abandoning the positions first of a 'united Russian social-democratic front', then of a 'Transcaucasian democratic front' to settle finally on a 'united Georgian democratic front'.[45]

Such praise may have been embarrassing at first: in a letter to their Russian Menshevik comrades on 2 June 1918 the Georgians were almost apologetic about their conversion to the cause of independence: 'We were simply formalising a position which had come about against our wishes and in spite of our efforts'.[46] It was not until mid-July 1918 that they formally constituted themselves as a party separate from the RSDRP. But, having finally opted for independence, they set about organising it with gusto.

German military occupation limited this 'independence' but the occupiers were not much concerned with Georgia's internal politics. They were more interested in trying to exploit its mineral wealth – manganese ore and coal. Germany also aspired to gain control of the oilfields of Baku and the transportation networks to the Black Sea coast. In their turn, the Georgians were hoping for international recognition, protection against Turkey, a degree of internal stability and assistance in establishing favourable borders. Neither side really got what it wanted. The chaos within Georgia made effective exploitation of its resources difficult, although some shipments of manganese ore were sent to Germany. Georgia gained temporary recognition from Germany in August, but this was based on a supplement to the Brest-Litovsk treaty, repudiated entirely after the fall of the Kaiser in November 1918.[47] Nonetheless, on balance the Georgian social democrats considered their experience of German occupation to have been positive.[48]

Land reform was the main measure of social redistribution attempted in Georgia in this early phase of independence. The legal basis had been established on 20 March 1918 by the Transcaucasian Sejm, but no attempt was made to implement it anywhere except Georgia. The reform was scarcely socialist, nor was it economically rational – it involved giving small and medium peasants legal title to their land, confiscating any large estates and selling parcels of land to peasants – but its main aim was 'to make the peasantry the impregnable rampart of the new republican regime', as Voytinsky put it.[49] In this regard, the reform was partially successful, where it could be implemented. However, from the outset it met resistance – not only from former landowners, but also in places from mistrustful peasants. In summer 1918 in the ethnically-Georgian Dusheti region the authorities faced a rural rising led by pro-Russia peasants who claimed Bolshevik affiliations; this

story repeated itself at intervals across Georgia. Only a minority of peasants took part in these risings; overall the mass of the peasants had benefited from the land reform.[50] But the food situation in the country remained dire – independence disrupted long-established trade and other links across the border with Russia. The country remained unable to feed itself without large-scale grain imports from the North Caucasus.

State-building

The main task of Georgia's rulers after May 1918 was to build a Georgian state, and this both fuelled and made use of an upsurge in national sentiment. This mood helped them defend their country's neutrality in the face of German pressure to conclude a military alliance.[51] However, it also created an atmosphere which many non-Georgians perceived, not always unjustly, as rampant Georgian national chauvinism. One campaign was to 'nationalise' the state apparatus – to convert Georgia from a province of the Russian empire, administered largely in Russian, into a state with its own national language, in which administration, education and so on was conducted in Georgian. This programme was pursued energetically from the outset.

The capital, Tiflis, posed particular problems. It was not really a 'Georgian' city. Under Russian rule it had been a cosmopolitan centre of trade and imperial administration, and its largest national group was the Armenians – up to 45 percent of the population. Additionally, as many Tiflis Armenians were engaged in trade, and owned significant property, they had long dominated local politics and the Tiflis city duma. As we shall see, by early 1919 the position had changed radically.

Russians made up the second largest group in Tiflis, and many of them had been employed in the administration.[52] These people were the main group likely to be dismissed under the 'nationalisation' programme, which, as Grigol Uratadze later recalled, somewhat disingenuously, was 'received by a certain part of the Russians living in Georgia with quite unjustified hostility'.[53] Although the social democrats genuinely tried to involve other national groups within Georgia in the country's political life, there was little real enthusiasm among these communities for the project of building a Georgian nation state. The disaffection of these minorities would be exploited by both White and Red forces seeking to reincorporate Georgia into the Russian state.

