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The Emergence and Development of the National Question
in Georgia, 1801-1921

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
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The period of Georgian history covered by this study, 1801-1921, was one of rapid change, a period in which Georgia was reunited after 400 years of division, regained its independence and then lost it again. It was a period too in which Georgians' emotional attachment to the nation and consciousness of their corporate identity greatly increased. This dissertation examines the various factors that played a part in this development and seeks to explain why, despite the spread of national awareness among all classes and a widespread and manifest concern for national renaissance, (that) a popular nationalist movement never emerged.

It looks first at Georgia's historical development, the emergence in the 11th-13th centuries of a centralised state, Georgians' relations with neighbouring peoples, and the events leading up to the country's incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1801, before going on in chapters two and three to examine the socio-economic factors underlying the acceleration of the country's national integration in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It is argued that although the raw material of Georgian nationhood - a common and distinctive language, shared history and cultural traits, and occupation of a recognisable territory - existed long before the 19th century, (that) it was only with the breakdown of feudal relations, the development of trade, the spread of commodity relations, the expansion of the communications network and the growing interdependence of town and country in the 19th century, that Georgians overcame the divisions inflicted on the country by foreign invasions and the

ambitions of rival principalities.

The incorporation of Georgia into the Russian Empire also brought the Georgian intelligentsia into contact with Russian and European thought and led in the 1860s and 1870s to the emergence of a new generation of Georgians who identified the nation and its future not with the monarchy or nobility, but with the people. Convinced that education was the key to national cultural revival, the Georgian radical intelligentsia began a campaign for national enlightenment, the aim of which was to heighten the people's awareness of their national identity and provide the cultural basis for national revival. For reasons which the fourth chapter seeks to explain, this new generation rejected separatism and sought to realise its goals within a democratic Russia, liberated from the autocracy.

Chapter five looks at the emergence of the Social-Democrats as a mass party in Transcaucasia and the reasons for the persistent failure of the overtly nationalist parties to make any impact on their support in the working class and peasantry. It examines too the gradual shift in the position of the Georgian Social-Democrats on the national question and their acceptance by the beginning of the first world war that the key to its successful resolution was the establishment of autonomous national units or cantons expressly for the administration of cultural affairs. By separating control of cultural concerns in this way from the state administration, it was hoped to prevent attempts to assimilate minority nationalities by the more powerful national groups like the Russians. With the national question thus settled, so it was believed, the proletariats of the various nationalities

could then focus their undivided attention on the class struggle.

In the final two chapters, the dissertation seeks to explain an apparent paradox: how after 50 years of proclaiming the importance of the union with revolutionary Russia, the Georgians came to declare independence; and why the Georgian Social-Democrats, for so long the advocates of devolving nationality affairs from the state, should ultimately have found themselves compelled to stress the primacy of national unity and the national idea.

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Georgian language sources are transliterated in accordance with the system employed in the Catalogue of Georgian Books in the British Museum, which is set out below. Where there are Russian and Georgian versions of a name or place, I have used the Georgian throughout. Thus, Dseret'eli not Tsereteli; Zhordania not Zhordaniya; Atchara not Adzharia; Bitchvint'a not Pitsunda; the Mtkvari rather than the river Kura; Signaghi not Signakhi; and T'bilisi not Tiflis. When quoting contemporary sources I have, where appropriate, used the spelling Tp'ilisi, which was the form used in Georgian throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Georgian transliteration key

ა a	კ k	ტ t	ძ dz
ბ b	ლ l	უ u	წ ds
გ g	მ m	ყ p'	ჭ tch
დ d	ნ n	ქ k'	ხ kh
ე e	ო o	ღ gh	ჯ j
ვ v	პ p	ყ q	ჰ h
ზ z	ჯ zh	შ sh	
თ t'	რ r	ჩ ch	
ი i	ს s	ც ts	

ance with the system used by the journal Soviet Studies (see below), except in cases of names or places, such as Moscow, which have widely accepted English spellings.

а а	и і	р r	ш sh
б b	й і	с s	щ shch
в v	к k	т t	ъ '
г g	л l	у u	ы y
д d	м m	ф f	ь '
(ё)е e	н n	х kh	э e
ж zh	о o	ц ts	ю yu
з z	п p	ч ch	я ya

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Introduction

While a considerable volume of research has been devoted to the relationship between the Russian Empire and its European minorities, in particular, the Poles and Ukrainians, very little has been written in the English language about Georgia or the Georgians. This is in part because of the country's geographical obscurity, lodged on the boundaries of Europe and Asia and amidst the tangle of the Caucasian mountains and the Pontic Alps, but no doubt also because of the difficulties in carrying out research in the USSR into the relationship between the Russians and the national minorities, and the understandable emphasis in Soviet studies in the West on the Slavic and Central Asian parts of the USSR. The benefits, moreover, of studying a relatively small republic whose culture and language are so different from the rest of the country, are less immediately obvious. In this respect, the Georgians have been rather less fortunate than their neighbours in Transcaucasia, the Armenians, whose diaspora has made a substantial contribution in the West to our knowledge of Armenian culture and history.

Even within the USSR, despite the enormous contribution of Georgians to Russian Social-Democracy, albeit primarily to its Menshevik wing, little of merit has been written outside of Georgia itself either in general terms or about the more specific issues that are the concern of this dissertation, the development of the national question in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the factors that gave rise at the turn of the century to one of the few mass-based social-democratic movements in the Russian Empire. Moreover,

despite the translation of much Georgian academic output into Russian, most of it remains in the vernacular only.

This dissertation examines the development of national consciousness in Georgia and its relationship with the emergence of the Georgian social-democratic movement, and seeks to provide an explanation of the forces that led to Georgia's declaration of independence in 1918 and to invasion by Soviet Russia in 1921. It is hoped that in the process it will also make a contribution to understanding why factors such as rapid socio-economic change, the economic exploitation of one nationality by another, the emergence of national intelligentsias and chauvinism come to be associated with the formation of strong nationalist movements in some areas but produce entirely different responses elsewhere.

In 1918 the Georgian Mensheviks declared Georgia's independence from Russia, an act which in many respects can be seen as the natural culmination of the socio-economic, political and intellectual developments in Georgia since its incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1801. Though the abrogation that year of the Treaty of Georgievsk between the East Georgian kingdom of K'art'l-Kakhet'i and Russia, which had granted the latter control of Georgian foreign policy in return for recognition of the sovereignty of the Georgian monarchy in internal affairs, was made with scant regard for the interests of the Georgian people, there can be little doubt that it paved the way for the economic and ethnographic recovery of Georgia and the coalescence in the latter part of the 19th century of a strengthening awareness among all classes of their national identity.

It is clear from the literature extant from the period that at the height of Georgia's development in the 13th century, before successive invasions undermined the unity of the medieval state and brought its "golden age" to a close, (that) its population already had a well-developed sense of ethnic identity based on an awareness of a shared and unique language, shared myths and customs, and a religion, Christianity, that set it in conflict with most of the surrounding world. The centralisation of the Georgian state, the development of trade and communications, and protracted warfare against neighbouring peoples, moreover, were all factors that strengthened that sense of cultural identity and helped forge the unity of the Georgian people. However, with the decline of the state and the resurgence of feudal fiefdoms, the strength of Georgians' awareness of their group identity waned, so that by the 18th century the past unity of the state was a dim memory for all but a few.

Georgia's incorporation into the Russian Empire, however, protected it from the almost incessant invasions from Persia and Turkey which, over the preceding 400 years, had not only arrested but also set back national social and economic development, and signalled the end of the country's division into warring principalities. Released from its preoccupation with survival, and at last provided with a modicum of stability, the population was able to redirect its energies into the economy. In the ensuing 50 years, the provincial barriers to national integration were gradually eroded as the development of trade, commodity relations and specialisation encouraged people to extend their horizons well beyond the boundaries of their own communities. By the mid-19th century the basis for the re-emergence of a

Georgian ethnic consciousness had already been laid as commercial relations between the various parts of the country, which had been severely disrupted since the Middle Ages, regained their former vigour.

The imposition of a Russian administration, Russian laws and the opportunities provided by the educational system were to have a deep effect on the development of Georgian society. The abrogation of the Treaty of Georgievsk broke the power of the Georgian monarchy and, by rendering redundant the traditional function of the nobility as a military caste entrusted with the defence of its subjects, undermined an important aspect of its *raison d'etre* in the eyes of the peasantry. By the 1850s, moreover, the feudal relationship between the nobility and peasantry, once the mainstay of Georgian society, was coming to be an impediment to further economic development and the cause of growing social tension between the two classes.

The cultural effects of the enforced union also wrought considerable changes, particularly in the upper reaches of society, where the nobility found itself compelled to shed the customs and tastes acquired through centuries of Persian dominance and reorientate itself to the Russian bureaucracy and the European manners of the Russian dvoryanstvo. Aware too of the advantages conferred by a European education to progress in the tsarist administration, those who could afford it sought places for their children in Russia's universities.

The consequences of the interaction of Georgian students with the Russian intelligentsia were, however, to be more far-reaching than the mundane ambitions of their parents. Greatly influenced in the 1830s by the preoccupa-

tion of Russian intellectuals with idealism and their search for Russia's role in history, and spurred by contact with Polish nationalism, the Georgian intelligentsia, small though it may have been, began to take up the theme of the Georgian nation and to seek to stimulate research into its history and traditions. As elsewhere in Europe, the intelligentsia, with its vision of a new global order of nation states, sought not merely to encourage the revival of a sense of ethnic community, but to discover in history the origins and laws of growth of the Georgian nation.

The turning point, however, in 19th century Georgian intellectual development came in the 1860s with the appearance of a new generation of students who, like their Russian peers, turned away from the abstract idealism of the 1830s and for the first time identified the nation and its history with that of the mass of the people. Figures like Ilia Tchavtchavadze, Akaki Deseret'eli and Kirile Lort'k'ip'anidze, all students in Russian universities in the late 1850s and early 1860s, were to establish a movement for national renaissance in Georgia, based on bringing education to the people and raising the level of cultural attainment to that of the most advanced nations of Europe, which was to dominate the intellectual debate in Georgia for the next 30 years and to exert a considerable influence on the attitudes of Georgian Social-Democrats to the national question.

Their rise to prominence coincided with the introduction in the 1860s and 1870s of the laws on the emancipation of the peasantry, and it was these, however imperfect or limited they may have been, which, by undermining the personal dependence of the peasantry on their landlords,

paved the way for the further economic and national integration of the Georgian people.

The accelerating intrusion of money into economic relations, crop specialisation, land shortage and the greater mobility afforded by the abolition of serfdom and the improvement of communications all contributed to the growing economic interdependence of the different parts of the country and to the steady drift of the population from the countryside to the towns.

Despite the tsarist administration's policy of settling Armenians on Georgian territory, the exploitation of the peasantry by the predominantly Armenian money-lending community, and the occasional contact of Georgian peasants with the Russian bureaucracy, judiciary and military, there was little inter-ethnic tension in the countryside, not least because Georgians comprised the vast majority of the population.

In the towns, however, the situation was very different. The domination of commerce by Armenians, particularly since the late 18th century, had, even before Georgia's incorporation into the Russian Empire, led to the Georgians becoming a minority within their own capital city, a situation accentuated in the 19th century both by the expansion of commerce and industry and the massive influx of Russians into the town following its establishment as the autocracy's administrative and military centre in the Caucasus. By the 1860s the Russian population of T'bilisi exceeded that of the Georgians, although this situation was reversed by the 1890s.

The latter, however, not only found themselves a minority within their own capital but also forced to accept the

most menial jobs. With credit facilities monopolised by the Armenians, the bureaucracy dominated by Russians and nationality coming increasingly to act as a determinant of social status, the Georgians in T'bilisi, most of whom were migrant peasant workers, were concentrated in the least privileged strata of society.

Compelled by circumstances to abandon the familiarity and relative predictability of their rural communities, peasants from all over Georgia, on entering this alien environment for the first time, found common ground in their shared language, cultural traits and economic misfortune. This fusion of Georgians from different parts of the country in the working class districts of T'bilisi and their resentment both of national and economic repression provided the radical intelligentsia with a receptive audience for its views on social justice and national renaissance. Fuelled by the tsarist government's endeavours to eradicate the Georgian language, the movement for national enlightenment quickly gathered momentum in the last years of the 19th century and spread beyond the towns to the villages and countryside.

Yet while the declaration of independence in 1918 can in certain respects be seen as the culmination of national integration over the preceding 100 years and the emergence of the movement for national renaissance, in many other respects it represented the negation of the hopes and aspirations of the Georgian people and its political leaders.

Although developments in the social, economic and political life of Georgia in the 19th century led to greater

awareness among Georgians of their corporate identity and to a new conviction in the worth of and a readiness to defend their cultural heritage, their growing identification with the nation did not conclude at any time in the formation of a movement for national independence. For most Georgians separation from Russia in 1918, though voluntarily declared, was made without celebration and with deep regret. In fact, ever since the return of the new generation of Georgian intellectuals from the universities of Russia in the 1860s, the movement for national renaissance in Georgia was predicated upon the conviction that national cultural rights could best be secured within a democratic Russia liberated from the stifling influence of the autocracy.

The Georgian working class and peasantry indeed remained largely impervious to the propaganda of the nationalist parties that appeared in Georgia in the early years of the 20th century, preferring instead to identify their interests with those of the Caucasian organisation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, one of the reasons for whose success in Georgia was its understanding of both the social and national-cultural aspirations of the people. Noe Zhordania, the leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks and President of the Georgian Republic in 1918-21, writing in 1908 stated that while the Georgian people had an undoubted thirst for national schools, literature and culture,

...it rejects national politics today just as it did in the past. It set out on this path from the very beginning and even now has not deviated. This is the historic path of the Georgian people by which it is distinguished from other cultural nations. Therefore, when Georgian Social-Democracy demands cultural autonomy for its nation and not political autonomy, it is reflecting life's course, reaching the heart-felt wishes of the

It is the intention of this study to examine the accuracy of this claim and to seek to explain why it was that the Georgians, despite their undoubted concern for the achievement of national cultural rights, despite having to endure the provocation of the tsarist regime's unconcealed chauvinism and despite their awareness of and anger at the economic exploitation of Georgia's natural resources, did not seek to emulate the many nationalist movements of central and southern Europe by struggling for the establishment of a national state.

By looking at the various factors - historical, cultural, social, economic and political - that can be seen to have conditioned the attitudes of the Georgian people in the 19th century, it is hoped both to provide some of the answers to this question and to shed light on the reasons why they should have rejected one collectivist ideology, nationalism, in favour of another, socialism.

In light of this apparent rejection of nationalism, the final two chapters look on the one hand at the reasons why Georgian Social-Democracy, in evident contradiction of its long-standing opposition to separatism, should have felt compelled to declare Georgia's independence, and on the other, at the way in which the experience of independence, albeit in the most trying circumstances, altered both the Social-Democrats perception of the national question, moving them towards embracing many of the views of their nationalist opponents, and that of the Georgian people.

1. Noe Zhordania, K'art'veli khalkhi da natsionalizmi (The Georgian People and Nationalism) (K'ut'aisi, 1908), p. 6.

The Historical Background to the National Question

1.1 Early History

Situated on the border between Asia and Europe and for centuries at the crossroads of the trade routes between Western and Northern Europe on the one hand and the Middle East and the Orient on the other, Georgia has long been subjected to the often conflicting influences of Persian, Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Turkish and, more recently, Russian cultures, each of which has played a part in the formation and evolution of a Georgian national identity.

Although inhabiting the Asian side of the Caucasus, the Georgians' proximity to Europe and their economic and cultural ties with first the classical world and subsequently Byzantium from very early in their history provided a counter to the all-pervasive Persian influence elsewhere in Asia Minor. The adoption of Christianity too in the fourth century A.D. ensured a strong cultural identification with Europe, an affinity, moreover, that at least until the 13th century was further consolidated by Georgia's integration into the cultural and intellectual life of Byzantine Europe.

Despite this westward orientation, Georgians, like the other peoples of Transcaucasia, had close commercial relations both with each other and the Persians, while Iranian culture, as is evident in the style of dress of the Georgian nobility, the incorporation of Persian loan words into the native vocabulary, similarities in their art and the appearance of Persian themes in Georgian medieval literature, remained a major influence in the country, even whilst its association with Constantinople was at its greatest.

Influenced though not overwhelmed by larger and more powerful peoples, the Georgians gradually emerged as a separate and recognisable people occupying a clearly identifiable area of land, possessing a distinctive culture, speaking a common and unique language and observing a religious faith that set them apart from their neighbours. This juxtaposition to the surrounding and frequently hostile world forced them into an early awareness of their separate group identity.

Contemporary Georgia occupies virtually all the area traditionally lived in by Georgian speaking people and in this respect is rather smaller than Georgia was at the height of its powers in the early 13th century. The country itself is split in two by the Likhi mountains which curve south from the Caucasus down to the Pontic Alps along the south coast of the Black Sea. This range has always played an important part in Georgian history and in the consciousness of the Georgian people. At the time of the formation of the original Georgian states of Colchis (known as Egrisi by the Georgians) and Iberia from the sixth to fourth centuries B.C., it was the Likhi or Surami range as it is alternatively known that divided the states. Georgians living in Iberia in the east came to distinguish themselves in a very basic way from West Georgians, calling them "Imierni", or those living that side, and themselves "Amierni", those living this side. After the Mongols' and Tamurlane's combined devastations had shattered the unity of the Georgian state from the 13th to 15th centuries, this old geographical division reasserted itself until the period of Russian rule. West Georgia was dominated by the Kingdoms of

Ap'khazet'i (Abkhazia), Imeret'i, Samegrelo (Mingrelia) and Guria, and East Georgia by those of K'art'li and Kakhet'i.

Archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors of the present Georgians inhabited the region some 600 to 700,000 years ago and that the Georgian tribes were already evolving a distinctive culture during the Bronze Age. By the sixth century B.C. and the creation of the state of Egrisi, the essential tribal components of the Georgian people had formed, based on a merging of local tribes with neighbouring peoples like the Hittites, Mitanni and Urartians, who in the course of centuries of wars and migration had settled there. These tribes, all speaking Georgian or at least dialects of it, were the K'art's, Megrel-Chans and the Svans.

According to Roman records (most notably Strabo's), available from the first century B.C., it is clear that despite growing cultural and linguistic unity the two states persisted, divided by the rib of mountains and a different economic life. As yet, Egrisi, with its links with the Greco-Roman world and well-developed trade networks, was the more advanced and civilised, but it was Iberia, populated by the K'art's or later K'art'velebi, which was to become the hub of the united kingdom of Sak'art'velo (the Georgian name for Georgia).

Whilst a common tongue and growing trade links were strengthening the ties between the two states, the spread of Christianity, adopted in 337 A.D. by King Mirian of Iberia and the establishment in the fifth century A.D. of the Khutsuri or Georgian ecclesiastical scripts, and the subsequent flourishing of Georgian ecclesiastical (in particular, hagiographical) literature undoubtedly helped consolidate ties. Gradually the East-Georgian written and spoken

language ousted Greek from its position of prominence in Egrisi.

The wealth of Egrisi, and the strategic position of both Georgian states attracted the attentions of the great powers of Asia Minor, the Arabs, the Persians and the Byzantine Empire. During the sixth century, the war between Constantinople and the Persians was concentrated on the Transcaucasian region. The mutual attrition of the contending powers allowed the Georgians to rid their lands of both by the end of the century, only to see them reoccupied by the Arabs soon after. Remarkably, the Georgians survived the countless invasions and in the ninth century the House of Bagrationi began to establish some order amongst the quarrelling clans and to emerge as the dominant name in Georgian society for the next thousand years.

A series of dynastic accidents and skilful diplomacy concentrated the kingdoms of Ap'khazet'i, Basiani, K'art'li and Tao into the hands of Bagrat Bagrationi or Bagrat III. He strove to crush the opposition of the feudal lords and princes and to centralise power. Thus the basis was laid for the Georgian feudal monarchy that was to flourish from the late 11th to 13th centuries. In this period East and West Georgia were united and the power of the feudal lords subjugated to that of the crown. Georgia's economy flourished and internal and external trade reached a new level of development not to be achieved again until the 19th century. The country's military fortunes, too, were at their height.

This was also "the Golden Period" of the Georgian arts. The subordination of the church allowed an imaginative lay literature to spring into prominence, most remarkably with

Shot'a Rustaveli's vep'knistqaosani (The knight in the Panther's Skin). Ecclesiastical architecture reached the high point of its development with the cathedral at K'ut'-aisi and the churches of Shatberdi and Dolisi Khana.¹ Metallurgical arts, notably enamel work, reached a level of development unrivalled elsewhere.

But the flourishing of the Georgian arts, like the country's economic and political development at their peak in the reign of Queen T'amar (1184-1212), was brought to an untimely end by the Mongol invasions beginning in 1230 and by the ravages wreaked by Tamurlane's hordes in the late 14th and 15th centuries. Tamurlane invaded Georgia eight times before he finally overcame its resistance. He left the economy shattered and the population halved.

Over the next 400 years Georgia was dominated by the rival great powers of the Middle East, Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and herself descended back into the petty, debilitating struggles of feudal lords and kingdoms. The economy ceased to progress, the arts were bereft of innovation and for all but a few, the idea of Georgian unity was lost. In fact, the Georgian princes (t'avadebi) had no moral scruples about turning for Turkish or Persian assistance in their intrigues against each other.²

At least until the 18th century Georgia was effectively divided into two spheres of influence, with the dividing line once more the Likhi mountains. In the west the kingdoms of Ap'khazet'i, Guria, Imeret'i and Samegrelo were under Turkish control, while in the east, at various different times and to varying degrees the Persians prevailed over the kingdoms of K'art'li and Kakhet'i. An interesting consequence of this latter relationship was the influential

role of the Georgian monarchy and aristocracy in the affairs of the Persian court.

Despite the intentions of the more able of Georgia's kings to unite the country, circumstances prevailed against them. No single kingdom was strong enough to dominate the others. All were preoccupied with an elemental struggle for survival. Towards the close of the 17th century, it is true, Vakhtang V of K'art'li attempted to put his son on the Imerian throne at K'ut'aisi, but the Turks reminded the Shah that a Turco-Persian treaty of 1632 accorded political recognition to the de facto division of Georgia into their respective spheres of influence. Vakhtang's efforts to widen his own power base ran counter to the terms of this agreement, and he was compelled to back down. Although he tried on at least another three occasions to reinstate his son, he failed every time, and the issue emphasised the limited scope for independent action open to the Georgian kingdoms. The problem was that neither Persia nor Turkey could accept their independent status and any moves by one kingdom to spread its authority over another was regarded (no doubt correctly) as an attempt by one or the other of the great powers to extend its power.

In the 18th century, thanks in part to the collapse of the Persian empire into one of its periodical bouts of anarchy, but thanks also to the ability of King Erekle II of the united kingdoms of K'art'l-Kakhet'i, East Georgia revived its fortunes sufficiently to become the dominant power in the Transcaucasus and North-West Persia. A similar recovery was effected by Solomon I in Imeret'i. Erekle, though, was aware of the ephemeral nature of his

achievements and the cost at which they had been won. incessant military campaigns against rival khanates, t'avade-bi, and the increasingly powerful Lek (Lezghin) tribes in the East Caucasus exacted a heavy toll in human casualties and demanded burdensome taxation of an already hard-pressed peasantry. Consequently, he sought the help of the Russian Empire, hoping to play both upon the avidity of its imperial designs for Persian territory around the Caspian Sea and on their shared religion. This was not the first time that the Georgians had looked to Russia. Vakhtang VI had appealed in the early 18th century for Russian aid to Peter the Great,³ and although it was perhaps naive of the Georgian monarch to have expected Russian assistance solely on the grounds of a shared faith, the alternatives available to him if his kingdom were to continue its resistance to Persian dictates were very limited, a fact realistically faced by Erekle II in 1783 when he signed the Treaty of Giorgievsk with Catherine II.

Erekle hoped that by transforming his kingdom, which by now more closely resembled a Transcaucasian federation populated in almost equal numbers by Georgians, Armenians and Tatars, into a Russian protectorate, K'art'l-Kakhet'i would acquire the peace needed for the economy to recuperate and the business of reviving his country's fortunes to begin. Peace, too, was essential to the stabilising of social relations and the reinforcement of the role of the Georgian aristocracy. The extreme burdens borne by the peasantry during the 18th century had strained their patience to the limit and exacerbated relations between peasants and the landed nobility. With the peasants unable to farm in a stable environment and having to cope with military levies,

the size of surplus produce left to the aristocracy, however hard they squeezed, was correspondingly small. Both, therefore, stood to gain from peace, and the aristocracy in particular.

The negotiations in 1788 caught Erekle at his weakest. The khanate of Erevan was in revolt, Solomon I of Imeret'i had just died following a heavy defeat at the hands of the Turks and he had still not recovered from the death of his son two years previously.⁴

Erekle surrendered Georgian sovereignty over foreign affairs to the Russians, as well as the right of investiture of the Georgian monarchy, but retained control of domestic affairs. The Georgian Church remained autocephalous. In return, the Russians were obliged to protect K'art'l-Kakhet'i from any aggression and to treat it, in this respect, as if it were a part of the empire.

The ensuing 18 years up to the incorporation of K'art'l-Kakhet'i into the Russian Empire in 1801 demonstrated the one-sidedness of the agreement. For the Georgians the treaty was a matter of life or death, for the Russians, a matter of convenience. Whilst the treaty coincided with their perceived interests they would uphold it but no altruistic sentiment nor moral scruple would oblige them to keep to it if their interests dictated otherwise.⁵

In 1785 the Turks invaded Georgia but Erekle, aided only by a token Russian force, turned them back in Jaro and Borchalo.⁶ When, though, the Russo-Turkish war broke out in 1787, the small Russian garrison withdrew beyond the Caucasus, leaving Georgia unprotected. Meanwhile Persian fortunes were reviving under the leadership of the court

eunuch, Agha Muhammed, who in 1795 turned his attentions on Georgia. Again the Russians left K'art'l-Kakhet'i wide open, while the Georgian army, which was grossly outnumbered, was forced to fall back from T'bilisi, leaving it to the Shah's sadistic vengeance. T'bilisi was razed to the ground and the population in another of its many battles for survival running in a line from the Mongols to Tamurlane, to Shah Abbas and now Agha Muhammed, suffered drastic losses in the unequal struggle. According to pre-revolutionary Georgian historian Zurab Avalishvili, the population of Kakhet'i declined by 50 per cent during the period of the Russian protectorate,⁷ while it is estimated that the population of Georgia as a whole had fallen from the five million claimed by the Georgian annals in the 13th century⁸ to between 770,000 and 800,000 by the beginning of the 19th century.⁹

The Russians, of course, lost nothing through K'art'l-Kakhet'i's misfortunes. In fact, it suited them to see the Georgians exhaust themselves before coming to their assistance. Nothing better emphasised their dependence on Russian arms. When in 1796 the Russians did finally arrive, the joint Georgian and Russian army swept the Persians back to Derbend, sized Baku and all the land up to Karabagh. By then, however, the country was devastated and Erekle was close to death with no one of his stature to follow him. In 1798, he died leaving the crown to his son Giorgi XII. With K'art'l-Kakhet'i in chaos, the Russians began to manoeuvre to put an end to the Bagratid monarchy in anticipation of Giorgi's death. When in December 1800 this happened, it marked the end of a dynasty. On 18th January 1801, by the Manifesto of Tsar Paul, the territories of K'art'l-Kakhet'i

were incorporated into the empire.

1.2 Social Relations in the Eighteenth Century and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

a) Nobility and Peasantry

Whatever the Russian motives for the annexation of Georgia, high among which were the desire for territorial expansion into North-West Persia and control of the Caspian Sea trade, to threaten the Ottoman Empire's north-east flank and to exploit Georgia's mineral wealth, there can be no doubt that as a consequence of the "voluntary" unification, the conditions were established for rapid social and economic change in the course of the 19th century. The tsarist administration forcibly reunited Georgia (Imeret'i was incorporated in 1810, Guria in 1829, Samegrelo in 1857, Svaneti in 1858, Ap'khazet'i in 1864, and Atchara after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78), and brought the peace and stability needed if the country was to break free from the enervating effects of a backward feudal socio-economic system and its petty dynastic rivalries. In doing so Russia shifted Georgia from the Asian orbit into Europe.

Open now to wider trade contacts with the West and to the influence of new social and economic ideas, and exposed increasingly to the destabilising effects of industrialisation, urbanisation, increased mobility and wider communications, Georgia was shaken from its feudal lethargy.

By re-establishing political unity and setting in motion the process of economic integration, Russia paved the way for the consolidation of the Georgian nation in the latter half of the century. Despite its colonial treatment of the Transcaucasus, exploiting its resources without

attempting to invigorate the local economy with any strength of its own, the forces released by the country's gradual modernisation helped erode the feudal mentality of the population, and, in particular, the peasantry. The process was, of course, a long one, and by no means complete by the beginning of the 20th century, but gradually increased mobility, the emancipation of the serfs, land shortage and experience of urban work conditions changed the values and aspirations of the peasantry and their perception of the world. With his spatial awareness stimulated by new economic forces, by the need to leave his land and seek work elsewhere, and by improved means of communication, the peasant's previous narrow sense of allegiance and belonging to his immediate vicinity, landlord, commune or family, was able to expand to encompass wider and more abstract loyalties such as to his class or to the nation. In theory, at least, the possibility of creating a mass-based nationalist movement had emerged by the turn of the century.

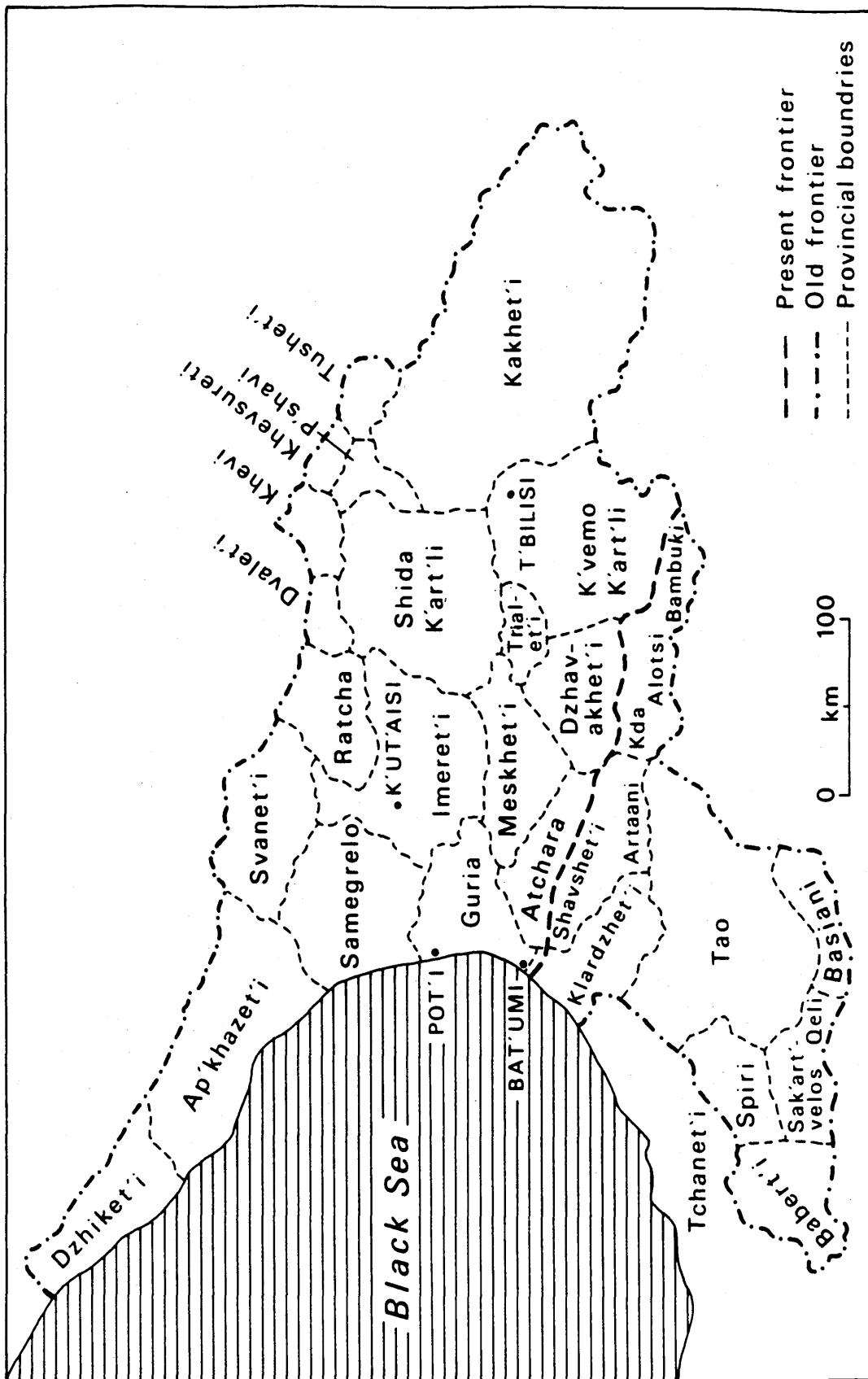
Georgia in 1801 was in a state of total disarray, split politically, territorially, economically and socially. Furthermore its agricultural base had been wrecked by the long succession of wars (K'art'l-Kakhet'i was severely damaged by the Persian invasion) and now lacked the manpower for a quick recovery. In these circumstances and given the level of socio-economic development attained in the Georgian kingdoms, it would be quite meaningless to speak at this stage of a united Georgian nation, although the basis for its future emergence, that is, a contiguous area of land occupied by a people who, by and large, spoke the same language, shared the same religion and possessed a common

culture and history, was and had been present for some time. As yet, though, society remained strictly hierarchical, dominated by its feudal institutions, and any sense of identification with the Georgian nation remained weak, limited to an inchoate awareness of a shared history, religion and language.

Although from about the 12th century serfdom or baton-qmoba as it was known in Georgia, was the basis on which society was organised,¹⁰ its extreme stratification was the product of the preceding stage of feudalism, patronqmoba, a stage which the doyen of Georgian historians, Ivane Javakhi-shvili, claims was remarkably similar to the feudalism of Western Europe in the Middle Ages. As well as allowing for the existence of free, small-scale producers, the entire society was divided from top to bottom into lords and subjects. By the time of Georgia's incorporation into the Russian empire, the t'avadebi, the heads of the great families or clans, had long since been exempted from feudal service, but the aznaurni or lesser nobility remained dependent variously on the king, the church and the t'avadebi. Many aznaurni, despite the fact that their status conferred on them special privileges and exemptions from obligations, were little wealthier than the peasantry. Furthermore, they were themselves subdivided, with the royal or king's aznaurni enjoying greater status than the rest.

This same stratification affected the peasantry, too, with each category possessing different rights and privileges. British Historian W.E.D. Allen refers to the the existence of six such categories,¹¹ and Davit' Gvritishvili to nine.¹²

Fig.2 Provincial Georgia



One of the problems of defining the term "serf" is that the Georgian word used, qma, has the additional meaning of "subject" or "vassal".¹³ Just as patroni denoted "owner", "protector", "guardian", "lord" and "king", so the term qma was in its turn used to denote a "subject", even though he were a didebuli aznauri (a promoted or honoured noble) or a didebuli official. The Historian of Queen T'amar speaks, for instance, of the Queen's didebulni (plural form), namely of Zakharia Panaskevteli and Daniel Kalmakheli as "the good qmani" (plural form), the favoured of the patroni, that is, as good vassals of the sovereign. The Historian of Queen T'amar calls the Shirvanshah, whose domains were under the Queen's protection, "the qma of T'amar the king". Thus everyone, including the t'avadebi, was a qma. With the collapse of central authority, however, power reverted to the main feudal lords, who consolidated their hold over the lesser nobility living within their domains, reinforcing serfdom or batonqmoba in the process as the dominant form of social relationship, while the word qma came increasingly to assume the connotation of "serf".¹⁴ This can be confusing if one considers that not only peasants were qmani, but all those who possessed a patroni including the lesser nobility. Whatever the causes of differentiation of status within the nobility itself, the fact that emerges is that the exaggeratedly hierarchical nature of the social structure had by the 18th century come to act as a brake on the free development of social relations and consequently on the emergence of wider loyalties such as to the nation.

There have been attempts, notably by Georgian nationalists, to suggest that class relations in the 13th to 19th centuries were harmonious, and that both nobles and peasants

regarded batonqmoba as mutually beneficial. Theirs, however, was an idealised version of the reality. To some extent they resemble the liberal intelligentsia of the 18th century, men like Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, Davit' Guramishvili and even kings Vakhtang VI and Erekle II in desiring a situation in which

the lord's and serf's mutual obligations were clearly determined. The serf should be obligated to show fear to his lord, reverence, obedience and correct devotion, whilst the lord should be duty-bound to practise paternal charity and a loving brotherliness towards his serf.¹⁵

The difference between them is that whereas the 18th century liberals understood that such relationships no longer existed and hoped for their restoration, many late 19th and early 20th century nationalists imagined that 18th century Georgia had been characterised by the existence of mythical harmony in class relations.

Attempts to suggest that class struggle was increasingly common in this period met with a hostile reception from Georgian nationalists at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Perhaps over-reacting to the tsarist administration's efforts to Russify the country and demean Georgia's culture and history, many Georgians became excessively sensitive to any work that did not depict Georgia in a favourable light.¹⁶ Ivane Javakhishvili, writing in 1904, devoted a book to the criticism of this phenomenon in which he pointed out that Georgia's interests were not best served by either ignoring or falsifying its past.¹⁷ Thus T'. Zhordania, writing in the paper Akhali k'art'li (New K'art'li), attacked the work of S. Avaliani, Krest'yanskii vopros v Zakavkaz'e, whose offence had been to argue that

the position of Georgian peasants in the 18th century was very severe. In response, Zhordania wrote:

The book leaves a very heavy impression on the Georgian reader, with disgust causes him to say of our forefathers: You were savages and cannibals and we spit on your graves.¹⁸

T'. Zhordania went on to assert that in Georgia "a solid moral and family link ruled relations between lord and serf".¹⁹

Even amongst the scarce material available in English on the Transcaucasus there is a tendency to romanticise: Oliver Wardrop wrote after his travels in Georgia in the 1880s:

The relations between the gentry and the peasantry are excellent; they are on terms of such affectionate familiarity that the later always addresses their prince by his pet name.

He added that

the perfect unanimity in the aims of the people renders an elaborate organisation unnecessary.²⁰

Even in the most auspicious of circumstances this would have been a tendentious claim; as it was, made in the years just after the emancipation of the Transcaucasian peasantry, when land shortage and the reluctance of a large part of the aristocracy to make any concessions to their one-time serfs had led to a serious deterioration in their relations and when even the aristocracy was divided amongst itself, it lacks credibility.

It served the interests also of those seeking a revival of the Bagratid monarchy in the early 19th century to paint a scene of pastoral harmony and to express their own

dynastic intentions in terms of the "people's" interests. That this image is false is demonstrably illustrated by the detailed records kept by the church of their estates. Thus, as early as 1712 Georgian serfs were resisting their obligation to pay feudal dues. In 1749 the serfs of Bolnisi church refused to pay their dues to the archbishop of Bolnisi and the Kat'alikos Antonius was forced to intervene. Similar refusals took place at Urbnisi (1776), Manglisi (1794) and Ruisi (1794).²¹ These records refer only to church property, records for private property being much scarcer. However, documents relating to dealings between the nobility and peasants provide examples of individual complaints and hardship caused by different t'avadebi and aznaurni,²² evidence of an increase in the number of peasants abandoning their plots and turning to banditry and instances of widespread rebellion against the feudal system. They note, for example, an uprising in Imeret'i in 1786 in which the peasantry attacked the homes of certain members of the aristocracy and which was only suppressed following an act of deceit in which the Imerian king invited 20 of the peasantry's elders to meet him and discuss their grievances, only to execute two and imprison the remainder on their arrival.²³

Erekle II was justifiably concerned by the mood of his serfs and, given the long and frequent campaigns made by his armies and the demands they made on a peasantry already exploited by their landlords and taxed to meet the needs of a complex state administration, it is not surprising that he should be amongst those calling for a revival of the supposedly original virtues of batonqmobā. He sought to

ease the strain on the population, too, by recruiting mercenaries from amongst the Cherkess clans²⁴ and by introducing measures to facilitate release from serfdom.²⁵ He did not, however, envisage abandoning the feudal system. Erekle's unease gives some indication of the limitations on the peasantry's loyalty to the state. As serfs they had few rights, being, in effect, the raw material of the state's ambitions, and the producers of its food and goods and, as such, had little cause for strong, positive identification with the interests of the monarchy. To some extent, though, a common religion, language and ethnic origin helped strengthen ties between the state and people, although under Erekle II, K'art'l-Kakhet'i was rather more pan-Caucasian in character than Georgian and contained a mixture of peoples and religions.

However, while Georgians retained a dim awareness of their separate and unique identity and while the church and the popular traditions of oral poetry and story-telling ensured a knowledge of a shared history and past unity, any sense of political unity that might once have existed in the "Golden Age" of Georgian history had long since been eradicated by the rivalries of the feudal lords. Thus by the end of the 18th century it is highly improbable that anything more than an unconscious and inarticulate sense of nationality existed amongst the mass of the people.

There were signs, however, that Georgia was developing a liberal intelligentsia, influenced by the European enlightenment, whose most eminent members were Vakhushiti Bagrationi, Anton Bagrationi and Davit Guramishvili.²⁶ Seeking to revive an interest in Georgian history and culture and its further development, they nevertheless remained

unable to extend that culture to include the peasantry. For the most part, the Georgian aristocracy remained as dominated by its feudal mentality as it had done for the previous 500 years. Moreover, that the concept of "Georgia" meant as little to it as it probably did to the peasantry is evidenced by its readiness to put aside ethnic and religious scruples and invite foreign assistance for its dynastic ambitions. Even in the 18th century there were intrigues against Erekle aimed at the restoration of rival branches of the royal family.²⁷

b) Russian Annexation and the Georgian Nobility

While the Russian invasion may have been morally indefensible insofar as it blatantly disregarded the Treaty of Georgievsk and trampled on the rights of a friendly state, it was nevertheless the case that members of the Georgian government had themselves been questioning the effectiveness of the treaty and asking whether Georgia might not best be served by greater incorporation into the Russian Empire. Many felt that only this would ensure Russian commitment. In 1799 Giorgi XII sent an ambassador to St. Petersburg with instructions to surrender the realm to the full authority of Tsar Paul, asking only that the Bagratid family retain its royal dignity.²⁸ The Russians, however, preferred to wait on the Georgian king's impending death and then resolve matters as they saw fit.

In November 1800 the tsar wrote to the commanding officer in the Caucasus:

The weakening of the king's health gives ground for expecting his decease; you are, therefore, immediately to dispatch, as soon as this occurs, a proclamation in Our name that until Our consent is

received no action should be taken even to
nominate an heir to the Georgian throne.²⁹

At the end of December 1800 Giorgi died, leaving Prince Davit' and Prince Iulon to squabble over the right to succession. Meanwhile the Russians rendered their arguments academic by the publication of a manifesto issued on 12th September 1801 announcing K'art'l-Kakhet'i's incorporation into the empire. Naturally this caused considerable anxiety amongst the Georgian nobility, but there was no coordinated opposition. In fact three factions emerged.³⁰ Of these, one group, gathered around Prince Davit', requested only that the terms outlined by his father Giorgi XII in 1799 be adhered to, whilst a second, focused on Iulon, demanded that the conditions agreed to in 1783 be honoured. The third group welcomed Russian annexation believing that it was the only way Georgia could be protected against Persian and Turkish aggression and that it facilitated the task of unifying the country and strengthening the economy. There were also those who simply regarded Russian annexation as an opportunity to gain revenge over Davit'.