Any regime must try to maintain law and order, and amidst the poverty and chaos of war and revolution, this was not straightforward. Crime, banditry and mob justice were rife. State institutions were weak and not

universally respected. Bolshevik organisations both on the periphery and underground in Georgia itself were also active, and local disturbances were frequently given a 'Bolshevik' colouration through the actions or claims of agitators. As both the regular police and army were under-resourced and overstretched, the task of maintaining order and security often fell to the social democrats' own paramilitary force, Valiko Dzhugeli's People's Guard. A kind of cult around this body and its leader was officially fostered. The anniversary of its creation, 12 December, became a national holiday. Dzhugeli's highly romanticised diary of his and his comrades' exploits, as they travelled the country putting down rebellions and assisting the army at various front lines, was serialised in *Bor'ba*.[54] The People's Guard, Dzhugeli claimed, was 'fundamentally honest and selfless', permeated with 'internationalism' and generally expressed 'human beauty and the magnificence of democracy'.[55]

It is unlikely that the targets of Dzhugeli's punitive missions saw things that way. In relation to one of their early sorties, to repress the peasant rebellion in Dusheti, a *Bor'ba* editorial on 29 June 1918 urged the People's Guard on to 'merciless retribution against the traitors', claiming that the 'Bolsheviks' leading the rising were 'acting hand in glove with agents of Black Hundred counterrevolution and Turkish emissaries'.[56] Jean Loris-Melikov, a French-Armenian born in Tiflis, observed of the guard: 'It is well paid, and terrorises the population'.[57] 'Terror' in Georgia was never a systematic part of the state-building process, but it was certainly deployed and officially enouraged on occasions – particularly against rebellious national minorities.

War against Armenia and Armenians

Akaki Chkhenkeli's refusal to define the state border when independence was declared proved to be a recipe for inter-ethnic conflict in peripheral areas. Over Georgia's southern border with Armenia, resentment at Georgia's perceived self-preservation at the expense of Armenia in May 1918 was exacerbated by subsequent events. It was reported that 80,000 Armenian civilians from the Akhalkalaki region, fleeing before the Turkish advances in June 1918, were prevented from entering Georgian-held territory by Georgian troops and left to starve in the high mountains. Armenian sources estimated that 30,000 of them perished. A few months later, according to the same sources, 15,000 newly-arrived refugees were driven back across the border to be massacred by Turkish bands.[58] There were also territorial disputes: in June 1918 Georgia occupied the northern part of the region of

Lori, securing the frontier against the Ottomans in this Armenian-majority area. Zhordania initially claimed this was a temporary measure, but before long Iraklii Tsereteli announced that northern Lori was sovereign Georgian territory.[59] At the time, pressed by Ottoman forces, Armenia could do little about this, but by the autumn of 1918, as Georgia's protector Germany faced defeat, Armenian irregulars, supported by the local population, started to fight the Georgians. By mid-December, Georgia and Armenia were at war. The conflict lasted two weeks before the new British occupiers, who had replaced the Germans, brokered a ceasefire starting at midnight on 31 December 1918.[60] Dzhugeli chronicled his brigade's last frantic attempts to take the (Armenian) village of Bolnis-Khachin before the ceasefire began, so that it could 'present our nation with a splendid New Year's gift'.[61]

The war gave new impetus to both Georgian and Armenian national chauvinism. In Georgia, as Hovanassian observed, 'the brunt of the war' was borne by 'the Armenians of Tiflis and the surrounding communities'.[62] All Armenian civilians in the region were declared to be prisoners of war. In January 1919 some were rounded up and were paraded round the streets as if they were captured combatants.[63] National and class resentment combined in a systematic, semi-official campaign of arrests, looting and humiliation of Armenian civilians, particularly the bourgeoisie of the capital, whose property was expropriated wholesale in early 1919. Although the intense persecution of Armenians soon subsided, the subsequent municipal elections in Tiflis were boycotted by most of the Armenian and Russian inhabitants, thereby ensuring an ethnic Georgian majority on the council for the first time ever.[64] The entire inglorious episode had given an additional fillip to the 'nationalisation' campaign.