Instead of capitalising on the confusion in the Georgian nobility the Russian military authorities destroyed what residue of good will that had existed towards them by forcing the nobility and other eminent members of the community, under threat of arrest, to swear allegiance to the tsar. However, although the tsarist administration quickly succeeded in antagonising all factions within the Georgian elite, the interests, although not the intentions, of those who regarded the Russian occupation as a means to bring together and reinvigorate the Georgian lands, and

those of the administration temporarily coincided.³¹ Many Georgians, for instance, enthusiastically joined the tsarist army and its campaigns against the Persians and Turks, seeking in Russian power, the means by which Georgia could regain lost territory and secure protection against future invasion.

Whilst it was the case that Russian policy inside Georgia was steadily alienating the nobility, a significant part of it continued to regard Russia's presence as necessary, although only for as long as Georgia was too weak to defend itself. They sought, in other words, to manipulate Russian strength to their own ends. The tsarist administration saw things rather differently and had a vested interest in supplanting the power of the Georgian nobility.

It saw the Transcaucasus as a stepping stone to further expansion into Asia, as a source of raw materials for its own nascent industry, and possibly, too, as a means to influence trade between Europe and Asia. What Russia least wanted was an independent, self-assertive Georgian government.

Either the Georgians underestimated Russian strength or they overestimated their own ability to negotiate independence once they had recovered sufficiently to look after themselves. It seems more likely that they underestimated the Russians. As one Georgian historian has put it:

This was a t'avadaznauri - patriotic road to the attainment of freedom which essentially assisted the tsarist Russia in the consolidation and extension of its power in Georgia.³²

By the 1820s changes in the country's social fabric, both those evolving independently and those instigated by

the Russians, had led the nobility to a reassessment of its position and to incline increasingly towards the violent overthrow of the regime.

c) The Emergence of an Armenian Commercial Bourgeoisie

As stated above class antagonism between the peasantry and nobility had become an issue of importance well before the 17th century. As yet, though, rebellions were localised, spontaneous reactions to the excesses of particular landlords, or combinations of factors like poor harvests and high military taxation. These early indicators of class struggle, however, were not confined to the country. In K'art'l-Kakhet'i's towns (as yet there was very little urban development in West Georgia) the growth of commerce was creating fresh areas of stress in the feudal structure.

Georgian 18th century towns were the property of the king or the t'avadebi to whom the king had granted them.³³ By law all those who settled in the them, including foreigners, became royal property.³⁴ In this way, the so-called free producers (craftsmen, etc.) and merchants were effectively little better off than serfs. In fact the vast majority of the urban population were by the 1780s, still formally enserfed either to the king, the nobility, or the church.³⁵ The limitations on the freedom of the middle category were compounded by the virtual monopoly of crown, church and nobility over the existing means of production and the caravanserai.³⁶

Within the urban population a divide had emerged between the wealthy merchants and the money-lenders and serf craftsmen and small-scale merchants. In the first category the most important were the mok'alak'eebi (literally meaning

citizens), a status conferred only on royal serfs (state serfs after 1801) wealthy enough to pay the tax corresponding to their position. Despite still being serfs, by virtue of their wealth and prestige certain members of this group had influence not just within their own community but within governing and aristocratic circles as well. Some, benefiting from the Georgian feudal practice of bestowing privileges (shedsqaloba), had the right to own serfs, and a few were promoted to t'avadebi, and thus out of serfdom.³⁷ Nevertheless, as commercial production expanded and with it the demand for money, so the king and the nobility turned to the richer merchants as their chief means of supply. In this way these nouveaux riches, building their fortunes by exploiting their poor colleagues and the peasantry, were in turn exploited by the nobility. Taxation of the mok'alak'eebi became one of the principal sources of royal income.³⁸ Coercion, too, was used against them by an often indolent aristocracy desperately searching for means to finance its expansive lifestyle. Backed by the society's extreme hierarchical structure, the nobility, and in particular its more important members, was able to exploit this emerging social class with virtual impunity.³⁹ However, its growing wealth and influence undoubtedly posed a threat to the nobility and in particular to the aznaurni, who though often having very little land and few serfs nevertheless felt obliged to live in a manner commensurate with their status. Many aznaurni fell into the debt of town moneylenders.

An additional factor which further complicated the class dimension of this relationship, and which was to have an important bearing on the development of national

relations and the national question in the late 19th century, was the predominance of Armenians among the urban merchants and craftsmen. Although there were only 47,000 Armenians in Georgia⁴⁰ at the turn of the century (six per cent of the total population), they made up 75 per cent of the population of T'bilisi.⁴¹ Because K'art'l-Kakhet'i was a Georgian kingdom and offered some refuge from Turkish and Persian attack, and perhaps because national intolerance had little place in Georgian life, Armenians had for a long time emigrated into south and south-east Georgia. In the 18th century Erekle II, endeavouring to promote the interests of his Caucasian state, actively encouraged the settlement of Armenians in those parts of K'art'li which had suffered particularly severely from the ravages of war. In this way he hoped to infuse the area with new vigour and develop commerce.

Although national intolerance did not as yet exist amongst the peasantry, there were signs as early as the 17th century that the threat posed by the Armenian merchants to the nobility's hereditary domination of society was leading to the formation of an anti-Armenian prejudice, as is illustrated by the following criticism of royal patronage of the Armenian merchants by Prince Lese Barat'ashvili:

Godless Armenians..., merchants, huckstering and because of the sins of our king, entrenching themselves in the palace...in defiance of the will of God they are made lords, administrators and aznaurni in Georgia... This is only done because of the impiety of kings, but look to the east, the west, south and north; where do Armenians possess nobility? They have been dispersed by God; is it in Man's power to unite them?⁴²

Thus ethnic differences exacerbated and complicated an already burgeoning class struggle. For the moment,

protected by the feudal structure of society, the nobility held the upper hand but even in these conditions the rising class could still challenge, encouraged, too, by the importance Erekle II attached to the development of commercial relations.

Whilst the potential for serious conflict between the two most powerful elements in Georgian society was clearly apparent by the time of annexation, it was not until the 1840s, with the decision of the Russian administration to grant official recognition to the amk'rebi or guilds, that the conflict could develop freely. By then the tsarist authorities had undermined the nobility's hereditary domination of the state.

The continuing development of this antagonism throughout the latter half of the 19th century was to have an important bearing on the national question in Georgia, for although a national movement had emerged by the end of the century among the intelligentsia (drawn largely from the aristocracy) and although the population as a whole was becoming more aware of its national identity, the traditional bearers of the national idea and the motive force behind many of the national movements elsewhere in Europe, the bourgeoisie, remained predominantly Armenian.

The growing political ambitions of the Armenian refugees, particularly from the late 18th century onwards, brought them into increasing conflict with the t'avadaznauroba and further exacerbated national relations. Whereas in the past their immigration into Georgia had been a spontaneous reaction to Muslim persecution, or at the invitation of the Georgian kingdoms, leading figures in the Armenian com-

munity in Transcaucasia sought in the aftermath of the Persian invasion of 1795 to use Russian influence to coerce the Georgian government to grant them land.⁴³ Despite the fact that this involved direct interference in Georgian domestic affairs and was therefore in contravention of the treaty of 1783, the Russians complied with the Armenian request. Erekle, who was in no position to dispute the issue, was forced to grant land to Armenian refugees in Kakhet'i and concede to their right to Russian protection. Other leaders of the Armenian community who had negotiated directly with the Georgian government, thus respecting its sovereignty in K'art'l-Kakhet'i, were granted land in Bolnisi.⁴⁴

This deliberate disregard for Georgian sovereignty caused many who had hitherto sympathised with the distress of a harassed people now to feel threatened by Armeno-Russian collusion.⁴⁵

1.3 Tsarist Policy in Georgia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

The measures adopted by the tsarist authorities in the first decade of their rule made serious incursions into the power of the Georgian aristocracy. An immediate end was put to the hereditary allocation of ranks and offices. From now on, the mouravebi, officials appointed from within the ranks of the most important nobles, were gradually replaced by Russian chinovniki.

Following the removal of the Georgian monarchy and the heavy blows dealt to the confidence of the t'avadaznauroba in the early 19th century, there was a marked rise in the proportion of free producers, merchants and money-lenders

among the population of T'bilisi. Whereas in 1782-3 they had only constituted 15.67 per cent of the city population, by 1807-8 their share had risen to 36.63 per cent.⁴⁶

It was not only in the towns that the authority of the Georgian feudal elite was eroded. In the country too key posts in the administration were assigned to Russians, causing the nobility considerable loss of prestige. Some t'avadebi retained their station as mouravebi but usually only in the more inaccessible regions like Pshavi, Khevsuret'i or T'ushet'i. In the more accessible central zones political power was firmly in the hands of the Russians. In this way Russian policy sought to neutralise the authority of the t'avadebi and, in time, to render them dependent on the tsar.

Measures were also taken to try to assimilate the Georgian nobility. This involved not just their reorientation towards a more European lifestyle and education, but also fundamental alterations to the feudal structure to bring it into line with Russia's.

A major problem that had to be overcome, however, was that the desire to both neutralise and assimilate appeared, to begin with, mutually incompatible. By attacking the political power base of the nobility the Russians exacerbated the sense of insecurity of a class already threatened by social upheavals in the feudal order, and immediately gained its hostility. The likelihood of a smooth incorporation of the Georgian nobility into the ranks of the Russian dvoryanstro rapidly receded.

By the treaty of 1783 Russia had acknowledged the parity in status of the Russian and Georgian nobility, but now that they had annexed K'art'l-Kakhet'i and were seeking

to root out all independent authority within the ex-kingdom, this too presented a problem. It was not until Russian rule was well consolidated that formal recognition was given to the Georgians' equal status. The greatest obstacle to the t'avadaznauroba's incorporation into the dvoryanstvo was the existence in the Georgian feudal system of a vassal relationship between upper (t'avadebi) and lower aristocracy (aznaurni), a distinction which, if the Georgian aristocracy was to merge with its Russian counterpart, would have to end. This, in fact, gave the Russians an opportunity on the one hand to further weaken the authority of the t'avadebi, and on the other to secure the loyalty of the aznaurni by ridding them of their burdensome feudal obligations. In the course of bringing K'art'l-Kakhet'i and later other parts of Georgia into line, the clergy were freed from serfdom and all taxation and duties in 1808,⁴⁷ while in 1811 all nobles who had been dependent on the church were placed under state authority.⁴⁸ In February 1827, confirming what had been agreed in 1783, the Georgian nobility, whether in state service or not, was declared equal in privilege and status to its Russian counterpart, and in July 1833 the important decision was taken to eliminate the category of vassal gentry in K'art'l-Kakhet'i⁴⁹ (Viceroy Vorontsov extended this ukaz to West Georgia in 1847).⁵⁰

However, whilst this policy was to bear fruit in the 1840s and 1850s, it was the cause until then of much insecurity not just among the t'avadebi, who had comparatively greater wealth to fall back on, but among the aznaurni, too. The ukazi of 1827 and 1833 did nothing to resolve the underlying issue of establishing who was actually entitled to the

rank of nobility. To this end the Georgians were made to form noble assemblies (in T'bilisi in 1819 and K'ut'aisi in 1840) with the task of defining membership. The onus of proving one's status fell on the individual aznaurni. In the frequent absence of documentary records, they were forced into the humiliating position of having to petition other nobles to testify on their behalf. By the law of 1833 those who failed to prove either their entitlement to land or noble status lost their property to their former lords, and became state serfs.⁵¹ In this way, the Russians ultimately acquired themselves new allies, but not without causing needless hostility in the process. As Viceroy Vorontsov was to demonstrate in West Georgia in the 1840s, there was a means available which the Georgians found acceptable. This came to light in 1844 when an imperial ukaz rendering it more difficult to prove nobility led to a rash of forged documents from the panic-stricken aznaurni. It was then pointed out that at the time of the treaty of 1783 Erekle (who apparently knew all the t'avadaznauroba's family names) had produced a comprehensive list of Georgian aristocratic families.⁵² It was suggested that Georgians should merely have to prove their membership of one of these families and that a commission of nobles oversee the process. By 1859 30,000 Georgians had established their aristocratic lineage and hence their right of access to state service.⁵³

The liberation or emancipation of the aznaurni from feudal service both reduced the income from taxation of the t'avadebi and contributed to the break up of their estates. Traditionally these were owned jointly by the members of the great clans or families, but even before Russian annexation there had been a trend towards breaking these up into

individually owned estates.⁵⁴ Vakhtang VI had, in fact, attempted to prevent this process by incorporating an article into his legal code which required that one forfeit five per cent of a divided estate to the state as a penalty for individualising collectively-owned lands.⁵⁵ Since the Russians were anxious to reduce the power of the great nobility by all means available it suited them perfectly if as well as destroying their political power they could weaken the t'avadebi's economic base by encouraging the breaking up of their estates. Thus in 1810, Vakhtang VI's law was rescinded. The break up of the large family-owned or sagvareulo estates and the establishment of individual ownership acquired a mass character following the occupation by Russia.⁵⁶

With their hold on political power rapidly receding, many t'avadebi tried to hang on to their estates, but with little success as the countless enactments relating to parcelisation of land in this period bear witness. From 1800-1825 the Tsitsishvili estates, for instance, were partitioned 10 times and divided among 30 different owners.⁵⁷

In 1847 Giorgi Mukhranbaton Bagrationi, himself a t'avadi, wrote a report to the tsarist administration entitled 'On the situation of the rights of the different classes of the Georgian people' (K'art'veli khalkhis skhvadaskhva tsodebat'a up'lebrivi mdgomareobis shesakheb), in which he argued that the sagvareulo system had been completely destroyed. The sagvareulo, or extended family group, increasingly tended towards division into nuclear families and the subsequent breaking up of estates. This process had gone so far, he wrote, that in many cases the size of these new holdings was scarcely sufficient to

support one family. Whilst he admitted that in terms of rights the nobility was still a privileged class, he felt that as far as property was concerned this was often no longer true. Only 15 t'avadebi, he claimed, owned over 200 serfs, and he went on to argue that to prevent further parcelisation of land the nobility should be required to possess a minimum of 40 serfs.⁵⁸

Apart for the fact that such a measure would have found great difficulty in acquiring the support of the Georgian nobility itself, which clearly had decided to move away from the old system, the Russians had no reason for wishing to prevent the further withering away of its economic power. As a Russian official put it when commenting on the report:

Would this really be to the advantage of the autocracy's policy? When the greater nobility possessed undivided estates, as well as having material resources it meant that they had a voice when the government required only that they listen.⁵⁹

While on the issue of state service and the nobility he wrote:

Any class which is in no way dependent on the government for its position represents a potential danger, and not without reason.⁶⁰

b) Resistance to the Russian Administration

Although by the end of the first half of the 19th century the Russians had firmly secured their position in Georgia, and acquired a considerable degree of acceptance amongst the aznaurni in particular, their policies had inevitably alienated significant sectors of the population as well. That the annexation more closely resembled a military occupation and that the Russian chinovniki were

introduced to run the administration were factors that contrived to unite the Georgian aristocracy where all others had failed. Ivane Javakhishvili wrote:

Not three years had passed (since annexation) when those very people who had thanked fortune that the Russians were in Georgia now cursed their fate.⁶¹

The chinovniki were unpopular in Russian itself, often being of non-aristocratic birth and considered of lesser education. Worse still they represented a threat to the political power of the aristocracy. In Georgia, ethnic and cultural differences inflamed feelings already aroused by the incompetence and corruption of the new bureaucracy. As Javakhishvili remarks, they were only in Georgia because they were no longer wanted in Russia.⁶² They knew no Georgian and had no inclination towards acquiring it, and neither had they the faintest awareness of Georgian custom or law. This combination of ignorance and national arrogance infuriated both aristocracy and peasantry.

The opening of a school for the nobility in T'bilisi in 1804 (which was soon to be followed by more of the same) to some extent fulfilled its purpose of preparing Georgians for state service, but the harsh and stifling atmosphere of the school and the humiliations suffered by the Georgian students hardened their opposition to Russian rule,⁶⁵ while the education received gave many the opportunity to progress to a higher education in St. Petersburg and contact with Western thought and ideas and the Russian intelligentsia. In this way the ground was prepared for the emergence of a Georgian national intelligentsia in the 1820s.

The urgency with which the Russians attacked the nobility brought few if any benefits to the peasantry.

Rather, the presence of a large standing army as well as an alien administration placed additional pressure on a population already pressed by a multiplicity of feudal dues and obligations. The size of the tsarist army in the Caucasus had reached 52,000 by 1816, 30,000 of which were located in Georgia and Azerbaijan. This, of course, takes no account of the numerous officials injected into the administration.⁶⁴

The Russian military presence brought greater but not complete protection against foreign invasion. The Leks from Daghestan were still a powerful and destructive force in East Georgia, while both Persia and the Ottoman Empire were still able to mount attacks. The rate of recovery from population losses sustained in the 1790s remained slow. According to Georgian demographer Vakhtang Jaoshvili, the absolute increase in 1800-1832 was 107,000, of which 25 per cent was due to Armenian immigration (and to a lesser extent, Greek) from Turkey.⁶⁵ Natural increase was a low 0.41 per cent a year. He comments:

The population's rather low increase tempo was determined by the existing military-political and socio-economic circumstances. From 1811-1812 black death, floods and famine caused severe losses in Imeret'i. Large population losses were caused too by the Leks, the sale of prisoners, the low level of sanitation and various other analogous phenomena.⁶⁶

Kakhet'i suffered in much the same way. At first the peasantry had looked to the Russians for sympathy, hoping that it might alleviate its position vis-a-vis the nobility. Javakhishvili refers to the comment of a Russian official on a letter he had received from a female serf of Prince Tsitsishvili,

...that she, just like all the men, is devoted to the Russians and hates the princes and nobles.⁶⁴

The peasantry was quickly disabused of such illusions but, nevertheless, its readiness to turn to the Russians regardless of nationality is indication both of the social chasm dividing the Georgian people and the lack of importance attached to ethnic solidarity by the majority of the population. With their values, loyalties and aspirations encapsulated within particular, narrow, feudal communities, their chief concerns were with the immediate necessities of life, and if the Russian administration were to weaken the nobility and ease their obligations towards it, then they would support the Russians.

Georgian nationalist writers were later to take the manifestations of discontent with the policies of the Russian administration that were soon to erupt and carry on erupting throughout the 19th century as evidence of national indignation. But there is little to substantiate their claim. Primarily the peasantry were protesting against the injustices of feudalism, and it mattered nothing whether the system was administered by Georgians or Russians. Uprisings were usually localised and when they did spread, they often included non-Georgian tribes or peoples. Examination of the first two large-scale rebellions in the period of Russian rule, in Oset'i in 1804 and Kakhet'i in 1812, shows their root causes to have been not in national hatred but anger at administrative corruption, economic exploitation and the behaviour of the occupying troops. In the case of Oset'i, the taking of food and fodder without payment, the compulsion of local inhabitants to build roads and bridges across

the Caucasus in atrocious conditions, and the not infrequent rape of local women created an atmosphere of constant tension to which a decision to conscript the male population into the army led to armed revolt.⁶⁸ In the ensuing violence the Russian garrison at Ananuri and a relief force of Cossacks were wiped out. Although some attempt was made to link up with Imeret'i, the uprising was in the main confined to the Georgian mountain tribes and resolved around their particular grievances.

In Kakhet'i the peasantry's faith in the Russian government in the Transcaucasus was quickly dissipated. In 1812 the army carried out a particularly harsh food requisitioning policy to provide for the ongoing campaigns against Persia and Turkey. Following immediately after two failed harvests, it brought the Kakhian peasantry close to starvation. Patience, too, with Russian bureaucratic practice was stretched to the limit. The combination of the introduction of Russian criminal law to replace the laws of Vakhtang VI, the ignorance of the chinovniki of Georgian custom, their use of Russian and their corruption had undermined any mutual understanding. Furthermore, whereas previously conscription had been accepted quite willingly,⁶⁹ instances in which Russian commanders had appeared to sacrifice their Georgian troops in battle had caused a change of heart.⁷⁰ Attempts to conscript in 1812 only succeeded in further agitating the population and a violent uprising broke out in which virtually the entire Russian force in Kakhet'i, as well as officials, were slaughtered. Count Paulovskii, the Russian commander-in-chief, threatened the insurgents with the wrath of God and of the tsar but without effect.⁷¹ The reply, though, gives some insight into the peasantry's

thinking.

We lack experience of letters and cannot understand what you have written. We do not deny Christ and we are not betraying the tsar, but you have not carried out what the tsar commanded in his manifesto. You have given us cause for action - murdering and hanging both the innocent and the guilty. Because of this we have lost patience. With bayonets you have seized our last grain and told us that we should eat grass. Because of requisitions we have no carts and no oxen; for every kod of wheat you gave us 1 ruble 26 kopecks, and to those who had none, you sold it for 4 rubles. We made a request to you, but you didn't send it to the tsar. We can no longer meet you. As it is we already feel dead and are ready to die!⁷²

The Georgian Bolshevik P'. Makharadze, in a paper given at the All Union Conference of Marxist Historians held in Moscow from 1928-29 gave a fuller version of the letter with the peasants' complaints catalogued in greater detail and still more stress placed on loyalty to the tsar. Rather than challenging overall Russian authority the letter merely complained that the tsar's subordinates were out of line and acting against his will. In Makharadze's version the localised nature of the revolt (though it did spread later) was emphasised by its claim to speak not for Georgian but for Kakhian peasants.⁷³

That the exiled monarchy, the nobility and the upper echelons of the clergy tried to manipulate peasant unrest is clear. Prince Iulon and P'arnaoz tried to develop the 1804 rebellion into a wider uprising⁷⁴ and Prince Aleksander entertained plans of supporting the 1812 revolt with a force of Persians.⁷⁵ However, whilst the peasantry had no great sympathy for the Russian administration, neither was it enthusiastic about resurrecting the Bagratid monarchy. Aside from the fact that this would almost certainly have

led to the reinforcement of the old feudal order, it is unlikely that Georgia could have remained independent in an area vied for by three major powers. Independence from Russia would in all likelihood have meant either dependence on Persia or Turkey, or still more likely, the redivision of the country, with East Georgia Persia's and the West Turkey's. As a vassal of either of these Muslim states Georgia would have been required to pay taxes to their respective exchequers, and in the inevitable struggle that would have occurred between Russia and these Middle Eastern powers for predominance in the area, Georgia's land and population would almost certainly have endured further devastation.

On the other hand, the Russian military presence, whilst expensive to maintain, did at least offer a reassuring bulwark against Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and perhaps more importantly, Russia's determination to destroy the power of the t'avadaznauroba brought side benefits to the serfs. Thus, as a means to cut the nobility's independent income, measures were taken to facilitate the process of securing freedom from serfdom. In 1824, it was made law that when a noble offered his lands for public sale his serfs could secure release from service to him by paying an appropriate sum of money.⁷⁶ Those who managed to buy their freedom but had no land became state or treasury (sakhazino) peasants, while those with land became private owners.

In 1836 another law was introduced enabling serfs to secure release from feudal service if their owner had no documents to prove ownership.⁷⁷

In this fashion the tsarist administration contrived not just to inhibit the nobility but also to facilitate the exploitation of the full range of state taxes from the peasantry on a regular basis. To this end they also showed particular concern to wipe out the slave trade that was rife in parts of West Georgia (Pot'i, Sokhumi, Akhaltsikhe).⁷⁸ The further depletion of an already decimated population in no way served the interests of the new regime. Whilst, of course, such measures were taken with purely the government's interests at heart, the peasantry, nonetheless, benefited.

Even the suppression of the autocephalous Georgian Church in 1811 failed to provoke a national reaction from the peasants, although it did widen the gulf between important elements in the Georgian elite and the Russians. Nevertheless, by attacking the church, they risked incurring the hostility of a much broader section of the population, insofar as the church, for all its opulence (perhaps because of it) and corruption was held in great respect by and occupied a central place in the lives of the peasantry. To attack it, therefore, was more dangerous than an attack on the nobility. It was possible, too, that the Georgian Church might provide common ground for the two classes.

The replacement of the Georgian clerical hierarchy with Russians quickly gathered momentum and was accompanied by a policy of repression against all the national characteristics of the church. Georgian icons and frescoes suffered particularly severe damage in this period. Exarch Theophilakt, new leader of the Georgian "flock", attempted where possible, to replace the Georgian liturgy with Slavonic forms, rendering it incomprehensible to its

audience.⁷⁹ He, himself, knew no Georgian.

In 1817 he limited the use of Georgian in the cathedral church of T'bilisi, Sioni, to three days a week, thus interfering with the free practice of faith in the town for the first time in 1400 years. Not even the Arabs, the Mongols, the Turks or the Persians had denied that right.⁸⁰

The arrests of the archbishops of K'ut'aisi and Gelat'i in 1820 and their subsequent maltreatment provoked a popular uprising in Imeret'i which soon spread throughout the whole of West Georgia.⁸¹ For a while it seemed as if the peasantry and nobility had found common cause, but by 1821 the revolt had petered out. Religion was not enough to hold them together, and whilst the changes undoubtedly affected the higher ranks of the church, in the country little was altered.

It is evident that at the time of the revolt in West Georgia the peasantry in East Georgia remained unmoved. Given the influence of the lower clergy, the village priests, among the peasants, a possible explanation for this contrast lies in the reform of 1808 granting the lower clergy in East Georgia release from serfdom. As a consequence, they had some cause to be grateful to the Russians. In West Georgia, however, there had been no such reform.

Subsequent to the suppression of the revolt it is evident too that the Russians considered this a matter of urgency, for from 1821 onwards measures were taken to extend the law into West Georgia, although it was not until the 1840s that the process was completed.⁸²

By the 1820s the aristocracy had had time to recover from the trauma of annexation and regroup. Better education

and improved contact with Western thought and developments, combined with the negative effects of Russian policy on justice and religion, the offensive presence of the chinovniki and the apparent slide towards Russification had provoked a new awareness of nationality among certain members of the nobility. Time, moreover, had given those confused in 1801 by the need for Russian protection and their desire for independence to regain their confidence and forget the chaos of the late 18th century.

The 1825 Decembrist uprising contributed to the revival, not least because many of its participants, including two Georgians, A. Gamgeblidze and M. Barat'ashvili were exiled to Georgia. A consequence of this was the flourishing of intellectual life in T'bilisi.⁸³ A new journal, Tiflissskie Vedomosti, began publication in 1828 and was described by Pushkin as

...the only one in Russia which has an original colour and where one can find articles of real and European interest.

In 1832 a Georgian edition, Saliteraturo Natsilebi Tp'ilisis Utsgebat'an started up.⁸⁵

Its confidence restored, the aristocracy planned the overthrow of the Russian administration in 1832 and the restoration of the Georgian monarchy. But the conspirators were by no means an homogenous group. The majority were monarchists with some degree of commitment to a constitution, but some were liberal democrats who sought the creation of a republic and initially at least a return to the treaty of 1783. This group included the leading lights in the awakening Georgian nationalist movement, men like Giorgi Orbeliani, Simon Dodashvili, Giorgi Erist'avi and Davit'

Qipiani. They were inspired by the French revolution of July 1830 and the Polish revolt of 1830-31. They did, however, make it clear that they regarded Russian protection as essential to Georgia's survival. Simon Dodashvili, for instance, stated that "without the patronage of Russia her [Georgia's] existence is impossible".⁸⁶

It would appear that the reactionary character of the monarchist faction, which sought the restoration of the pre-1783 status quo, caused some wavering amongst their more liberal colleagues. The plan to exterminate all leading members of the Russian administration proved the final straw, and Prince Iase Palavandashvili felt compelled to betray the plot.⁸⁷

Had it succeeded, apart from bringing an inevitable clash with the Russian army, it seems very likely that it would have met with a negative response from the peasantry. Even if one assumes that the Georgian monarchy could have defended its sovereignty against the Persians and Russians, it is apparent that the peasantry was indifferent.

Ivane Javakhishvili wrote:

Now that we have the documents we can with conviction say that even without the betrayal by Palavandashvili, the conspiracy had no chance of success, and not because there was insufficient hostility and dissatisfaction in Georgian society with the regime introduced by the Russian government, but because exactly at that time there was strong agitation among the Georgian peasantry, and it would not have supported the nobility. The reason lies in the fact that in precisely those years when the plot was being hatched for the overthrow of Russian domination, a powerful movement had re-emerged amongst the peasantry for freedom from serfdom.⁸⁸

Reports made by the Russian administration give documentary evidence of the peasantry's increasing reluctance to

fulfil their obligations to their landlords, with rich peasants offering particularly stubborn resistance.⁸⁹

Despite its failure, however, the conspiracy was something of a watershed in Georgian history. It marked the end of the Bagratid monarchy once and for all, and saw the emergence of a Georgian nationalist intelligentsia, albeit very small, and restricted to the aristocracy, but a beginning nevertheless. They stand as the forerunners of the more important national movement of the second half of the 19th century. In the immediate term, too, the plot brought home to the government the folly of alienating its greatest potential ally amongst the indigenous population, the Georgian aristocracy. Aside from class sympathy, the Russian government was understandably reluctant to grant favours to the Georgian peasantry when their own peasants were making similar demands nearer to home. Beginning with a law introduced in 1832 limiting the right to own serfs to the nobility, and reinforcing the nobility's power over their serfs⁹⁰ and the lenient treatment handed out to the conspirators, the regime set out to entice the Georgian gentry into cooperation.

It had long been acknowledged in government circles that the Georgian administration was hopelessly inefficient and corrupt, but nothing had been done about it.⁹¹ Having observed the consequences of misgovernment and ignoring the nobility's interests, it was at last recognised that tsarist policy could best be served if loyal Georgians became actively involved in the administration. The measures taken in K'art'l-Kakhet'i in 1837 and the 1840s in West Georgia to ease the position of the aznaurni (above), and the ability of Viceroy Vorontsov (1845-54) to find common language with

the Georgian nobles led to their transformation by the 1850s into a loyal arm of the tsarist government.

1.4 The Growing Significance of the National Question

By the end of the first half of the century the four key actors in the future evolution of the national question, the Russian administration, the Georgian nobility, the Armenian bourgeoisie and the peasantry (preponderantly Georgian), had all made their sympathies clear. The Russians, despite occasional eccentric deviations towards the promotion of Georgia's socio-economic and cultural life as something worthy in itself (notably under Vorontsov's influence), and in spite of the fact that by simply bringing a measure of security to the area they had contributed to its progress, regarded Georgia very much as a colony, whose wealth should be exploited not for its own benefit but for that of the Russian heartland. The Russian Minister of Finance in 1827, Kankrin stated:

The Transcaucasian provinces not without reason could be termed a colony of Russia which should bring the state highly significant profits from the products of southern climes.⁹²

His view was shared by General Paskevich, military commander-in-chief in Georgia, who in the same year enquired:

Should we not regard Georgia as a colony which could provide us with raw materials (silk, cotton, cloth, etc.) for our factories, in exchange for manufactured goods from Russia?⁹³

Whilst this inevitably hindered the economic progress and integration of Georgia, it must have given some satisfaction to those Georgian aznaurni who felt threatened by the rising fortunes of the commercial bourgeoisie in urban

centres like T'bilisi, T'elavi, Gori and Akhaltsikhe.

Commenting on the tariff imposed in 1831 on foreign goods and measures taken to boost the performance of Russian manufacture, Kankrin noted:

...through the introduction of a new system of trade into the Transcaucasian district I don't so much have in mind more income, so much as the support of our native industry.⁹⁴

His policy proved a failure. The virtually tariff-free route through Transcaucasia had, while it lasted, attracted Persian, Turkish and European trade, but imposition of import controls led to increased Persian interest in European merchandise and to the redirection of the East-West trade route via Trebizond instead of T'bilisi. Protectionism did nothing, moreover, to increase Russian sales in the region, not least of the reasons for this being that the market was still very small, and although money was in increasing use in both the rural and urban economy, much of it was of non-Russian denomination, testifying to the persisting Persian and Turkish influence. Furthermore, Georgia was too far from the Russian manufacturing centres for the still rather weak bourgeoisie to achieve an effective exploitation,⁹⁵ and with communications still poorly developed, and the mountain tribes uncontrolled, the journey across the Caucasus remained an extremely hazardous exercise.

In Georgia itself, the local economy was dominated by the amk'rebi or guilds, which in their turn were dominated by Armenians. Despite the backing of their government Russian merchants had by the mid-19th century still failed to put up an effective challenge. By 1854 nearly all

government contracts were being handled by the Armenians.⁹⁶ Russian rule, whatever its other faults, had at least provided a stable climate for trade and expansion. The Armenian merchants were already turning their attention to Europe, to the extent that between 1821 and 1864 imports of foreign goods into Transcaucasia rose ninefold.⁹⁷ In recognition of the role played by the T'bilisi merchants, and as part of his policy of integrating the leading elements of Georgian society into a closer identification with the empire, Viceroy Vorontsov declared the mok'alak'eebi "hereditary eminent citizens of the empire". Thus included into the category of "honoured citizens" (pochetnye grazhdane) created by Nicholas I in 1832,⁹⁸ they were freed from military recruitment, the poll tax and corporal punishment.⁹⁹

The successful integration of large sections of both the Georgian nobility and the Armenian bourgeoisie into the service of the Russian empire, the achievement of persuading both classes to identify their future prosperity and security with the maintenance of Russian rule was accompanied by a confrontation within Georgian society itself.

As changes in the country's social relations placed greater stress on its ailing feudal structure, class antagonism between the mainly rural-based nobility and the commercial bourgeoisie assumed new proportions. The growth in the use of money was undermining the power of the t'avad-aznaurni, based on a prescriptive right to land and authority. However, with that right under increasing challenge, and with their estates fragmenting, the desire of many aznaurni to lead a lifestyle which they deemed

commensurate with their station, and their ability to do so were often poles apart. Reluctance to live within their means brought an every expanding number to fall into the debt of the urban nouveaux riches, the Armenian bourgeoisie. This confusion of the class struggle with ethnic differences was later to have an important effect on the development of the national question in Georgia.

Russia's colonial treatment of the Transcaucasus had its repercussions in the late 1850s with the emergence of a new Georgian intelligentsia, educated in the universities of Russia and Europe and strongly influenced by the Russian revolutionary democratic movement. With its roots lying with the Georgian liberal nationalists of the 1830s, they took a strongly hostile view of tsarist rule and its effects on Georgian cultural and socio-economic life. Although the members of this movement met considerable hostility from their own class, the nobility, they, nevertheless, emerged as the most challenging intellectual force in Georgian society. Their active support of agrarian reform and emancipation of the serfs plus their belief that the country's future socio-economic and cultural prosperity depended on the transfer of land to the peasantry, the abolition of privilege and the establishment of national autonomy, galvanised a vigorous movement of opposition to the Russian administration. However, its call for national unity across class boundaries was to stumble not just on class antagonism, but on the fact that the bourgeoisie, so often the bearers of the national idea, were Armenian and uninterested.

The fourth and perhaps most important force in Georgian society was the peasantry. It continued to suffer from all

sides of the social spectrum, and not least from the Russian administration. Once the tsarist authorities had secured the loyalty of the t'avadaznaurni they felt confident enough to protect their interests, past mutual antipathy breaking down before a common desire to maintain their feudal domination.

Whilst the peasantry continued to suffer from a variety of state taxes and labour demands the nobility, seeking compensation for the reduction in the size of its estates, compounded the peasantry's misfortunes by intensifying its exploitation.¹⁰⁰ For the majority of the peasantry, too, the rise in the fortunes of the merchants and money-lenders became another source of despair, for although the exploitation of the countryside by the town was not yet a major factor, by the end of the century it had assumed critical proportions.

Despite the fact that the key battles in the Crimean War on 1853-6 were fought elsewhere, the Turks nonetheless committed large forces to the Caucasian front, and Samegrelo, in particular, was the scene of heavy fighting. Consequently the peasantry were once again required to bear the brunt of government policy with lives, materials and supplies. The war, as in much of Russia, had a catalytic effect on peasant unrest. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, peasant reaction had swollen, culminating in a series of uprisings (notably in Guria) against the feudal structure and landed interest.

Thus as Georgia moved into the second half of the 19th century and the process of modernisation gathered momentum, so the stresses and strains within the society's feudal

straightcoat reached breaking point, and whilst the economy's continuing development seemed to indicate the closer integration of the country, social divisions appeared to threaten its fragmentation.

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2. Z. Avalov (Avalishvili). Prisoedinenie Gruzii k Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1906) p. 17.
3. Ibid., p. 77.
4. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., p. 210.
5. Z. Avalov, op.cit., pp. 278-86.
6. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., p. 211.
7. Z. Avalov, op.cit., p. 191.
8. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., p. 285. The Georgian sources on the Middle Ages are collated in M.F. Brosset's Histoire de la Georgie, 1iere partie (St. Petersburg, 1849). Muslim sources are numerous from the 9th century onwards. Detailed Armenian sources date from the 7th century.
9. V. Jaoshvili. "Sak'art'velos mosakhleoba XIX saukunis rep'ormandel periodshi". (The population of Georgia in the pre-reform period of the 19th century), Matsne istoriis seria (The Herald, historical series). T'bilisi, 1976, no. 1, p. 87. D.M. Lang, A Modern History of Georgia, (London, 1962) p. 36 using an unquoted source has the figure even less at 500,000.
10. K'art'uli sabtchot'a entsiklopedia (Soviet Georgian Encyclopedia) Tomi. 2. (T'bilisi, 1977) p. 231.
11. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., p. 232.
12. D. Gvritishvili. Masalebi k'art'veli glekhobis istoriisat'vis (Material on the History of the Georgian Peasantry) (T'bilisi, 1979) ch. 2.
13. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., pp. 250-51.
14. K'art'uli sabtchot'a ensiklopedia, op.cit., p. 232. There is a paucity of documentary material extant on the early forms of serfdom in Georgia, but a book of law written by Bek'a-Aghburgha in the first half of the 14th century provides some information. He reveals, for instance, that owners of serfs had the right to search for and bring back runaway serfs for a period of up to 30 years after their escape, and that in South Georgia the peasants had been tied to the land from at least the 12th century. Georgian historians are mostly of the opinion that by the 11th-12th centuries the majority of peasants throughout Georgia were tied to the land.
15. D. Gvritishvili, op.cit., pp. 324-25.

16. I. Javakhishvili. Mamulishviloba da metsniereba (Patriotism and Science) (T'bilisi, 1904) Javakhishvili attacks the tendency prevalent among nationalist writers in Georgia to regard all those who wrote anything but eulogies of Georgian history as enemies of the people. Georgia's interests, he said, were not best served by ignoring or falsifying its past. Hans Kohn, Pan-Slavism (London, 1960) p. 336 describes a similar attitude among Czech 19th century nationalists. He quotes too a passage from Ernest Denis's La Boheme depuis la Montagne-Blanche (Paris, 1902-3), which as Kohn says can be applied generally in the age of nationalism: "Generally it is infinitely better to have no history than to keep up in the people the inclination to falsehood. It is a wrong piety to wish to cover up the errors of our forefathers; the only means of honouring the memory of our fathers consists of abandoning their mistakes".
17. D. Gvritishvili, op.cit., p. 294.
18. Ibid., p. 295.
19. O. Wardrop. The Kingdom of Georgia (London, 1888) p. 86.
20. Ibid., p. 164.
21. I. Dzhavakhov (Javakhishvili) Politicheskoe i sotsialnoe dvizhenie v Gruzii v XIX veke (St. Petersburg, 1906). p. 5.
22. D. Gvritishvili, op.cit., pp. 294-341.
23. Ibid., p. 310.
24. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., p. 203.
25. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsialnoe dvizhenie, op.cit., p. 6.
26. M. Gap'rindashvili. K'art'uli ganmanat'lebloba (The Georgian Enlightenment) (T'bilisi, 1966), p. 5.
27. W.E.D. Allen, op.cit., pp. 202-3.
28. D.M. Lang, op.cit., p. 39.
29. Ibid., and Z. Avalov, op.cit., pp. 199-200.
30. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsialnoe dvizhenie, op.cit., pp. 10-11.
31. M. Dumbadze, "Dsarizmis batonobis ganmtkitseba. Sak'art'velos istoriis midsa-dsqli shemoert'eba" (The consolidation of tsarist rule. The unification of Georgia's historic territory) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi Tomi 4 (Essays on the History of Georgia, Vol. 5) (T'bilisi, 1973) p. 874.

32. Ibid.
33. Sh. Meskhia. Goroda i gorodskoi stroi feodalnoi Gruzii (T'bilisi, 1959) p. 161.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 159. 77 per cent of the population was owned by 6.7 per cent of the population.
36. Ibid., p. 161.
37. Ibid., pp. 187-88.
38. Ibid., p. 184.
39. E. Khoshtaria, Ocherki sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi istorii Gruzii (T'bilisi, 1974) p. 36.
40. R.G. Suny. "Russian rule and Caucasian society in the first half of the 19th century" in Nationality Papers Vol. VII no. 1, 1979, p. 65.
41. V. Jaoshvili, op.cit., p. 94.
42. R.G. Suny, "Russian rule and Caucasian society", op.cit., pp. 55-56 and Sh. Meskhia, op.cit., p. 239.
43. I. Javakhishvili. Sak'art'velos sazghvrebi (Georgia's Borders) (Tp'ilisi, 1919) pp. 30-31.
44. Ibid., p. 31.
45. Ibid., p. 32.
46. Sh. Meskhia, op.cit., pp. 160-61.
47. D. Gogoladze. "Tsvlilelebi k'veqnis sotsialur tskhovrebashi" (Changes in the country's social life) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.4, op.cit., p. 892.
48. A. Pantskhava. Ocherki agrarnoi istorii Gruzii pervoi poloviny XIX veka (T'bilisi, 1969), p. 51 cited in R.G. Suny, op.cit., p. 56.
49. D. Gogoladze, op.cit., p. 893.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 894.
52. R.G. Suny, "Russian rule and Caucasian society", op.cit., pp. 60-61.
53. Ibid., p. 61.
54. D. Gogoladze, op.cit., p. 895.
55. R.G. Suny, "Russian rule and Caucasian society", op.cit., p. 55, citing A. Pantskhava, op.cit., Suny

notes that on 7th August 1810 an article in the code of Vakhtang VI requiring nobles to forfeit five per cent of a divided estate to the state was rescinded, thus removing the penalty for individualising collectively owned lands.

56. D. Gogoladze, op.cit., p. 896.
57. Ibid., p. 895.
58. Ibid., pp. 896-97.
59. Ibid., p. 897.
60. Ibid.
61. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsial'noe dvizhenie, op.cit., p. 11.
62. Ibid.
63. R.G. Suny. "Russian rule and Caucasian society", op.cit., p. 58.
64. M. Dumbadze, op.cit., p. 879.
65. V. Jaoshvili, op.cit., p. 95. From 1800-1832 the percentage of ethnic Georgians in the total population of Georgia fell from 79.4 per cent to 75.5 per cent, and continued to fall. In part this was the consequence of deliberate government policy; the settlement, for instance, of 1,189 Wurtemberg Germans in East Georgia from 1817-18, and the encouragement given to Russian soldiers fighting on the Caucasian front to settle in Georgia on retirement. On the other hand, many came to Georgia as refugees from Turkey and Persia. From 1829-31 alone almost 32,000 Armenians and Greeks settled in West Georgia (p. 92).
66. Ibid., p. 95.
67. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsial'noe dvizhenie, op.cit., p. 12.
68. Ibid.
69. M. Dumbadze, op.cit., p. 875.
70. D.M. Lang, op.cit., p. 52.
71. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsial'noe dvizhenie, op.cit., pp. 19-20.
72. Ibid., p. 22.
73. F. Makharadze. Gruzia v XIX veke. Trudy pervoi vsesoyuznoi konferentsii istorikov-Marksistov T.1 (Moskva, 1930) pp. 486-87.
74. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsial'noe dvizhenie, op.cit., p. 13.