Social democrats in power

Crisis management and war necessarily took up a large part of the government's attention and an even bigger part of the state's resources. Nonetheless, a start was made on various modernising reforms. As part of the nationalisation process, the network of primary schools was expanded rapidly, with education in Georgian. Voytinsky claimed that by 1920 there were more than 2000 primary schools in the country, twice the pre-revolutionary figure.[65] Tiflis University, the first in the Caucasus, was founded in January 1918. The network of public libraries expanded. There were initiatives in adult education, public health, and progressive labour legislation. Some of the largest economic assets, notably the mining sector, were either nationalised or subjected to a state trade monopoly. These sorts of measures helped

ensure that, despite the economic ruin and other problems, the social democrats remained genuinely popular – at least among the ethnic Georgians. The elections to the Constituent Assembly of Georgia, held in February 1919, gave the social democrats a landslide victory. Their party list gained 408,541 votes, compared with 33,630 for the Socialists-Federalists, 30,128 for the National Democrats and 21,453 for the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Of the 130 seats in the new assembly, the social democrats initially held 109.[66] The Bolsheviks remained illegal and ineligible to stand, so any sympathy they may have had was not recorded. Moreover, as only citizens were eligible to vote, national minorities residing in Georgia were probably underrepresented, although the social democrats had representatives of all the major nationalities on their party list.[67]

The assembly did not hurry to perform its primary task and draw up a constitution – it only finally adopted one on 21 February 1921, by which time Georgia had already been invaded on several fronts by the Red Army and the DRG had just days to live.[68] Instead, the assembly served from March 1919 to February 1921 as the republic's parliament, to which the government (exclusively social-democratic after March 1919) was answerable.

Georgia's economic situation was disastrous thoughout the period of independence. State finances in particular were catastrophic – in the first year of independence total state revenue only covered about a third of state expenditure.[69] The needs of defence and the transition costs of independence greatly increased demands on the treasury while tax receipts fell and subventions from Russia stopped entirely. Soviet Russia had many similar problems, and it is instructive to compare the authorities' approaches to tackling them. Both states resorted to printing money to cover state expenditure, and in both cases the result was runaway inflation. However, the task of national consolidation pursued by Zhordania's government meant that it did not follow the Bolshevik practice of unleashing internal civil war against 'class enemies' and rely on requisitioning to mobilise resources to anything like the same extent as in Russia. The actions against the Tiflis Armenians in early 1919 was not part of a broader campaign of forcible expropriation of individual property.

One undesirable consequence of the political and economic chaos across Transcaucasia was a concentration of people in the big cities, particularly Tiflis. Jean Loris-Melikov observed:

> As Tiflis fills with Georgians from all parts of the country, the Georgian countryside empties [...] Provincial life seems to be dead; production is two times lower than it was under the Russian regime.[70]

In response to extreme overcrowding and food shortages in Tiflis, in November 1919 the government announced draconian measures to expel unemployed internal and foreign migrants from the city within two weeks. Foreign nationals without business in Tiflis were to leave the republic, jobless Georgians were to return to their place of registration. All residents had to register to prove their right to live there, and any landlords or employers who connived at circumventing these measures would themselves be expelled.[71] Subsequent notices in the press outlined further harsh measures against non-compliance. By prioritising the removal of non-Georgians, the 'unloading' of Tiflis in late 1919 could contribute towards the city's 'nationalisation'.

Conflict on the northern border – Abkhazia, Ossetia and the annexation of Sochi

Georgia's northern border with the Russian North Caucasus was turbulent throughout the DRG's existence. At different times on that border there were White armies who hoped to reconquer Transcaucasia, Bolsheviks who wanted to Sovietise it, as well as various local armed bands. In September 1918, in a counteroffensive against Bolshevik forces moving down the Black Sea coast, Georgian troops advanced north-westwards through Abkhazia and occupied the Russian town of Sochi. Although there were few ethnic Georgians in the region, the DRG sent government minister Evgeniy Gegechkori there to secure support for a Georgian annexation of the area. Although he succeeded in getting resolutions of support from local socialists, in the meantime the White armies had arrived there. Gegechkori failed to convince the White generals to accept this loss of Russian territory, and Georgia had to surrender it.[72]

Zhordania's government was generally hostile to General Denikin's White armies. This caused friction during the British occupation in 1919-1920, since the British were committed to the White side in the civil war, and were unsympathetic to Georgia's pretensions to statehood. In early 1919 the Georgians had to bow to British demands and permit the transit of a small number of White troops. Bolshevik propagandists, keen to denounce the Georgians' 'staunch support of all the White Guards',[73] tried to use this episode as proof, but the documents they provided did not make a compelling case.[74] For the Georgian social democrats, the Whites represented counterrevolution, monarchist reaction and Russian imperialism. Dzhugeli's diary entries for April 1919, when it looked as though his People's Guard would be fighting Denikin's forces, showed much more

enthusiasm for that fight than for most others.[75] At the same time, it was necessary to deal and treat with the White administrations across the border on a daily basis, both commercially and politically. Fighters in the Russian civil war to the north would sometimes seek refuge on Georgian territory, or try to invade in hot pursuit. One way the Georgians attempted to secure part of their northern border in September 1919 was by sponsoring an anti-White rising in Chechnya and Dagestan by the United Mejlis of the Mountain-dwelling Peoples of the Caucasus. A prominent Muslim Menshevik from Vladikavkaz, Ahmed Tsalikov, produced the newspaper of this Mejlis, *Vol'nyy gorets* [Free Mountain-dweller] on the government presses in Tiflis in 1919 and 1920.[76] In their own backyard, the Georgians were playing power politics.

Besides ethnic Georgians, Armenians and Russians, there were other national groups on the territory claimed by Georgia – the Abkhazis on the north-west coast around Sukhumi, the Ossetians in the north, and the Adjarians in the south west around Batumi. All these groups had different political orientations from the Georgians proper; the Abkhazis and Ossetians spoke completely different languages, and many Adjarians were Muslims. Bolshevism was relatively stronger among the Abkhaz and in Batumi.

In the case of Abkhazia, which had voluntarily joined with Georgia in June 1918, the DRG made efforts to organise genuine local autonomy for the region. However, throughout this period both Bolsheviks and White forces were also active in the area. The Whites provided an alternative pole of attraction for nervous Abkhazi landowners, while Bolshevik organisers fomented peasant discontent over the slow pace of land reform. Abkhazia remained restive, but most of the time Georgia's tussles with Abkhazia were political rather than military.[77]

South Ossetia was a different case – no real autonomy was ever negotiated, and the repression was brutal. A rising was organised there by the local Bolsheviks to coincide with the Red Army invasion of Azerbaijan in April-May 1920, when they anticipated that the Red forces would then sweep through Georgia. Lenin and Stalin attempted to call the rising off, but the locals persisted, and by the end of May had declared 'Soviet power' across South Ossetia.[78] Dzhugeli dubbed this episode the 'South Ossetian Vendée', and insisted 'these traitors must be punished severely'.[79] The main tactic of his forces in crushing the rising was to burn down entire villages believed to support the rising and drive their inhabitants out into the mountains. He observed, with malicious satisfaction: 'They will be cold there. Very cold!'[80] The suppression of the rising was followed by widespread

ethnic cleansing, in which all Ossetians who could not positively prove their loyalty were driven across the border into North Ossetia, in Russia. This ensured enthusiastic Ossetian participation in the Red Army's overthrow of the social-democratic government a few months later, in February 1921.[81] The memory of Georgian brutality in that campaign is kept alive in South Ossetia to this day.

International recognition

From the outset DRG's leaders craved international recognition, which they hoped would underpin its separate existence. German recognition in 1918 had ended after Germany's defeat, and the British occupation forces who replaced the Germans at the end of 1918 backed the Whites' ambition of reconstituting the Russian empire. By 1920 the situation had changed. The Whites were heading for defeat, and the British were leaving, finally abandoning Batumi in September. The main threat now was Soviet Russia to the north. At the end of April the Red Army had invaded and occupied Azerbaijan, mainly to secure the Baku oilfields for Russia. DRG forces rebuffed an attempt by the Red Army to press on into Georgia, and an attempt at a rising by the Tiflis Bolsheviks on 2 May was crushed by the People's Guard. Soviet Russia, militarily overstretched by its war with Poland at that time, decided to postpone its plans to reannex Georgia and conclude a treaty instead. On 7 May 1920, unknown to the Tiflis Bolsheviks, Grigol Uratadze was in Moscow negotiating a treaty in which Russia renounced any claims on Georgia and recognised its independence and borders. In a secret clause, the DRG undertook to legalise the activities of the Communist Party in Georgia.[82]