75. Ibid., p. 19.
76. D. Gogoladze, op.cit., p. 904.
77. Ibid., p. 905.
78. Ibid., p. 904.
79. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsial'noe dvizhenie, op.cit., pp. 20-22.
80. Ibid., p. 21.
81. Ibid., p. 22.
82. D. Gogoladze, op.cit., pp. 892-93.
83. A. Ioseliani. Sak'art'velos istoriis problemebi da t'ergdaleulebi (The T'ergdaleulebi and Problems of Georgian History) (T'bilisi, 1972) p. 45.
84. R.G. Suny. "Russian rule and Caucasian society", op.cit., p. 59 citing D.L. Vateishvili, Russkaia obshchestvennaya mysl' i pechat' v pervoi treti XIX veka (Moskva, 1973) p. 310.
85. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 46.
86. Ibid., p. 47.
87. K. Salia. "Quelques page de l'histoire de Georgie. Lutte du peuple Georgien pour la restoration de son independence" in Bedi kartlisa, revue de kartvelologie vol. XXXVI (Paris, 1978) pp. 171-72. Salia argues that the Georgian nobility had been conspiring to overthrow the Russians since 1829. M. Gotsadze, "Brdzola damoukideblobis aghdgenisat'vis 20-30-iani dslebis mijnaze" (The struggle for the restoration of independence at the turn of the 20s and 30s) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi T.4, op.cit., pp. 937-58, makes this same point and traces the origins of the conspiracy to St. Petersburg. He notes the formation of secret groups in the early 1820s to debate views on national, social and political questions.
88. I. Dzhavakhov. Politicheskoe i sotsial'noe dvizhenie, op.cit., p. 31.
89. Ibid., p. 28.
90. Ibid., p. 31.
91. Ibid., pp. 30-32.
92. F. Kazemzadeh. "Russian penetration of the Caucasus" in Taras Huncak ed. Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution (New Brunswick, 1974) p. 254.
93. Ibid., p. 255.

94. M.K. Rozhkova. Ekonomicheskaya politika tsarskogo pravitel'stva na srednem vostokey vo vtoroi chetverti XIX veka i russkaya burzhuazia (Moskva, 1944) p. 88.
95. M. Dumbadze, op.cit., p. 914.
96. R.G. Suny. "Russian rule and Caucasian society", op.cit., p. 72.
97. Sh. Chkhetia. Tbilisi v XIX stoletii (T'bilisi, 1942) p. 206, cited in R.G. Suny, p. 72.
98. Ibid.
99. G.V. Khachapuridze. K istorii Gruzii v pervoi polovine XIX veka (T'bilisi, 1950) p. 464, cited in R.G. Suny, p. 73.
100. D. Gogoladze, op.cit., p. 898.

National Integration in the Pre-Reform Period of the 19th Century

2.1 Russian Occupation and Social Change

The consolidation of Russian power in Georgia during the first 30 years of the 19th century laid the basis for the transformation of the country's social and economic life both in the period preceding the emancipation of the serfs and in the years thereafter.

Although the victorious conclusion of the war against Persia in 1829 did not bring an end to all hostilities in the Transcaucasus¹ it did eliminate the Persian challenge to Georgia's survival once and for all² and, in doing so, paved the way for the economic revival of East Georgia and, in particular, the rich agricultural province of Kakhet'i. Able to live and produce in a relatively stable environment, Georgia began to evince all the characteristics of a society experiencing the effects of economic integration and mounting social division.

Between the 1830s and the 1860s, the decade of the abolition of serfdom or batonqmoba in Georgia, the traditional structures of society were placed under growing pressure to change. The move away from the self-contained existence of communities that had changed little over the previous 500 years was now prompted and made possible by the reassuring presence of the tsarist army. Not only did the Russian troops offer a reasonable safeguard against future invasion, they, and with them the imported bureaucracy, expanded the market for the peasant economy and thus encouraged the development of commodity relations.

However, whilst it is undoubtedly the case that it required the Russian political control of the Transcaucasus to release Georgia from centuries of enforced lethargy, it would be wrong to assume that prior to this Georgia had shown no indication of making progress on its own. As was shown in the previous chapter, the Georgian kings of the late 17th and 18th centuries had made repeated efforts to shake the country from stagnation, but had been largely frustrated by the political, social, economic and demographic restrictions of the time. Under Erekle II, East Georgia had shown signs of economic recovery, only for the precarious nature of the kingdom's existence to be brutally emphasised by the Persian invasion of 1795. Despite the invasion, however, it is evident that granted a period of protracted tranquility the potential for economic and social transformation of the area existed.

The geographical location of Georgia, its warm climate and fertile soil, enabled its inhabitants to recover relatively quickly from the traumas they had faced.³ The variety of climatic conditions encountered in the different parts of the country, moreover, played a significant part in preserving a degree of economic unity at a time when political unity was shattered. Different regions and districts began to specialise in different areas of agricultural production, so that the cultivation of cereals, wine, cotton, silk or the practice of animal husbandry and forestry became associated with particular provinces or districts. Thus, although commerce remained limited by the nature of the economy, trade between East and West Georgia, as well as inter-district exchange, was maintained.⁴ The infertility

of the mountain soil, too, compelled the highlanders to trade regularly in the plains and valleys for essential items.⁵

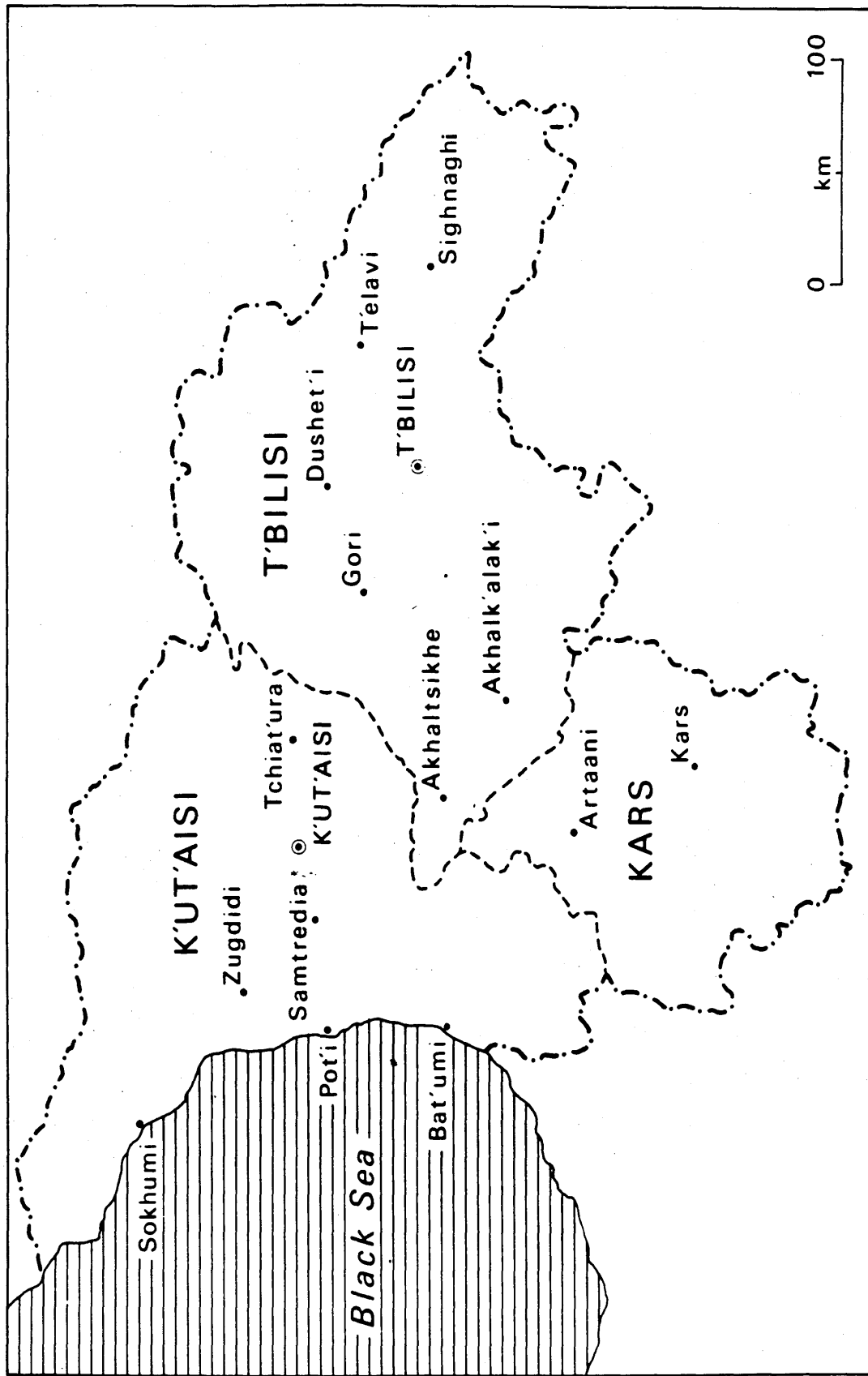
During the 18th century the emergence of a thriving merchant industrial population, stimulated by the immigration of Armenian refugees, accentuated the division between town and country, and while the number of urban inhabitants as a proportion of the total population remained very small, and although even these were engaged primarily in agricultural pursuits, the numbers of those occupied solely as artisans or merchants and usurers steadily rose. By the mid-18th century T'bilisi had become a major market for consumer products.

Nevertheless, despite this and the burgeoning class struggle described in the first chapter, the continuing domination of the country by the institution of batongmoba, the poverty and shortage of human resources, the constant threat of invasion from the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and debilitating Lek raids on the country's isolated and unprotected rural communities combined to deny the country the time and the peace in which to progress.

By the close of the 18th century, the fragility of Erekle II's achievements was demonstrated first by the outflow of Armenian commercial capital to the safer centres of Moscow and Astrakhan,⁶ and later by the sack of T'bilisi by Agha Mohammed Khan.

Through the provision of the security and unity that Georgia had lacked in the 18th century, Russia at least removed some of the obstacles to its further economic and social integration.

Fig.3 The administrative division of Georgia during the nineteenth century



By the 1830s the effects of the Russian presence were beginning to have an impact on life in the Transcaucasus. Stabilisation of the military situation had brought an end to the atmosphere of insecurity that had prevailed under the first 30 years of the tsarist administration, and with the monarchy now firmly suppressed, Georgian society had grown more accustomed to the new regime. Whilst there may have been some degree of ambivalence in its appreciation of foreign control there can be little doubt that for the majority, the new government had brought a welcome respite. The attitude of many Georgians is best summed up in the words of Ilia Tchavtchavadze, who was to emerge as one of the leading figures of the cultural and political renaissance in the last 40 years of the century.

Peace settled on an exhausted country, which for so long had been denied rest. She became calm after the destruction and the ravages, grew peaceful after the war and the struggle... a new era was born in Georgia, a time of rest, a time when she could lead a life without fear.

At last granted the conditions which through her own meagre resources the country had vainly sought to achieve, Georgia began to show signs of recovery. The rather low rate of natural increase sustained by the population during the first third of the century had begun to pick up: whereas between 1800 and 1832 there had been a natural increase of 0.41 per cent per annum⁸, between 1832 and 1865 it averaged 1.1 per cent per annum.⁹ Nevertheless, the 1,351,000 people living in Georgia in 1865 was still a long way short of the 5 million recorded in the 13th century.

In the period between 1865 and 1873 (by which time the serf emancipation laws had been introduced throughout

Georgia) natural increase continued at a rate of 0.85 per cent per annum, raising the total to 1,450,000 (see table).¹⁰

Table 1: Total Population of Georgia 1800-1873

1800 -	784,700
1832 -	892,100
1865 -	1,351,000
1873 -	1,450,000

The immediate impact of this relatively rapid rise in the birth rate was a decline in the amount of land available to each individual peasant, and although the converse of this was that the same conditions making possible the upsurge in the population had also laid the basis for increased agricultural output, the means and mode of output was unable to cope with the increased pressure. The plight of the Georgian peasantry was not helped, either, by the tsarist policy of settling Russian and European (predominantly German) settlers on some of the best land available. Many of the new settlers in the second third of the century were demobilised soldiers or religious groups like the molokany. By 1864, 19,000 Russians were living in the country.¹¹

Conditions in the provinces of Imeret'i and Ratcha in West Georgia were particularly bad, compelling the peasantry either to migrate or seek local employment as hired labourers. As in much of the rest of the country, the peasantry had to make a living from plots of land that were not simply too small, but were also scattered and in some cases located

up to seven kilometres from their villages.¹² Their problems were compounded by the fact that not only was the population of West Georgia denser than that of the east, but was inhabited by a proportionately greater number of aznaurni. Thus, according to the figures issued by the Transcaucasian Statistical Committee in 1864, 9.9 per cent of the population of K'ut'aisi Gubernia belonged to the nobility, whereas a survey carried out for 1865 showed that it only comprised 3.5 per cent of the population of T'bilisi Gubernia.¹³ The poverty, moreover, of some of these nobles, many of whom owned little land, few serfs and were heavily in debt to money-lenders, was such that they would attempt to maintain their standard of living by demanding not just their serfs' surplus production but also that part of their produce essential for their survival.¹⁴

Throughout Georgia the corvee peasantry were made to pay a variety of taxes, the most common being the kulukhi or wine tax and the ghala or grain tax, both of which were as yet paid in kind. In addition, they were duty bound to perform the service of begara - the provision of free labour on their owners' estates. There were, moreover, regional differences regarding the proportion of the harvest that should be ceded to the landlord.¹⁵ The temptation for the poorer nobility was to push it higher and higher, but whilst in the short term this appeared to solve the problem of their declining living standards, in the long term it merely served to exacerbate them, because not only did it drive the peasantry to overwork the soil and thus progressively reduce its fertility and the size of the harvest, it also caused ever increasing numbers of serfs to seek escape by emigrating to East Georgia in the hope that they would not be

detected. This trend towards migration had the further effect of helping to accelerate the decline of the didi ojakhi or extended family, which at its peak consisted of up to 100 or more relatives living and working communally.¹⁶ The advantage to the landlord of this institution was that it ensured that his serfs had the productive capacity to till the soil efficiently¹⁷ and thus produce more, and that it provided him with a reliable unit for taxation. Once the didi ojakhi began to decline, as it was doing in all but the most inaccessible parts of Georgia throughout the 19th century, to be replaced by nuclear family groups who often lacked their own means of production and had to either hire it, or work for someone else,¹⁸ then both the plight of the peasantry and that of the poorer nobility became far worse.¹⁹

The corruption, too, of the Russian chinovniki and the burden of state taxation further compounded the peasantry's difficulties. In such circumstances the urge to move to T'bilisi to secure work as a hired labourer, artisan or craftsman's apprentice assumed countrywide proportions. Some even sought employment as agricultural workers in the vineyards of Kakhet'i.²⁰ Batongmoba, however, continued to act as a break on socio-economic evolution.

A Ministry of Justice report filed in T'bilisi in 1836 stated that

The general poverty of Imeret'i region in contrast with the abundance they [peasants emigrating from West Georgia] encountered in Georgia [East Georgia], together with the sizeable demand for their labour, particularly in the cultivation of the numerous vineyards of Kakhet'i, caused them to wish to prolong their residence here.²¹

Table 2:

The Rural and Urban Population of East Georgia 1835-1865²²

East Georgia	1835		1865	
	Numbers	% of Total	Numbers	% of Total
Urban Population	40,000	10.8	99,687	15.3
Rural Population	330,300	89.2	551,313	84.7
Total	370,300	100.0	651,000	100.0

The Rural and Urban Population of West Georgia 1835-1865

West Georgia ¹	1835		1865	
	Numbers	% of Total	Numbers	% of Total
Urban Population	14,058 ²	2.7	30,470 ³	4.4
Rural Population	534,783	97.3	669,530	95.6
Total	548,841	100.0	700,000	100.0

1. Imeret'i, Ratcha, Samegrelo and Lechkhumi, Svanet'i, Guria, Ap'khazet'i, Meskhet'-Javakhet'i.

2. K'ut'aisi and Akhaltsikhe.

3. K'ut'aisi, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalk'alak'i, Pot'i, Sokhumi.

Compelled by poverty and the difficulty of gaining permission from landlords to seek temporary jobs in the towns, the number of serfs fleeing from their owners to seek employment became especially marked,²³ with the consequence that Paskevich, the Russian Governor General, responded to landlords' demands by introducing a passport law in 1830 which made it illegal to leave one's estate without the

issue of official documents.

The passports granted a maximum leave of one year.²⁴ Such were the conditions of many of the estates, however, that administrative measures like these proved quite inadequate to the task of preventing the outflow of labour to the towns.

Part of the difficulty for the authorities and for owners trying to secure the return of runaway serfs was that employers would rarely ask for the identity of their workers. With serfdom limiting their labour supply they stood to gain nothing from obliging the authorities. A disproportionately large number of labourers in T'bilisi, too, came from West Georgia which made it important that they should not cut themselves off from an important supply. A contemporary observer describing the working population of T'bilisi in 1846 wrote:

Examine the enormous mass of manual labourers in T'bilisi and other places. They are all Imerians and Osians... their main concern lies in a desire to acquire money, and with it to pay the state tax, the landlord's ghala and to provide for their families.²⁵

In the 1840s the scale of emigration from the countryside had become so great that efforts were made to return migrant workers regardless of whether or not they had passports.²⁶ It seems, however, that these efforts met with little success for the stream of both legal and illegal immigrants to the towns continued to flow. In the early 1860s almost 3,000 passports were being issued annually in K'ut'aisi Gubernia.²⁷

The stimulus to migrate came not just from the failure of Georgian agriculture to support the rural population, but

was symptomatic of the general malaise of batonqmoba. As the population moved to the towns, so the latter's role as both supplier and consumer of goods expanded. Commodity relations began to replace the natural economy and the peasantry increasingly produced for the market. In these conditions it was often the case that peasants who had been able to exploit the upturn in trade in the country were able to buy their freedom from owners whose accumulating debts had made them more accommodating to such requests. Count Vorontsov, Viceroy of the Caucasus, wrote of this emerging class of peasants:

One comes across such peasants, too, about whom one can freely say that they are wealthier than their owners. They pay tax in the form of one tenth of the wine harvest, drink almost half of it with the hired workers who looked after their vineyards and are able to take so much wine to market and get so much money from its sale that... they often lend their owners money.²⁸

Between 1850 and 1863, 1,314 cases were passed in K'ut'aisi Gubernia alone acknowledging the right of certain peasant households to purchase their freedom. As a consequence, 7,250 men and women were liberated from serfdom, 4.5 per cent of the total serf population of the gubernia.²⁹ They paid their owners 201,544 rubles in compensation.³⁰ Strictly speaking, most of these peasants joined the state category, but insofar as restrictions on their movement were concerned, or their right to pursue independent economic activity, there were no obstacles.

The Russian administration made its own contribution to this process when as part of its scheme for reducing the independence of the Georgian nobility and simultaneously increasing its treasury income by expanding the category of

state peasants, it introduced a law in 1836 (see Chapter One) compelling the aznaurni either to produce documentation confirming their right to own serfs or to abandon that right altogether. The number of peasants who secured their liberty in this manner and the number of aznaurni who were affected was so great that the regime finally responded to the nobility's requests by changing the law in 1849.³¹ If serfs wanted to obtain release from their landlords the onus of proving that they were not his property now rested entirely on them.

Although the relatively greater degree of scarcity in West Georgia led a correspondingly high proportion of its inhabitants to abandon their villages, the same trend, stimulated by the expansion of trade between the towns and the country and the growth of the urban population, was apparent in East Georgia, a fact born out by statistical data available for T'bilisi Gubernia in 1860 and 1861. At this time 8,103 landless peasants were settled on landlords' property as khiznebi,³² whilst 1,830 corvee households, or 14 per cent of the total, either owned insufficient land for their own needs or none at all.³³ Consequently, whilst the increase in the urban population in the first third of the century can be traced by and large to the immigration of Armenians, Greeks and Germans (excluding Russian military and administrative personnel), a considerable part of the increase in the second third of the century was achieved at the expense of the rural population.

A census description of T'bilisi carried out in 1866 showed that during the 1850s and the first half of the 1860s 1,006 peasant households settled in the city from East Georgia alone. Of these by far the greater part were state

peasants, a fact indicative of the obstacle serfdom continued to present to the mobility of the population. A further 650 households arrived from West Georgia, other parts of the Transcaucasus, Russia, Persia and Turkey. In all, these peasant immigrants accounted for 10 per cent of the city's inhabitants at this time.³⁴

A similar pattern was evident in other East Georgian towns. In the same period, 1,255 peasant households settled in the towns of Gori, T'elavi, Signaghi and Dushet'i. By 1866 15.3 per cent of the population of Signaghi was comprised of peasants who had settled there in the preceding 15 years.³⁵

On the basis of the official statistics it emerges that whereas the urban population of Georgia stood at 54,058 in 1835, or 5.1 per cent of the total population, by 1865 it had reached 130,157 or 9.8 per cent of the total. One difficulty with these figures, however, is their failure to include numerous categories of urban inhabitants. The number of corvee peasants, for instance, is understated because a high percentage of these were escapees trying to hide their identity. Seasonal workers, moreover, were not included. It is estimated that during the summer about 20,000 would arrive from Persia alone, and that on this basis the population of T'bilisi in the mid-1860s was probably in excess of 100,000.³⁷ It is, therefore, likely that the urban population as a proportion of the whole was higher than the official data indicates.