The treaty with Russia was a mixed blessing for the DRG. A large, well-staffed Russian embassy was established in Tiflis which served as a centre for local Bolshevik organisation. At the same time, it became easier for the Georgians to monitor the local Bolsheviks and arrest any who attempted to overthrow the state. Russian recognition was however a precursor to wider recognition by the major European powers in January 1921.

As noted above, Georgia was also keen for recognition by the main workers' parties of Europe, and hosted a high-powered delegation of socialist leaders in late 1920, in a mirror image of the burgeoning political tourism to Soviet Russia. Karl Kautsky stayed for several months, and there were shorter visits from other leaders, including Ramsay MacDonald in October. Their reports were all most enthusiastic. MacDonald told the *Manchester Guardian* that

> Georgia is a most productive country. Its wine is of a very high quality. The country is prosperous on the whole, and there is plenty to eat.[83]

He also assured his readers that there was 'complete liberty of opinion', and that 'Bolshevik propaganda [...] is not interfered with'.[84]

Kautsky wrote a detailed pamphlet: *Georgia. A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic* (1921), which, just like foreign admirers' accounts of visits to Soviet Russia of the time, almost completely failed to find any faults with his hosts. He paid almost no attention to the national question, or to any of the repressive measures to which the DRG government had resorted at different times. Overall, Kautsky's presentation of the DRG as a social-democratic success story and 'the antithesis to Bolshevism',[85] had more to do with his struggle against the communists in Germany than with the realities of life in Georgia.

However, Kautsky was quite right to point out that the revolt which precipitated the Red Army invasion in February 1921 was not a rising of the Tiflis proletariat, which remained generally loyal to the government, but of 'remote villages'.[86] The Bolsheviks had failed to foment a genuine workers' rising to which the Red Army could provide 'fraternal assistance', so they had to make do with a peasant revolt. It was a bitter irony that the area which revolted on 11 February 1921 was the Armenian-majority Lori district, which Georgia had annexed and fought to retain in the summer of 1918. Armenia, which had been taken over by Soviet Russia just weeks before, at the end of November 1920 in a carve-up with Turkey, now served as a bridgehead in an invasion which in five weeks had reconquered Georgia for Russia. The consolidation of the Georgian nation would continue over the next seven decades, but within the framework of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Democratic socialism – or nation-building?

Georgia's social-democratic leaders were serious Marxists who understood socialist internationalism very well. But the character of a regime is not determined by the good intentions of its leaders alone. The DRG was constructed, in the face of ongoing internal and external hostility, by thousands of ordinary Georgians who cared little for the niceties of social democracy but were keen to build, serve and defend a Georgian national state. In this situation, it is scarcely surprising that many observers noticed an atmosphere of national chauvinism pervading independent Georgia. One of the most scathing, the British journalist C. E. Bechhofer, who was there in late

1919, denounced it as 'a classic example of an imperialist "small nation"', adding that 'in territory-snatching outside and bureaucratic tyranny inside, its chauvinism was beyond all bounds'.[87] Jean Loris-Melikov remarked on petty acts like the removal of all signage in Russian or Armenian in Tiflis,[88] and even Ramsay MacDonald noted that 'the Georgians are intensely anti-Bolshevik and also anti-Russian'.[89] As for the Armenian Mikael Varandian, his bitter verdict was that 'in theory, Georgian social democracy has always professed the purest internationalism, but in reality, it has followed crudely nationalist policies'.[90]

Could it have been otherwise? It had never been the intention of the Georgian social democrats to lead an independence movement. But it is easy to see how circumstances, their own commitment to democracy, and their willingness to shoulder their responsibilities as elected representatives of their nation led them into that position. Unfortunately, in many respects they were thereby, as Loris-Melikov observed at the time, 'vanquished by the nationalism of the petty bourgeoisie'.[91] It was not evil intent but the logic of their situation which led them into secret diplomacy with Imperial Germany and Turkey at the expense of the Armenians, border wars with their neighbours over slivers of territory, and conflict with their own national minorities – all of which fostered the sort of chauvinism that the social democrats had struggled against for most of their political lives. The task of building a nation state amidst war, ruin and ethnic strife has a logic of its own – one which is difficult to combine with proletarian internationalism.