The total figures do not, however, give a picture of the pattern of development in the country as a whole. If one looks at the official statistics province by province,

it becomes apparent that a sharp distinction was emerging between East Georgia, in which the capital, T'bilisi, is located and West Georgia . In the former the official figures show that 15.3 per cent of the population was urban by 1865, whereas in the latter the figure was only 4.4 per cent.³⁸

The more rapid urbanisation of Eastern Georgia to a large extent reflected the growth of T'bilisi as the major commercial, industrial and political centre of the Transcaucasus, in which capacity it attracted a large proportion of the migrant rural population of Imeret'i, Ratcha, Samegrelo, Guria and Oset'i, as well as that of the eastern provinces of K'art'l-Kakhet'i. A further factor inhibiting the development of the towns and commercial activity in West Georgia was that such lines of communication as existed linking its main towns with T'bilisi and with the rest of the empire were poor.

The population of K'ut'aisi did expand rapidly, but from a low base (see Table 4) and much of its development was due to its selection as the administrative centre of the newly created K'ut'aisi Gubernia. The other main West Georgian town, Akhaltsikhe, did it is true, have a relatively large population by contemporary standards, but it expanded very slowly having suffered considerable devastation during the Turko-Russian war of 1828-29. Because of this, and the subsequent termination of the town's trade links with the Turkish towns of Artvin, Erzerum and Kars, the population of the town in 1865 (see Table 3) was still barely a quarter of the number who had lived there in the 1820s.³⁹

Table 3(i)

The Taxable Population of East Georgian Towns 1821-1865⁴⁰

Towns	1821	1835	1847	1865
T'bilisi	15,374	25,290	29,853	67,253
Dushet'i	1,143	1,700	1,800	2,525
Gori	2,322	3,000	3,763	5,054
Sighnaghi	1,997	3,500	4,801	9,687
T'elavi	1,677	2,680	4,000	7,300

Table 3(ii)

The Taxable Population of West Georgian Towns in 1820s-1865

Towns	1825	1835	1847	1865
K'ut'aisi	-	2,000	-	11,807
Akhalk'alak'i	-	-	900	2,260
Akhaltsikhe	40,000	10,667	-	11,617
Pot'i	-	-	-	1,309
Sokhumi	-	-	-	1,612

When the railway linking the towns of West Georgia with T'bilisi and Baku was built during the 1860s and 1870s the rate of urbanisation increased markedly. The Black Sea towns of Pot'i, Redut'-K'ale, Sokhumi and Bat'umi, once it had been liberated from the Turks, were the chief beneficiaries of the improvement in the communications network. For the meantime, however, the main towns such as Sighnaghi and T'elavi, both well placed to take advantage of the expansion of the wine market, were situated in the east.

The creation of two gubernii, T'bilisi and K'ut'aisi, to cover Georgia reflected a deliberate tsarist policy to

keep the country divided, a policy that was to be retained throughout the century, and which included referring only to the inhabitants of K'art'l-Kakhet'i (predominantly T'bilisi Gubernia) as Georgians; West Georgians were designated as Imerians by the government and all official references of the 19th century to this area attempted to preserve this distinction. The division of the country in this way could, it is true, be said to have reflected the status quo prior to Georgia's integration into the Russian empire. But as has been argued above the division only appeared as the result of invasion and survived primarily because Persian and Turkish foreign policy dictated that it should do so. Despite the political rupture Georgia retained its ethnic and linguistic unity throughout this period and contrived in the face of considerable obstacles and the traditional nature of the economy to preserve a modicum of economic exchange. For the Russians, however, it made political sense to resist Georgian aspirations for unity, and history had provided them with a convenient rationale for preserving the division.

Nevertheless, the process of urbanisation was playing a significant part in furthering the national integration of the country. The growing migration from rural to urban Georgia was breaking down the resistance of traditional society to change, prompting the disintegration of the extended family and forcing people to sell their labour to provide for their own and their dependents' existence.

The close-knit structure of the Georgian peasantry consisted of communities that were formed primarily as extensions of an original didí ojakhí or extended family. Because of the economic advantages that accrued to its members

from keeping together - the family commune owned more land than the nucleated family and was thus better placed to provide for its members and pay tax - as well as the efforts of the nobility to prevent its disintegration,⁴¹ the decision of certain members of the family to break away did not necessarily conclude in the formation of nuclear groups, but often in the creation of new family communes.⁴² By the mid-19th century, however, the small family was establishing itself as the norm in most parts of the Georgia. M. Kovalevski maintained that in certain areas, notably amongst the Khevsurs and the T'ushs, Georgian mountain peoples inhabiting the north-east of the country, the didí ojakhí had ceased to exist by the beginning of the 19th century.⁴³ By the 1880s, by which time it is true that emancipation of the serfs had given further impetus to its disintegration, socio-economic surveys carried out in the various regions and districts of the country showed that in T'elavi district in Kakhet'i the average size of Georgian rural families was only marginally above six,⁴⁴ that in T'bilisi district their average size was 5.21,⁴⁵ and in Shorapani district, in Imeret'i, 7.02.⁴⁶

In addition to the break-up of the extended family, an important feature of the social structure of the Georgian peasantry facilitating mobility was that in the main the basis of land tenure was not a communal system similar to the Russian mir, but the individual farmstead or karmidamo. Thus, although members of a didí ojakhí shared communal responsibilities and property within the family, and although their mobility was severely limited by the restrictions of serfdom and presumably by feelings of attachment

and duty to the family, they were not fettered to the same extent as much of the Russian peasantry was by its social and economic obligations to the wider community or mir.

Once the peasantry started to move away from the accustomed village environment they not only expanded the boundaries of their own experience, but also significantly increased their opportunities for communication with Georgians from different parts of the country. In this respect, T'bilisi, in spite of the many years of fragmentation and the feudal parcelisation of the land, retained its place as the paramount town of the Transcaucasus. Now its status was enhanced not just as an administrative centre, but as the cultural, commercial and industrial centre of Georgia, in which capacity it played an important role in bringing together Georgians from different parts of the country and making them aware of their shared attributes.

Once separated from the familiar environs of their villages it was not surprising that the peasantry should seek new forms of group identification in the towns. For people whose lives had been acted out within the confines of a restricted rural neighbourhood, whose interests and concerns reflected the relative certainties of their previous existence, and in particular, for those who had lived as part of a communal family with a shared dwelling place or darbazi providing for upwards of 50 people,⁴⁷ and used to the social and economic and emotional support of their community, the experience of living in an unfamiliar environment, often surrounded by people speaking languages they could not understand must have been an alienating experience.

heterogeneity, the countryside was predominantly populated by Georgians, and even when other nationalities settled in villages they tended to set up their own communities. Nearly all the Armenians living in Kakhet'i, for instance, were concentrated in two of the province's 58 villages.

The high concentration of the Georgian population in the rural areas, combined with the proclivity of the Armenians towards jobs as merchants or artisans, had produced a situation in which the Georgians were a minority within their own towns.⁴⁹ In 1865 when they comprised 74.8 per cent of the total population,⁵⁰ they made up only 22.8 per cent of those living in T'bilisi. Armenians, on the other hand, accounted for only 10.2 per cent of the population of Georgia but 42.6 per cent of that of T'bilisi.⁵¹ In Signaghi, the fastest growing town in East Georgia outside of T'bilisi, 1,102 of the town's 1,619 households in 1863 were Armenians.⁵² In Akhaltsikhe, the second largest town in West Georgia, Armenians dominated commercial activity even though many of them had chosen to move to East Georgia in the 1830s and 1840s in search of a bigger market.

It seems conceivable, at least, that the Georgian peasantry, used to the homogeneous ethnic environment of their villages, may have come to experience a heightened awareness of their national identity through their realisation that in the towns they were a minority, an awareness, moreover, that may well have been strengthened by the confusion of class and nationality in T'bilisi, by the prevalence of Armenians in the bourgeoisie and Russians in the bureaucracy.

The sense of insecurity felt by Georgians in such an alien milieu is reflected in the fact that like the other

nationalities in T'bilisi they tended to form guilds along national lines. To some extent this may have been the consequence of the nature of the crafts they were pursuing, and need not have indicated any sense of antipathy towards other nationalities, but it did nevertheless accentuate ethnic division within the city and played a part in strengthening the significance attached by Georgians to national identity.

Georgian economic historian P. Gugushvili, citing a contemporary source, notes that from the 1830s craftsmen belonging to certain professions were united into a number of amk'rebi or guilds. The existence, however, of two or more independent amk'rebi representing the same profession within the same town was, as he notes, a divergence "from the general principles of the guild organisation", and reflected conflicts of racial, religious and regional interests.⁵³

According to reports on the guilds in 1855, for example, the T'bilisi wine merchants were divided into five amk'rebi corresponding to five outlying districts of the city. T'bilisi's porters were formed into the following six amk'rebi: Georgian porters, Armenian porters, West Georgian porters, furniture porters, porters working for the wine merchants located on the maidan, and porters working for the Avlabar⁵⁴ wine merchants.⁵⁵

Aside from illustrating the point that the working population of T'bilisi tended towards organising itself along national or regional lines rather than professional lines, it is worth noting the preference of West Georgian porters, at least, to form their own guilds, setting them apart from East Georgians, a fact which suggests perhaps

that as yet their regional attachments remained stronger than any sense of national identification.

Nevertheless, the national integration of the country continued to gather momentum. In addition to those settling on a more or less permanent basis in the towns, there were thousands more who travelled to find seasonal work during lulls in agricultural activity. A report filed by the head of T'elavi district in 1841 notes that the peasantry moved from place to place, and from the villages to the towns during the harvest, as well as when food supplies and land were insufficient for their needs, or when raids by the mountain tribes were becoming particularly troublesome.⁵⁶

In this way, by extending the territorial boundaries within which they lived and worked, and by gradually breaking free from the lethargy of the traditional rural environment, Georgia's peasants, though still denied full mobility by the survival of batonqmoba, began to expand the field of their activities and to identify not just with the immediate locality in which they were born, but to develop a wider sense of allegiance as the barriers limiting greater social, economic and political communication between the different parts of the country were eroded.

The National Composition of the Population of Georgia

1800-1873⁵⁷

Nationalities	Thousands		Thousands		Thousands	
	1800	%	1832	%	1875	%
Georgians	622.6	79.4	671.1	75.9	1049.1	72.4
Ap'khaz	52.0	6.6	56.6	6.3	60.0	4.2
Osians	29.3	3.7	32.3	3.6	55.9	3.8
Armenians	47.0	6.0	84.0	9.4	169.0	11.7
Russians	-		-		33.9 ¹	2.3
Azeris 2 and Tatars	30.0	3.8	27.0	3.0	42.3	2.9
Jews	3.3	0.4	4.0	0.5	9.4	0.6
Greeks	0.5	0.1	7.0	0.8	17.9	1.2
Others	-		4.1	0.5	13.5	0.9
Total	784.7	100.0	892.1	100.0	1,450.0	100.0

1. Does not include military personnel

2. The term "Tatar" was often used indiscriminately by the Russian administration and many writers in the 19th and early 20th centuries to describe Azeris, other Turkic peoples and Persians living within the Russian Empire. In fact, the vast majority of Turkic people living in Georgia were and still are Azeri, although there were some Tatars. Whereas the Azeri language belongs to the south-eastern branch of Turkish languages, the Tatar language belongs to the Altaic branch. Except when in quotation I have used "Azeri" when official or other contemporary sources have used "Tatar".

Fig. 4 The national composition of the population of Georgia 1800 - 1873

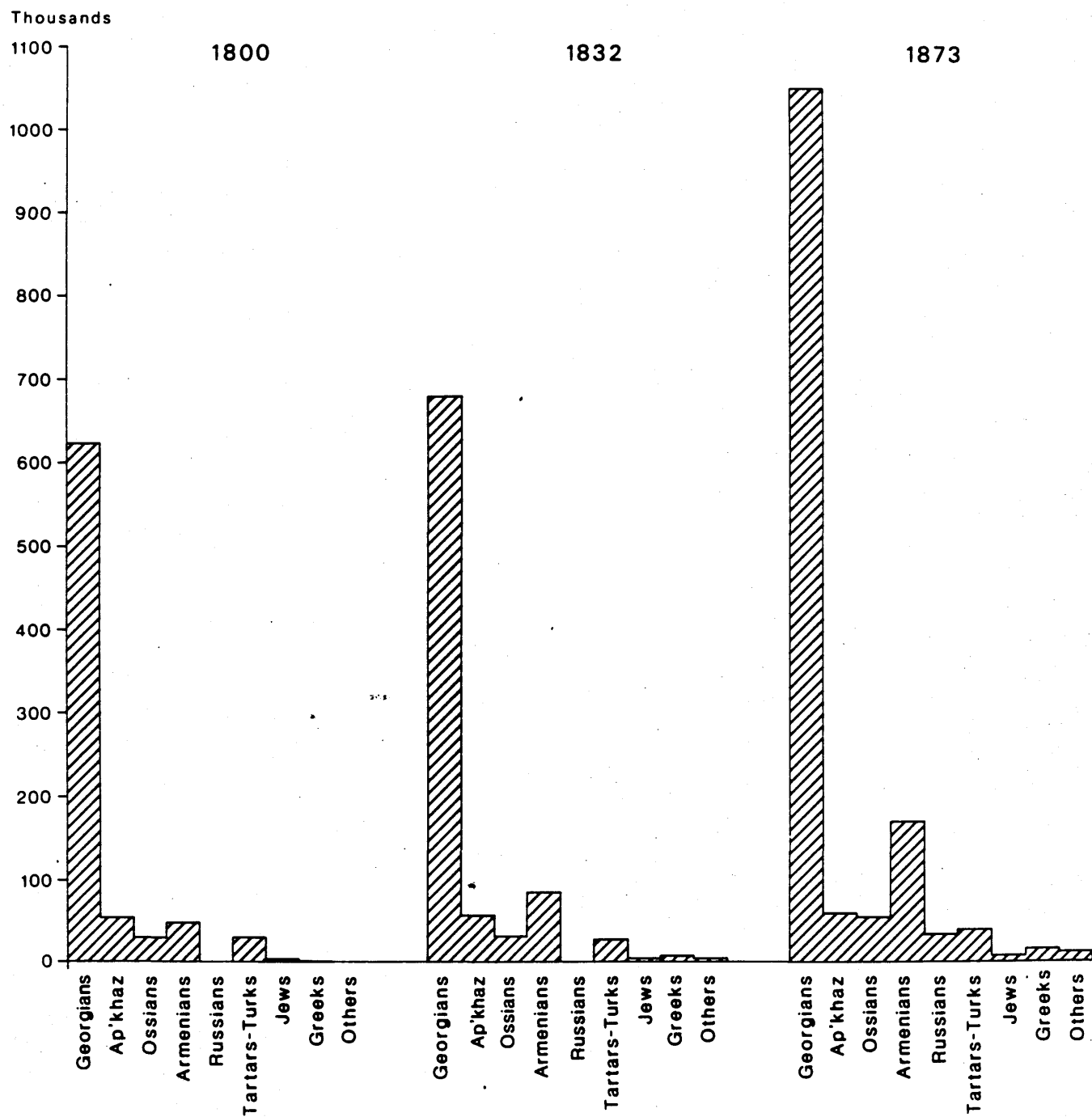


Table 5: Peasant Migration to East Georgian Towns 1850-1860³⁶

Categories of Peasants

East Georgian Towns	Total No. of Newly Arrived H'holds	State Peasant H'holds	Peasants Liberated from Serfdom	Corvee Peasant H'holds	Church Peasant H'holds	Total No. of Taxable Households in the Town	1850-60 Arrivals as a Percentage of the whole
T'bilisi	1,006	600	171	138	97	10,115	10.0
Dushet'i	45	32	6	6	1	391	11.4
Gori	186	166	9	3	8	943	19.7
Sighnaghi	856	428	412	5	11	1,654	51.3
T'elavi	168	105	59	1	3	1,199	14.0
	2,261	1,331	657	153	120	14,310	15.3

The tsarist government's policy, discussed in the previous chapter, of treating Georgia, and for that matter all the non-Russian areas on the periphery of the empire, as colonial dependencies whose chief purpose was to provide Russia with raw materials and a market for Russian manufactured goods, undoubtedly slowed the pace of economic development in Georgia and with it the pace of national integration.

Although the increased flow of Russian products, and especially textiles, probably did inhibit the transformation of corresponding domestic industries into small-scale capitalist enterprises, Russian industry was not particularly successful in exploiting the Georgian market. In fact, whereas about 1.25 million rubles of Russian goods were imported into Georgia during the early 1840s, as opposed to a total of 809,542 rubles worth of goods from Europe and Asia, by 1857 1,086,816 rubles worth of goods were being imported from Europe and 934,063 rubles from Asia, whilst Russian imports had scarcely grown, if at all, from their 1840s level. Because the tsarist authorities did not issue figures specifically for Georgia, but rather for the whole of the Transcaucasus, it is difficult to extract accurate information. But it is at least clear that 718,528 rubles worth of goods were imported from Russia via the Black Sea port of Redut-kale, and that 1,306,268 rubles of Russian goods entered the Transcaucasus through Baku, some of which must have reached Georgia.⁵⁸

A rather more negative aspect of tsarist economic policy, its refusal to tolerate the existence of industries in Georgia which might duplicate and compete with those

already existing in Russia, was easier to enforce and seriously inhibited local industrial development. The following example drawn from the 1850s is indicative of the sort of problem entrepreneurs of any nationality had to face when trying to start up enterprises in the Transcaucasus:

At the beginning of the decade the Vice-Regent to the Transcaucasus, Count Vorontsov, assisted a German, Karl Meitsner, to set up a cloth factory in the village of Dre, just outside T'bilisi, in the belief that by so doing he would be able to supply the Transcaucasian army's cloth requirements at a low cost. However, the appearance of the factory caused protest amongst Russian cloth producers at whose request the Minister of Finance refused to allow state orders from the factory. Denied this outlet and faced with the refusal of the local population to buy its coarse, low-quality cloth, the factory was forced to close down.⁵⁹ The Minister of Finance explained:

I have gone to considerable trouble to explain to Prince Vorontsov that to grant the advantages requested by him for the Dre factory would aid the development of sheep-breeding and cloth-making in the Transcaucasian area. But... that in my opinion it would not be right to allow the encouragement of industry in the aforementioned area at the expense of the industry of Inner Russia.⁶⁰

In addition to these barriers to the establishment of successful businesses there remained the considerable obstacle of serfdom, for although there was a significant movement of the population, both legal and illegal, from the countryside to the towns, there is no doubt that the volume of migration was held down by the survival of feudal social relations tying serfs to their owners and to the land. In 1830 the Russian administration added to the limitations on

movement when it introduced a passport system restricting the freedom of the peasantry to travel, or at least making it more difficult to do so, because in theory serfs could not move without their owner's permission in any case. Passports would be issued for a period of one to six months, so as to enable peasants to find temporary employment in the towns or elsewhere. In special circumstances these would be granted for one year. But in all circumstances the peasants had to submit documentary evidence to the passport issuing office that their services were not required on their landlords' estates.⁶¹

Thus the nature of Georgian society, held in place and even reinforced by the administration, deprived the nascent bourgeoisie of the manpower to develop industry. Manpower, moreover, was not only limited, but also of poor quality. Such was the traditional nature of Georgian society that indigenous skilled labour outside of the handicraftsmen and artisans was virtually impossible to find. As a consequence, those who did succeed in establishing industries in Georgia were immediately confronted by the problem first of transporting the machinery from Europe or Russia, and then of finding workers with sufficient expertise to operate the machines. In some cases industrialists attempted to get around this problem by bringing their own skilled labourers with them.

A still greater difficulty was that because of the nature of communications between Georgia and the main industrial centres, it was often impossible to provide factories with a regular supply of spare parts, with the consequence that production was subject to frequent disruption.

Even if one leaves these difficulties aside, however, the infeasibility of establishing a successful enterprise was always in doubt given the limited capacity of the local market for absorbing industrial output. There were, it is true, marked changes in Georgian society between 1801 and the introduction of the peasants' reforms of the 1860s, not least being the disintegration of the natural economy, and whilst there is some disagreement among Georgian economic historians as to the extent of this process, all are at least agreed that it was assuming increasingly wider importance. This was of crucial significance to the economic and hence the greater national integration of the country, for until the self-sufficiency of the rural economy was broken down, until there was a development and expansion of the domestic market and a spread of commodity production, the extent of that integration would remain limited.

One of the factors reflecting this change was the evolution of the fiscal system from one characterised by the collection of produce from the peasantry and the extraction of gratuitous labour, or begara, to one which was increasingly marked by the payment of money.