Notes

1 Karl Kautsky, *Georgia. A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic*, London, 1921, p71.
2 Leon Trotsky, *Between Red and White*, London, 1922, p50.
3 Ibid., p85.
4 Eric Lee, *The Experiment: Georgia's Forgotten Revolution 1918-1921*, London, 2017, p236.
5 For the discussion on this in 1903 and later in 1906, see Stephen Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colours. The European Road to Social Democracy 1883-1917*, Cambridge MA, 2005, pp111-112, 213-214.
6 Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colours*, Chapter 6 (pp129-158) contains an excellent and succinct account of this episode.
7 Wladimir Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, Paris, 1921, p62.
8 Ibid., pp.63-65; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colours*, pp191-192.
9 Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, p69.

10 See G. I. Uratadze, *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii Gruzinskoy Demokraticheskoy Respubliki*, Munich, 1956, p16.
11 Noy Zhordania, *Moya zhizn'*, Stanford CA, 1968, p.73.
12 Ibid., p76
13 Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, p75.
14 See Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)*, New York, 1951, p39.
15 See Avtandil Menteshashvili, *Iz istorii vzaimootnosheniy Gruzinskoy Demokraticheskoy Respubliki s sovetskoy Rossiey i Antantoy. 1918-1921 gg.*, Tbilisi, 1989, p4.
16 Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, p.80.
17 Resolution of the Caucasus Regional Congress of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, 25 May 1917, in S. E. Sef, *Revolyutsiya 1917 goda v Zakavkaz'i*, Tiflis, 1927, pp148-149.
18 Zhordania, *Moya zhizn'*, p78
19 See Sef, *Revolyutsiya 1917 goda*, pp161-163.
20 See ibid., p290.
21 See ibid., p289.
22 Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, pp50-51.
23 See Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920. The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge, 1985, p119.
24 Uratadze, *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii*, p24.
25 Bolshevik newspaper *Kavkazskiy rabochiy* cited in G. Khachapuridze, *Bol'sheviki Gruzii v boyakh za pobedu sovetskoy vlasti*, Moscow, 1951, p135.
26 Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, p58.
27 See Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colours*, 260-261; Uratadze *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii*, pp38-40.
28 See Zhordania, *Moya zhizn'*, pp79-80; Uratadze, *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii*, p42.
29 See Sef, *Revolyutsiya 1917 goda*, p355.
30 See Valiko Dzhugeli, *Tyazhelyy krest*, Tiflis, 1920, pxv; Zhordania, *Moya zhizn'*, p80. Zhordania added: 'The time for repression against them had not yet arrived'.
31 Dzhugeli, *Tyazhelyy krest*, pxvi.
32 I. Dubinsky-Mukhadze, *Shaumyan*, Moscow, 1965, p333. Shaumyan himself may not have found out until 22 January 1918, see ibid., p284.
33 See N. N. Zhordaniya, *Za dva goda. Doklady i rechi*, Tiflis, 1919, p62.
34 Zhordania, *Moya zhizn'*, p84.
35 See Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p120.
36 See ibid., pp.122-123.
37 Ibid., p126.
38 English translation of Chkhenkeli's telegram on civil.ge/archives/243815.
39 Ibid.