At the turn of the century the circulation of money in Georgia was very limited. The Russian administration, however, without actually changing the denomination of the taxes that proliferated across the country, determined to transform the system so that the Transcaucasian Treasury department would benefit from the inflow of cash. With this in mind, the then Governor of the Transcaucasus, Tsitsinashvili (Tsitsinov), revised a series of taxes previously paid by Georgian crown serfs to the king, but who now, in their capacity as state peasants (sakhazino) paid the

Russian administration.⁶² These taxes, which had emerged out of the feudal dependency of the peasants, were now to be paid with money. They were the saaghdgomo or Easter tax, the sashobao or Christmas tax, the samaspindzlo which had its origin in the customary entertainment of the landlord by the peasants, but which later became payable with produce or money,⁶³ the shevardeni which like the samaspindzlo originated as a duty performed by a serf for his master, but consisted in providing him with trained falcons,⁶⁴ the sakvrivo paid by peasants to the state (or to landlords in the case of corvee of sabatono peasants) for the right to marry a widow,⁶⁵ the sachekme paid by peasants on the marriage of their daughters,⁶⁶ the dzghveni which like the saaghdgomo and the sashobao originally took the form of a voluntary gift to the landlord,⁶⁷ but which later evolved into a state tax, the nabadi,⁶⁸ which started as the provision of felt shepherds' cloaks and the gasamgreli paid by divorcees.⁶⁹

Later attempts were made - with mixed results - to extend payment by money to the main taxes paid by state peasants: the kodis-puri, a grain tax,⁷⁰ the makhta which fell primarily on merchants and the tax-paying urban population (but excluding sabatono peasants),⁷¹ the galani which was limited, in the main, to the mountain areas,⁷² the ghala,⁷³ the kulukhi,⁷⁴ a wine tax and the sabalakhe.⁷⁵ Who paid what taxes depended on the nature of the crop being cultivated, the location, and in the case of the sabalakhe, which was calculated on the number of sheep a peasant owned, on whether or not the individual was a livestock farmer.

state tax, the sursat'i which fell on all categories of peasant - state, church and sabatono (corvee) - failed however.⁷⁶ The Transcaucasian administration had originally envisaged transforming its method of payment and, in fact, went as far as to grant peasants the right to pay the tax in rubles if they wished. This decision occasioned a sufficiently enthusiastic response from the population as to give the government cause for thought. The sursat'i was Georgia's chief grain tax, and since the enforced unification with Russia in 1801, had become one of the main means by which the tsarist authorities supplied the food requirements of the large Transcaucasian army.⁷⁷ Such was the fall-off in the supply of grain to the state granaries brought about by the change that although the domestic market may well have stood to gain, the consequences for the provision of food to the Russian troops were serious. As a result, the sursat'i tax, despite appeals from the peasantry, reverted to payment by produce. The impact of this decision, particularly on those peasants whose livelihood depended primarily on grain crops, was markedly to reduce the quantity of grain left to them for sale, and therefore to restrict their contacts with the market.

Such was the size of the army in the Transcaucasus, moreover, that the administration discovered that the sursat'i alone was not sufficient to meet its requirements. To make up the shortfall a policy of compulsory grain requisitions was introduced with the government buying at a price well below the market level. While the market price of one kodi of grain ranged from between four and seven rubles and on occasions rose even higher, the state paid only one ruble

20 kopecks, regardless of fluctuations in market prices.⁷⁸

Not only did this policy drive many peasants below the subsistence level and give cause for some of the uprisings referred to in the previous chapter, it also inhibited the incentive for cultivating grain crops and may, therefore, have actually defeated the purpose of the administration's policy. Furthermore, the seizure of the peasantry's surplus produce limited their capacity to act as consumers of town-produced goods and hence restricted the further integration of the country's economic life. The contraction of the rural market (comprising, of course, the vast majority of the country's population) was a particularly serious blow to manufacturers in the towns, especially given the ban imposed by the tsarist government on their goods competing with Russian equivalents. It did nothing, either, to promote another aspect of the regime's economic strategy, the import of Russian goods into the Transcaucasian market.

By the 1840s it appears that state peasants were still paying the sursat'i and kodis-puri in produce, and that whilst a large number were regularly paying ghala, galani and makhta with rubles, only the mali (which merged with the makhta after 1845), kulukhi and sabalakhe were paid by all state peasants in money.⁷⁹

If one bears in mind that 41,397 of the country's 113,810 peasant households belonged to the sabatono category, and that the vast majority of their taxes were paid in produce, it becomes clear that the natural economy was far from finished in Georgia.⁸⁰

In addition to the state sursat'i, the sabatono peasants were obliged to pay a number of taxes, most notably

ghala, which was traditionally imposed on corn, or kulukhi, as well as a variety of those established by custom, such as the sashobao, samaspindzlo and dzghveni referred to above, and to work on their landlords' estates. Payment of these taxes by money was also making inroads in this category of peasant but was limited by the preference of most Georgian landlords for retaining the corvee system.⁸¹

The majority of Georgian aznaurni owned very few serfs and were often themselves quite poor. According to census figures for 1861, 869 of the 1,751 t'avadni and aznaurni of T'bilisi Gubernia had less than 21 serfs and only two owned over a thousand, whilst on average each Georgian landowner had seven peasant households (komli) on his property.⁸² Despite their poverty, many retained a contempt for commercial enterprise and active involvement in the management of their estates. They sought, instead, to cling to a mode of existence that was long outdated. With their authority and security whittled away by the social, economic and political changes of the first half of the 19th century, they sought to perpetuate the idea of the expansive feudal lord through the maintenance of corvee and quit-rent. An article in the newspaper of the new generation of radical Georgians, Droeba (The Times), points to their profligate, self-destructive lifestyle:

However much wine and grain you harvest, you still drink and eat it yourself; if you find you have too much for yourself then on Sundays and festival days you always arrange feasts, and with the help of your neighbours and acquaintances you satiate yourselves with red-wineskins... you always waste twice the amount you eat and drink... Besides all this there are weddings, services, christenings, wakes and a host of other things. At weddings you gather people together for three days and pile as much wine and food into them as you can... it's the same during wakes when you invite several

In spite of their distaste for commerce most were forced by the extension of commodity relations into the rural economy to increase their sale of surplus produce. However, they sought in the main to achieve this end not by rationalising the management of their estates, but by maximising the taxes and labour owed them by their serfs. The inevitably deleterious effect of increased time spent working the landlords' fields and vineyards on the agricultural productivity of the sabatono peasantry not only further exacerbated relations between themselves and the t'avadaz-naurni, but also still further depressed the ability of the rural population to act as a market for urban industrial production, manufactured goods and crafts.

It has been argued by some Georgian historians that although state and church peasants were still paying 54.6 per cent of their taxes in produce up to the point of the financial reforms of 1843-45, the main reason for this was that the state was continuing to impose restrictions on the payment of sursat'i with money.⁸⁴ Whilst it is very likely that this was the case and that had this impediment been removed monetary taxation would have predominated, the fact of its preservation nevertheless continued to have an adverse effect on the country's industrial development.

The financial reforms, however, by transforming all state taxes into compulsory payment by cash and by reducing their numbers did much to further break the survival of the natural economy amongst all categories of peasants, although payment by produce continued to be the dominant form among sabatono peasants up to the 1860s reforms.⁸⁵

In the mid-1860s, by which time Georgia's serfs were being emancipated, industrial production, such as it was, was concentrated almost exclusively in light and consumer industries and mining. Although the failure of Russian industry to meet the demand of the Georgian market provided an opportunity for some limited production of agricultural equipment, the major enterprises were concentrated in the semi-manufacture of silk, wool and cotton, and in the treatment and working of leather and brick production.⁸⁶ Of all the towns in Georgia, only T'bilisi employed a sizeable industrial labour force, and even there it remained small. According to the official figures, there were only 2,536 workers employed in industrial enterprises in T'bilisi Gubernia in the mid-1860s,⁸⁷ and whilst it is likely that this understates the real number because of the reticence of enterprise owners to declare peasants in their employment who were without passports, it is nevertheless the case that these first representatives of the Georgian proletariat made up only a very small percentage of the total population.

In the main, Georgia's towns were centres of trade and small-scale commodity production. It is estimated that craftsmen (ostatebi) accounted for five to seven per cent of the urban population in 1865,⁸⁸ and that 5,524 of them lived in the capital.⁸⁹ Since on average they employed between one and two assistants or apprentices, it is clear that together with their families they represented a considerable proportion of the urban population.⁹⁰

The sales of Georgian handicrafts' producers rarely exceeded 50 to 60 rubles per annum and, with the exception of T'bilisi, were directed almost entirely at the local

market.⁹¹ In fact, if one is to accept the following report, submitted in 1863 on the East Georgian town of T'elavi, it would appear that there, at least, commercial activity scarcely existed outside viticulture. The town governor, revealing his exasperation with the native population, wrote:

The business undertakings of the people of T'elavi, excepting a few Armenians, rarely extend beyond their native town. Occupied exclusively in viticulture and the purchase of wine in the district, the local population acquires all the necessities of life through it alone and consequently regards all other branches of industry with characteristic Kakhian [native of Kakhet'i] apathy. When faced with shortages in the immediate term they count, with inbred lack of concern, on a brighter future so that, strictly speaking, Georgians, who form the majority of the population in this region, are generally not involved in trade. This is the exclusive sphere of the Armenians who, in spite of the shortage of capitalists in the town, and the fact that its geographical location places it far from the main trade points, supply T'bilisi, the Georgian Military Highway, Vladikavkaz, the whole of the Caucasian line and even Temir-khan-Shura with the best wines cultivated in T'elavi and its surrounding area.⁹²

Despite the growing number of crafts operating outwith the guilds (amk'rebi), the latter continued to maintain a firm grip on urban economic life. Alexandre Dumas, who travelled in the Transcaucasus in 1858, was witness to the extent of their influence in T'bilisi:

Around these caravanserai lies the commercial quarter of the town, where each street is concerned with one trade only. You would not find an armourer's shop near a goldsmith's, nor a furrier's near a fruit-seller's. There is a street of shoe-makers, but I doubt whether you could buy boots of slippers there. These are different trades.⁹³

The monopolisation of business and the domination of trade exerted by the merchants' corporation gradually induced

Hitherto, it had held the heads (ustabashebi) of the guilds responsible for tax collection and law and order among their members. But the advantages gained in this fashion were increasingly perceived to be outweighed by the disadvantages. The amk'rebi were held particularly responsible for inhibiting the development of commercial activity.⁹⁴

In spite of the secondary role played by industrial enterprises in the economic development of Georgia's towns in the pre-reform period and the obstacle to the expansion of production, it is clear from the figures available on the number of enterprises and their output that progress was made prior to the reform and that from the 1840s onwards the pace of industrialisation accelerated.

Table 6: T'bilisi Gubernia

Year	No. of Enterprises	Output in Rubles
1852	154	211,820
1856	172	112,126
1857	195	157,529
1858	239	512,321
1860	306	387,058
1861	386	453,897
1862	378	707,360
1863	417	688,708
1864	479	819,913
1865	461	1,199,550

Table 7: K'ut'aisi Gubernia

Year	No. of Enterprises	Output in Rubles
1847	12	6,735
1850	17	11,780
1855	22	21,540
1861	42	23,398

Between 1835 and 1865 the number of industrial enterprises increased 10 times and the value of production 30 times.⁹⁵ By 1865 there were about 500 such enterprises in the whole of Georgia.⁹⁶ Since, too, the vast majority of their output was sold locally it is clear that the domestic market was expanding quite markedly.

Although, as the table for the output of leading enterprises in T'bilisi demonstrates, industrial production was on a limited scale even in the capital city, it is worth noting that at two rubles per head of the population the value of industrial production per person in T'bilisi Gubernia in the 1860s was higher than most of the gubernii of Inner Russia and that even when production for the far less developed K'ut'aisi Gubernia is included output per head was still on a par with most. It is only when one considers that production in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Vladimir Gubernii ranged from 20 to 50 rubles per head that it becomes clear just how undeveloped the Georgian economy was.⁹⁸

Despite the relative backwardness of Georgian industry, there is no doubt that the country's towns played an important part in furthering national integration during the middle of the 19th century. The increase in the urban population provided an expanding market for agricultural

produce and hence encouragement for landowners and peasants to market their produce. Furthermore, the more the latter were compelled to pay their taxes in money, the more urgent it became for them to sell.

The initial spur to agricultural producers in the 19th century had been the arrival of the Russian Transcaucasian army and the tsarist bureaucratic apparatus. Although the former acquired a large part of its food requirements through taxation and requisitions, their presence

Table 8
The Number and Value of Output of T'bilisi's Larger
Enterprises in 1864

Nature of Enterprises	Number of Enterprises	Value of Output in rubles p.a.
Bricks	93	370,000
Saw-Mills	33	49,000
Tiles	11	14,000
Tanneries	10	60,000
Cigarettes & Tobacco	8	24,000
Soap	8	17,000
Carriages	5	21,000
Beer	4	3,000
Candles	2	2,000
Facet production	1	12,000
Mechanised Metal Work	1	6,000
Copper Utensils	1	4,500
Bread and Macaroni	1	2,000
Total	178	584,000 ⁹⁹

nevertheless stimulated demand. After the fiscal reforms of 1843-45, moreover, and the transfer of sursat'i to payment by cash, the importance of the military market expanded, although following the successful conclusion of the war against Shamil in the Caucasian mountains at the end of the 1850s the military presence was scaled down. Just how important the army was to some parts of Georgia is made clear in the memorandum sent in May 1864 by the mok'alak'-eebi of Gori to the Governor-General explaining the reasons for the decline of trade in the town. Among these they listed the departure of the Gori garrison:

From the day of the establishment of the Russian Government in Georgia until 1846 the Caucasian regiment was permanently stationed here - then the 9th Eger and the Kherson were renamed the Georgian regiment. We tried as best we could to do everything for the regiment so as to secure its presence in our town. We constructed several barracks for it at our own expense and on land belonging to the town... Because the regiment accepted these sacrifices from us and as it had everything it needed for its economic unit, we thought it would stay here forever and consequently our trade... would flourish more and more... Therefore, many of us built stone houses in the town, to which many committed their entire capital. But we were very wrong in our assessments... the headquarters of the Georgian regiment was transferred to Bely Klyuch in 1846. As a result of this our town has declined, we get absolutely no income from our municipal estate, the capital spent on it is lost, trade has fallen off completely and we are impoverished. many of our fellow mok'alak'eebi, seeing the sad plight of the town, have abandoned it and departed to various different places to trade.¹⁰⁰

Whilst the military presence in the Transcaucasus was significant in this respect, and in Gori apparently crucial, elsewhere there was not always the same pronounced dependence on one or other factor. The growth of the city of T'bilisi, for instance, owed itself to a variety of causes, among them its traditional role as the political and

economic centre of Georgia and its location at the hub of commercial traffic through the Transcaucasus to Europe, Russia, and Asia, whilst certain other towns like Signaghi were, in large measure, satellites of T'bilisi, owing their own economic success to the rise in consumer demand in the capital and their location in rich agricultural areas. Commerce in Signaghi also benefited from the settlement of a large Armenian community in the area early in the 19th century.

By the 1850s and early 1860s there were a number of permanent markets operating in T'bilisi which not only attracted merchants from all over Georgia and the Caucasus, but also from Persia, Turkey, Russia and Europe. The T'bilisi bazaars, the T'at'ar, Seid-Abadi, Avlabar and Erevan square, acted as a focal point for commercial activity in the country. Merchants from the smaller towns, from Akhaltsikhe in the West to T'elavi in the East, brought local produce and crafts to the centre and returned to the provincial towns with Russian, European and locally manufactured goods. In turn these towns drew their surrounding populations to their markets. Akhaltsikhe, until it was supplanted by K'ut'aisi and other towns benefiting from the construction of the Transcaucasian railway, became the main market town in West Georgia. Small-scale traders from all over Imeret'i and North-East Turkey bought in Akhaltsikhe and then sold at a profit in the villages.¹⁰¹

From the 1840s the volume of marketings rose dramatically. In 1845 1,763,450 rubles of agricultural produce and crafts were sold in the whole of Georgia, over half of which came from the sale of wine and silk. In 1858, according to

the somewhat dubious claim of the governor of Signaghi district (mazra), 3,583,350 rubles of agricultural produce and crafts were sold there alone. Even allowing for exaggeration, it is still indicative of the change that had occurred since 1845. 1,530,000 rubles of this figure came from wine and brandy, 1,930,000 from livestock, and only 290,000 from grain, a figure which says a lot about the relative importance of the various crops in East Georgia.¹⁰²

The figures available on the proportion of crops marketed during this period are very patchy, rarely giving a complete picture. Nevertheless, they are sufficient to give an overall impression of the basic trends. In East Georgia, the main occupation of the rural population was viticulture, one of the chief attractions of which was that vineyards required far less space than grain crops. It is also the case, however, that they required almost constant attention throughout the year, thus limiting the time available for growing other produce for personal subsistence. This may go some way, therefore, to explaining the high proportion of wine sold by the main Kakhian wine producing districts as early as the 1830s. According to a report filed by the Russian administration for T'elavi district (mazra) in 1836, 66 per cent of the wine made that year was sent to T'bilisi for sale.¹⁰³ Marketings, however, fluctuated considerably from year to year and were much lower in West Georgia than in the east.¹⁰⁴ The further commercialisation of the wine trade was impeded too by the lack of storage facilities in the towns, by the poor quality of the roads, the primitiveness of the techniques used and the size of the Transcaucasian market.

Following the decision to change the sursat'i to a money tax in the fiscal reforms of 1843-45, and the boost to Georgian wheat and corn exports prompted by the Irish famine of the 1840s, both the nobility and serfs increased their sales. During the 1840s, not only was 25 per cent of the crop sold every year but the quantities harvested increased too.¹⁰⁵ From 1850-57, the amount of land sown to winter cereals on sabatono estates rose by 83.1 per cent and to spring cereals by 132.9 per cent.¹⁰⁶ From 1807-50, the quantity of cereals collected annually in T'bilisi Gubernia jumped from 398,254 chetverts to 2,054,000, whilst in K'ut'-aisi Gubernia annual harvestings rose from 865,436 chetverts in 1847 to 2,157,239 in 1853.¹⁰⁷ By the 1860s over one million puds of corn were being shipped to Europe annually, most of it to Scotland and Ireland.¹⁰⁸

Over the same period sericulture, one of the traditional Georgian industries, witnessed a similar transformation. By the 1860s, 60 to 70 per cent of the 30,000 puds produced every year in the Transcaucasus (mostly in West Georgia) were either exported or sold locally. A similar pattern emerged with cotton, fruit and vegetables, and dairy and livestock farming, while new crops like tobacco were quickly orientated towards the market.¹⁰⁹

It was T'bilisi with its population of 100,000 that was the main consumer of agricultural produce and crafts. Its significance to the Georgian rural economy is demonstrated by the annual sale figures for the city markets. The importance too of the capital to East Georgia, where a high percentage of the population was engaged exclusively in viticulture, is apparent from the fact that in the early

1860s its population bought 500,000 vedros or 10,500,000 pints of Kakhian wine every year from these four markets alone.

Annual sales of agricultural produce in T'bilisi in the years immediately preceding the emancipation of Georgia's serfs varied between 3,500,000 to 5,000,000 rubles.¹¹¹

The abolition of feudal custom barriers, the development of commodity relations and the improvement of trade routes in Georgia not only stimulated greater commercial intercourse between town and country, but also noticeably increased inter-district and inter-regional exchange. The scope of the individual peasant's activities was now extending beyond the boundaries of his immediate environment and taking him to what had hitherto often been barely familiar

Table 9: Annual Sales at T'bilisi's Markets in Late 1850s-1860s

Product	Quantity Sold (puds)	Value of Sales (rubles)
Grain Flour	400,000	240 - 320,000
Kakhian Wine	500,000 vedros	100 - 500,000
Spirits	50,000 vedros	150 - 200,000
Meat	300,000	450 - 540,000
Fish and Caviar	25,000	125 - 200,000
Oil	50,000	300 - 400,000
Clarified Butter/ Butter	40,000	240 - 320,000
Vegetables, Fruit, Milk		200,000
Barley	150,000	450,000
Hay	350,000	50,000
Firewood	40,000	600,000

parts of the country. The T'bilisi Gubernia accounts for 1857 note that:

Domestic trade is in good shape. The one part of the gubernia is in constant exchange with the other for its goods and products.¹¹²

To some extent this process was already emerging in the 18th century, but had been inhibited by the instability of Georgia's political, economic and military affairs. However, the security brought by Russia's military presence and the defeat of the Turks and Persians stimulated economic activity. From the 1830s onwards the tendency of the peasantry to become occupied exclusively in the cultivation of one particular crop and, in fact, for whole districts or regions to specialise in this way became more pronounced. When this happened, it naturally followed that the need for exchange with other parts of the country became more pressing and that the traditional insularity of peasant life should reveal signs of collapse.

The predominance of Armenians in commerce is a peculiar feature of Georgia's socio-economic development in the 19th century, which can at least in part be explained by the traditional belief, held by West Georgians in particular, that involvement in trade was in some sense shameful. A report on the situation in Imeret'i in 1837 notes that:

However poor an Imerian is, he considers trade beneath his dignity. When a peasant's wife takes a suckling pig or a chicken for sale at the market, she covers her face like a Tatar (sic) woman because of her involvement in such shameful activity.¹¹³

But despite their traditional reticence towards trade, it is clear that in both eastern and western parts of the

country the peasantry were shedding their inhibitions. A merchant class had even emerged in Svanet'i, one of the most remote and inaccessible parts of Georgia. Some villages specialising in one or another product had reached the point where like the tobacco growing village of Khoni in West Georgia, they marketed virtually their entire crop.¹¹⁴

By the 1830s, weekend rural markets, the nodal points of the country's economic integration, were a common feature of Georgian life. K'ut'aisi market attracted traders from all over West Georgia, from Ratcha, Svanet'i, Samegrelo, Guria and the villages and settlements of Imeret'i. Similar markets dealing primarily in agricultural produce, handicrafts and domestic industrial goods, and held on a weekly or monthly basis existed in numerous towns and villages scattered across the country.