40 D. G., 'Edinstvennyy vykhod', in *Bor'ba*, No. 77, 26 May 1918, p2.
41 Cited in Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, pp155, 157.
42 Cited in ibid., pp158, 159.
43 Uratadze, *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii*, p78.
44 'Hoch Georgia!!!', *Kaukasische Post*, No. 23, 29 May 1918, p1.
45 'Inland', *Kaukasische Post*, No. 23, 29 May 1918, p2.
46 *Nash Golos*, No. 9, 5/18 June, 1918, in D. Pavlov, compiler, *Men'sheviki v 1918 godu*, Moscow, 1999, pp. 512-516. English translation on http://korolev-perevody.co.uk/gruzine.html
47 See John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace*, London 1938, p433.
48 The Georgians sent a letter to this effect to the International Socialist Bureau after the Germans had evacuated the country. See Uratadze, *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii*, pp81-82; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, p160.
49 Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, p213. For further details of the reform see Stephen Jones, 'Between ideology and pragmatism: social democracy and the economic transition in Georgia 1918-21', in *Caucasus Survey*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 2014, p9.
50 Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, p193.
51 See Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, p170.
52 See Richard G. Hovanassian, *The Republic of Armenia. Volume 1. The First Year, 1918-1919*, Berkeley, CA, 1971, p4. Hovanassian gives a figure of 350,000 inhabitants of Tiflis.
53 Uratadze, *Obrazovanie i konsolidatsii*, p82.
54 Republished as a separate volume, *Tyazhelyy krest*, at the end of 1920.
55 Dzhugeli, *Tyazhelyy krest*, pp83-84 (online edition).
56 Editorial in *Bor'ba* No. 104, 29 June 1918, p2.
57 Jean Loris-Mélicof, *La Révolution Russe et les Nouvelles Républiques transcaucasiennes*, Paris, 1920, p164.
58 See Mikael Varandian, *Le conflit Arméno-Géorgien et la guerre du Caucase*, Paris, 1919, pp72-73; Loris-Mélicof, *La Révolution Russe*, p138. The sources are Armenian. Precise numbers cannot be verified and may have been exaggerated.
59 See Hovanassian, *Armenia. Volume 1*, pp71-72.
60 See ibid., pp114-117.
61 Dzhugeli, *Tyazhelyy krest*, p109.
62 See Hovanassian, *Armenia. Volume 1*, p122.
63 Ibid., p123.
64 Varandian, *Le conflit Arméno-Géorgien*, p97.
65 See Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, p206.
66 See ibid., p194.
67 Ibid., p195.
68 A full English translation of the 1921 constitution can be found on https://

matiane.wordpress.com/2012/09/04/constitution-of-georgia-1921/

69 See Woytinsky, *La Démocratie Géorgienne*, pp245-246.
70 Loris-Mélicof, *La Révolution Russe*, p.164.
71 See 'Mery pravitel'stva k razgruzke Tiflisa', *Bor'ba*, No. 262, 16 November 1919, p3.
72 See Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, pp234-239.
73 See J. Shaphir, *Secrets of Menshevik Georgia. The Plot against Soviet Russia Unmasked*, London, 1922, p8.
74 See ibid., pp29-32.
75 See e.g. Dzhugeli, *Tyazhelyy krest*, pp140-141.
76 On Tsalikov, see S. M. Iskhakov, 'Men'shevik A. Tsalikov ob otnoshenii rossiyskikh musul'man k pervoy mirovoy voyne. 1917 g.', in *XX vek i Rossiya*, 2, 2014, pp185-200.
77 For a detailed analysis of the Abkhaz and Ossetian cases, see Cory Welt, 'A fateful moment: ethnic autonomy and revolutionary violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)' in Stephen F. Jones, ed., *The Making of Modern Georgia 1918-2012*, London, 2014.
78 Ibid., p222.
79 Dzhugeli, *Tyazhelyy krest*, p233.
80 Ibid., p. 235.
81 See Welt, 'A fateful moment', pp223-224.
82 See Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, pp297-299.
83 'A Promising Russian Border State – Mr Ramsay MacDonald on Georgia', in *Manchester Guardian*, 12 October 1920, p8.
84 Ibid.
85 Kautsky, *Georgia,* p8.
86 Ibid., p101.
87 C. E. Bechhofer, *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920*, London, 1921, p14.
88 Loris-Mélicof, *La Révolution Russe*, p.163.
89 'A Promising Russian Border State', p8.
90 Varandian, *Le conflit Arméno-Géorgien*, p98.
91 Loris-Mélicof, *La Révolution Russe*, p.137.