Aside from these, there were annual markets at which local output was supplemented with goods from Russia and Europe. Only the trade fairs or yarmarki, a Russian system imported into Georgia with the arrival of the Russian administration, failed to find a secure footing and by the middle of the century were already showing signs of fading out. In the 1860s when goods valued at 5 million rubles were being sold annually at T'bilisi's markets alone, the yarmarki only managed a turnover of approximately 250,000 rubles per annum for the whole of Georgia.¹¹⁵

The development of commodity relations gave greater impetus to the emerging commercial bourgeoisie of merchants (vatchrebi) and money lenders (mevakhsheebi). Aided by the growth of Georgia's foreign and domestic trade, the country's leading merchants succeeded in building up

considerable capital assets. In 1862, of T'bilisi's 3,000 or so merchants, the leading 122 owned capital worth 1,988,200 rubles and five or six each had over 100,000 rubles.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere in the country business was conducted on a smaller scale but the same process was taking place. In Gori, despite the departure of the Georgian regiment (above), the leading 65 merchants had an annual turnover of 250,000 rubles and 10 of them travelled regularly to Leipzig, London and Constantinople.¹¹⁷ In Signaghi there were 239 local and 25 foreign merchants at the beginning of the 1850s,¹¹⁸ four of whom owned capital of over 100,000 rubles.¹¹⁹

An examination of the census data and government reports on the urban population of Georgia gives a clear indication of the extent to which Armenians monopolised this growing class. In 1863, all of T'bilisi's 466 hereditary, honorary mok'alak'eebi were Armenian, as were 75 per cent of the city's 18,145 merchants and ordinary mok'alak'eebi. Conversely, 90 per cent of the hereditary nobility and the vast majority of household servants and peasants living in the capital were Georgian. A similar situation prevailed elsewhere.¹²⁰ Thus nearly all the merchants in T'elavi, Signaghi¹²¹ and Akhaltsikhe were Armenian.¹²² Only in K'ut'aisi, where Armenian settlements were few and far between, was there a sizeable indigenous merchant stratum.¹²³

Many of these Armenians and particularly the mevakh-sheebi among them, made their fortunes by exploiting not just the poverty of the peasantry, but that of the poorer aznaurni. The failure of the latter to adjust to the times frequently led to their securing loans at high interest rates (unless they were granted terms by the T'bilisi

Gubernia public trustees), bankruptcy and the mortgaging of estates. Among the richer merchants, moreover, there was a tendency to invest money in real estate rather than industry, perhaps because of the obstacles imposed on the latter by the tsarist government.¹²⁴ But as most of their ventures into land ownership were made at the expense of impoverished aznaurni this tended to further exacerbate an already strained relationship between these two classes.

To the t'avadaznauroba, already deprived of political power by the Russians, anger and frustration at the erosion of their economic and social standing was compounded by the ethnic composition of the commercial bourgeoisie. Such was the coincidence of class and nationality in Georgia that the struggle for supremacy between these two classes was rendered still more acute by an element of ethnic antagonism. Oliver Wardrop, a British traveller in Georgia, albeit in the 1880s, noted this feeling when he wrote:

Only those who have lived the life of the people in Trans-Caucasia know what a terrible curse the money-lending community are. A local proverb says, 'A Greek will cheat three Jews, but an Armenian will cheat three Greeks,' and the Georgian, straightforward, honest fellow, is but too often cruelly swindled by the artful children of Haik. When the fraud is very apparent the Armenian often pays for his greed with all the blood that can be extracted from his jugular vein.¹²⁵

However, whilst its predicament may have stirred much of the nobility to nationalistic outbursts directed in large part against Armenians, it met with little sympathy among the peasantry. In some cases, in fact, the plight of the aznaurni was cause for peasant celebration because merchants purchasing estates were barred from owning serfs. In such

circumstances they could either buy their liberty or become state serfs.

Not, of course, that the peasantry did not suffer as much if not more than the petty nobility, because although their contacts with the market were becoming more frequent they were usually reliant on middle-men (shemsqidvelebi) to market their produce. This was often because they only wished or were only able to sell in small quantities. Additionally, the road network was so limited and the markets often so distant that peasants living a marginal existence could neither afford the cost of the journey, nor the time spent making it.¹²⁶ Furthermore, those that persevered found themselves in an alien environment and vulnerable to the sharp practices employed to buy produce cheaply. The T'bilisi merchants' amk'ari controlled the roads into the capital so that its members could prevent peasants from reaching the market and establishing the going prices.¹²⁷ In 1893 the newspaper Iveria described the same practice, unchanged since pre-reform days:

Merchant-speculators confront the villagers on the approach roads and practically take their goods from them by force before selling them at the bazaar at three times the amount.¹²⁸

Peasants engaged in viticulture in East Georgia were subject to the attentions of a particular type of middle-man called a siraji (chalandari in West Georgia) who came out to the villages from T'bilisi and T'elavi and returned with carts laden with wine.¹²⁹ The peculiarity of the siraji consisted in the fact that he acted as money-lender, supplier and seller as well as purchaser. The journal Gut'nis Deda (The Ploughman) said of the siraji that he has,

...a perfect knowledge of the position of the seller, knows to whom and at what time to go to sample wine, where and for what reason to reject wine, when to offer a price and when to keep quiet ... he knows whether or not the owner of the vineyard needs money to pay the charity's office, to pay taxes, to purchase bread or other household needs.¹³⁰

Furthermore, the Armenian sirajebi of T'bilisi operated in unison, assigning each other spheres of influence.¹³¹ Among the Kakhian peasantry only the rich and the relatively rich (shedzlebuli) were able to avoid falling into their debt.

The grain trade was also dominated by Armenian merchants whose practice was to purchase when prices were low and to store the grain until prices rose. A contemporary journal appearing in 1862 commented,

The grain trade outside Tiflis (T'bilisi) has an enormous number of representatives, who one can put into two main categories: merchants ex professo, state purveyors with a lot of capital and specialising in the purchase of grain, and petty traders who suck the blood from the veins of the unfortunate peasantry and use its labour and property as if it were their own.¹³³

Since most peasants did not produce enough to keep stocks for themselves, they lived in constant fear of a poor harvest. The middle-men would buy the meagre crop at low cost to themselves and then wait till the market price peaked. They could then return to the villages, offer the starving peasants loans with exacting conditions and then sell them back the same grain at a price far in excess of what they had paid for it. The peasantry were thus caught in a vicious circle from which even a good harvest was no escape.¹³⁴

It is, therefore, equally the case that they had ample cause for hostility towards the commercial bourgeoisie. However, whilst there can be no doubting their anger, it did not take nationalist form. It seems quite likely that the ethnic origin of their oppressors was a matter of little concern to the peasantry. They had been, and in some cases still were, just as oppressed by Georgian aznaurni, Russian officials, and Russian, Persian and Turkish soldiers. What was required, therefore, was not a change in the nationality of the oppressor, but a change in their economic and social status. National consciousness was not yet so developed among Georgian peasants that they could transcend the class barrier and find common cause with the t'avadaznauroba against the Armenians. In fact, one could argue that the continued class antagonism between the nobility and the peasantry was one of the main reasons why nationalism had such little popular appeal after the peasant reforms. National unity could not exist whilst such a divide persisted.

It should also be noted that the attitude of the Georgian peasantry was complicated by the social divisions that were quickly emerging within its own ranks. There was, therefore, no peasant solidarity against the merchants and money-lenders. The richer peasants were often as guilty of exploiting the poorer peasants as the sirajebi.

In T'elavi district not only did the well-off peasants have more land than the rest, they also owned more cattle. 17.9 per cent of the peasantry owned 60 per cent of the livestock.¹³⁵ In Signaghi district, where animal husbandry played an important part in the local economy, 17.2 per cent of the peasantry owned seven per cent of the cattle and 49.4

per cent had none at all.¹³⁶ That the Georgian plough required eight buffalo to drag it gives some impression of how dependent the poor must have been on the rich.

In the Kakhian villages of Shilda, Shak'riani, Zemo Khodasheni, Eniseli, Qvareli, Uriatubani and Shalauri, 46 per cent of the land and 49 per cent of the wine produced from it were owned by rich or shedzlebuli peasants.¹³⁷ The scale of the farming enterprises operated by some peasants was such that even if they belonged to a didj ojakhi they still needed to hire labourers,¹³⁸ although hindered by the survival of serfdom.

Thus in the Georgia of the early 1860s it is evident that national integration was rapidly gaining momentum and that this process, together with the confusion of class and ethnicity, was playing a part in stimulating national consciousness. However, whilst nationalist sentiment may have been prevalent in certain sectors of the nobility, it had not yet found a footing in the peasantry.

1. P.W. Avery, "An enquiry into the outbreak of the second Russo-Persian War, 1826-28", Iran and Islam, (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 17-40. The terms of the treaty of Turkomanchai concluded in 1828 finally destroyed Persia's threat to the Transcaucasus.
2. Turkey continued to threaten Georgia right up to the Bolshevik invasion in 1921. The raids of mountain tribes on Georgian rural settlements remained a serious problem up to the defeat of Shamil in 1859.
3. This may in part explain the relative resilience of Georgia by comparison with Armenia.
4. E.V. Khoshtaria, Ocherki sotsial'no - ekonomicheskoi istorii Gruzii. (T'bilisi, 1974), pp. 35-36.
5. The prime source of living for most Georgian highlanders was sheep farming, an occupation that forced them to travel widely in Georgia and present day north Turkey in search of suitable winter pastures. This semi-nomadic existence helped maintain an awareness of the national characteristics they held in common with people populating different parts of the country.
6. D.M. Lang, The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy 1658-1832, (New York, 1957), p. 194.
7. I. Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebi (Essays), T.4 (T'bilisi, 1955), pp. 216-17.
8. V.J. Jaoshvili, "Sak'art'velos mosakhleoba XIX saukunis rep'ormandel periodshi" (The population of Georgia in the pre-reform period of the 19th century), Matsne, T'bilisi no.1, 1976, p. 96.
9. Ibid., p. 91.
10. Ibid., p. 89; D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi sop'lis meurneobasa da mredsvelobashi repormandel sak'art'veloshi (Capitalist Enterprises in Agriculture and Industry in Pre-Reform Georgia), (T'bilisi, 1959), p. 223; E.V. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., p. 90; Kote Ant'adze, 'Amierkavkasiis mosakhleobis ritskhovneba da erovnuli shemadgenloba 1873 dsels (The size and national composition of the population of the Transcaucasus in 1873), Matsne, no.4, 1976, p. 32.
11. V. Jaoshvili, op.cit., p. 93.
12. R. Kharadze, Gruzinskaya semeinaya obshchina (T'bilisi, 1960), p. 69.
13. V. Jaoshvili, op.cit. p. 87.
14. I. Antelava, Gosudarstvennye krestyane Gruzii v pervoi polovine XIX v. T.1 (Sukhumi, 1955), pp. 158-59.

15. kavkazom' T.1 (T'bilisi, 1907), pp. 290-91. Esadze provides a good description of the variety of taxes payable by the Georgian peasantry. The ghala consisted in most cases of 1 kodi of produce (or the money equivalent) from one dgh'iuri of land, i.e. approximately 48 kg from a unit of one day's ploughing. The kulukhi consisted of between one fifth and one seventh of the grape harvest. Esadze estimates that peasant households performed 10-15 days begara per annum on their landlords' estates; M.F. Brosset, Histoire de la Georgie, pp. IV-CLXXVI, Vol. II (St. Petersburg, 1856-58); N.A. Bendianishvili, Dokumentebi sak'art'velos sotsial-uri istoriidan, T.1; batonqmuri urt'iert'oba XV-XIX ss (Documents from the Social History of Georgia, Vol. 1; Feudal Relations in the 15th-19th cc) (T.6, 1940-53).
16. R. Kharadze, op.cit., p. 43.
17. N.L. Abazadze, "Semeinaya obshchina y Gruzin", Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie (Moscow, 1889), p. 19. Abazadze comments on the labour intensive nature of Georgian agriculture in the 19th century. Viticulture demanded constant attention all year round, and numerous workers. Because of the nature of the soil and of the type of plough used to till it, a Georgian ploughing team required 8 pairs of buffalo and at least 4 workers.
18. I. Ant'elava, "P'eodalur-batonqmobis sistemis rghveva da kapitalistur urt'iert'obat'a ganvit'areba sop'lis meurneobashi" (The collapse of the system of feudal-batonqmoba and the development of capitalist relations in agriculture) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., pp. 58-59.
19. D.M. Lang, The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy, op.cit., pp. 67-71. Lang comments on what he considers to be "a lurid and clearly overdrawn picture of feudal tyranny in Georgia" given by certain foreign observers during the 18th and 19th centuries. Whilst he rightly warns against placing too much faith in the observations of impressionable foreigners he himself provides ample evidence of the plight of the peasantry. Although there undoubtedly were owners like Akaki Dseret'eli (quoted by Lang) who treated their serfs well, such men existed in Russia, too, without actually mitigating the overall condition of the peasantry.
20. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., pp. 87-89.
21. E.V. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., p. 84.
22. E.V. Khoshtaria, ibid., p. 90; D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 223; V. Jaoshvili, "Sak'art'velos mosakheoba", op.cit., p. 89; K. Ant'adze, "Amierkavkasiis mosakhleobis ritskhovnoba", op.cit., p. 32. The figures given by Ant'adze for the population of T'bilisi Gubernia in 1873 are adjusted to include the non-tax paying strata of the population (i.e. nobility and clergy) and give a total for that

year of 1884,000. This would suggest that the figure given by Khoshtaria for 1865 of 489,100 is well off the mark. Given an annual rate of natural increase of one per cent, and allowing for immigration, the figure given by Gogoladze of 602,954 would seem closer. This figure, however, does not include the nobility and clergy. According to Sbornik statisticheskikh sredenii o kavkaze, T.1, Div.4 p. 50 and 52, 3.5 per cent of the population of T'bilisi Gubernia were members of the nobility and 1.5 per cent clergy. Ant'adze also points out that the 1873 figures omitted a further 3.5 per cent of the population through deficiencies in the census gathering process. Adjusting Gogoladze's figure to take this information into account it would seem that the population of T'bilisi Gubernia in 1865 was in the region of 651,000. A similar adjustment of the urban figures gives a town population of 99,687, or 15.3 per cent of the total. Because of the inadequacies of the population statistics gathered in this period these figures can only be considered approximate however. In West Georgia, the number of non-tax payers as a percentage of the whole was considerably higher than in East Georgia. 9.9 per cent of the population of K'ut'aisi Gubernia belonged to the nobility. This obviously necessitates a greater adjustment of the figures than for East Georgia.

23. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 92.
24. Ibid., p. 92.
25. Ibid., p. 93.
26. E.V. Khoshtaria, Ocherki., op.cit., p. 87.
27. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 49.
28. I. Ant'elava, "P'eodalur-batonqmuri sistemis rghveva", op.cit., p. 53.
29. E.V. Khoshtaria, Ocherki., op.cit., p. 97.
30. A. Surguladze, "Dasavlet' sak'art'velos ekonomhuri ganvit'areba XIX saukunis 30-60-ian dslebshi" (The economic development of West Georgia between 1830 and 1860), in Samkhret' - dasavlet' sak'art'velos mosakhleobis kulturisa da qopis sakitkhebi (Problems of the Life and Culture of the Population of South-West Georgia) (T'bilisi, 1973), p. 94.
31. Ibid., p. 96.
32. N. Natsvlishvili, "Khiznebis sotsialur-ekonomhuri mdgomareoba sak'art'veloshi XIX saukunis dasasruls: Borjomis mamuli" (The Socio-Economic Position of the Khiznebi in Georgia at the End of the 19th century: The Borjomi Estate), Matsne, no. 5, 1968, p. 145. Although this article deals with a slightly later period it provides a good example of the position of the

khiznebi, a category of landless peasants compelled to rent land on terms set out by the landlords. A khizani who left his own landlord's estate could rent land from another but would still have to pay some form of tax (in theory) to his original owner. In addition to the cost of renting the land, the khizani household would do begara for the landlord and pay ghala. Although subject to the whims of individual landlords they did not pay poll tax or perform house service for landlords. The relatively few complaints against landlords by khiznebi suggests perhaps that their position vis-a-vis the majority of the peasantry was relatively good. See, too, Esadze, Istoricheskaya zapiska ob' upravlenii kavkazom, p. 295.

33. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, p. 48.
34. E.V. Khoshtaria, Mredsvelobis ganvit'areba da mushat'a klasis chamoqalibeba XIX saukunis sak'art'veloshi, Tomi 1 (The Development of Industry and the Formation of the Working Class in 19th century Georgia, Vol.1) (T'bilisi, 1968), p. 112.
35. Ibid., p. 113.
36. Ibid., p. 112.
37. Ibid., p. 113.
38. V. Jaoshvili, "Sak'art'velos mosakhleoba", op.cit., p. 89.
39. Sh. Lomsadze, Samtskhe-Javakhet'i (T'bilisi, 1975) pp. 451-59.
40. E. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., p. 89; D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 224; Sh. Lomsadze, op.cit., p. 451. The author quotes two French travellers in the region in the 1820s. The first, Gamba (Voyage dans la Russie Meridionale, 1826, Vol. 1, p. 403), estimated the population of Akhaltsikhe at 40,000. Dubois, however, (Voyage autour du Caucase, Vol 2, Paris, 1859, p. 284) claimed that the population was 50,000.
41. Sbornik' zakonov Gruzinskago tsarya Vakhtanga VI (T'bilisi, 1887), Article 98, pp. 31-32.
42. R. Kharadze, op.cit., p. 54.
43. M.M. Kovalevskii, Zakon i obychai na kavkaze (Moscow, 1890), p. 102.
44. A.M. Argutinskii, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan Telavskogo uезда, Tiflisskoi gubernii", from Materialy dlya izucheniya ekonomicheskogo byta gosudarstvennykh krest'yan Zakavkazskogo kraya, tom 5 (St. Petersburg, 1885), p. 5.
45. C.V. Machabeli, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan Tiflisskogo uезда, Tiflisskoi gubernii" from

46. I.N. Bakhtadze, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan Shorapanskogo uezda, Kutaisskoi gubernii", from Materialy, op.cit., p. 183.
47. M.A. Kosven, Etnografiya i istoria kavkaza (Moscow, 1961), p. 99.
48. A.M. Argutinskii, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan Telavskogo uezda", op.cit., pp. 6-7.
49. Another factor making population statistics unreliable was that during the 1820s and 1840s, when a large number of serfs were escaping without passports to the towns, many attempted to assume Armenian identity in the hope that if their landlord should find them they could claim to know nothing of him. Thus many Georgian serfs married Armenians, learned to speak Armenian and lived in the Armenian part of the towns. An important factor in the choice of Armenian identity was the widely held assumption that serfdom did not exist in Armenian society. It is conceivable, therefore, that the number of Armenians as a proportion of the population of T'bilisi in 1865 may be inflated.
50. R. Klimiashvili, K'alak' T'bilisis demograp'iuli protsesebis sotsialuri p'akt'orebi (Social Factors in the Demographic Processes of T'bilisi) (T'bilisi, 1974), p. 32.
51. Ibid., p. 38.
52. "Opisanie goroda Signakhi i ego okrestnostei, predstavlennoe gorodnichim Andronikashvili v statisticheskii komitet"; Document 8 in Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, Seria II, T. 1, Gruzia v periode burzhuaiznykh reform (T'bilisi, 1960), p. 13.
53. P.V. Gugushvili, Razvitie promyshlennosti v Gruzii i Zakavkaz'e v XIX-XX vv T.1 (T'bilisi, 1957), p. 68.^o
54. V. Jaoshvili, "Sak'art'velos mosakhleoba", op.cit., p. 94; K. Ant'adze, "Amierkavkasiis mosakhleobis ritskhovnob", op.cit., p. 32.
55. An Armenian quarter of T'bilisi situated near Metekhi fortress on the left bank of the R. Mtkvari.
56. E.V. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., p.87.
57. V. Jaoshvili, "Sak'art'velos mosakhleoba", op.cit., p. 94; K. Ant'adze, "Amierkavkasiis mosakhleobis ritskhovneba", op.cit., p. 32.
58. E. Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba XIX saukunis 30-50-ian dslebshi" (Trade in the 30s -50s of the 19th Century) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., p. 98.

59. E. Khoshtaria, "Sak'art'velos mredsvelobis ganvit'areba XIX saukunis 30-60-ian dslebshi" (The development of Georgian industry in the 30s-60s of the 19th century) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., p. 82.
60. P.V. Gugushvili, Razvitie promyshennosti v Gruzii i Zakavkaz'e, op.cit., p. 274.
61. E. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., p. 86.
62. E. Orjonikidze, "P'uladi da naturaluri gadasakhadebi rep'ormandel sak'art'veloshi" (Money and natural taxes in pre-reform Georgia), Matsne, no. 3, 1976, p. 24.
63. Lali Gvakharია, Sakhelmdsip'o begara - gadasakhadebi aghmosavlet' sak'art'veloshi XIX saukunis pirvel nakhe-varshi (State Taxes and Corvee in East Georgia in the First Half of the 19th Century) (T'bilisi, 1960), p. 46.
64. Lali Gvakharია, ibid., pp. 487-48.
65. Ibid., p. 48.
66. Ibid., p. 48.
67. Ibid., p. 49.
68. E. Orjonikidze, "P'uladi da naturaluri gadasakhadebi" op.cit., p. 24.
69. Ibid., p. 24.
70. Lali Gvakharია, Sakhelmdsip'o begara, op.cit., p. 62.
71. Ibid., p. 82.
72. Ibid., p. 75.
73. Ibid., p. 73.
74. Ibid., p. 83.
75. Ibid., p. 83.
76. E. Orjonikidze, "P'uladi da naturaluri gadasakhadebi" op.cit., pp. 24-25.
77. Ibid., p. 25.
78. Lali Gvakharია, Sakhelmdsip'o begara, op.cit., p. 86.
79. Ibid., p. 95.
80. E. Orjonikidze, "P'uladi da naturaluri gadasakhadebi" op.cit., p. 31.
81. Ibid., p. 31.
82. Droeba (The Times) no. 4, 25.3.1866.

83. Ibid., no. 22, 22.7.1866.
84. E. Orjonikidze, "P'uladi da naturaluri gadasakhadebi" op.cit., p. 28.
85. Ibid., p. 28.
86. E. Khoshtaria, 'Sak'art'velos mredsvelobis ganvit'areba', op.cit., p. 84.
87. E. Khoshtaria, Mredsvelobis ganvit'areba da mushat'a klasis chamogalibeba XIX saukunis sak'art'veloshi, T.2 (The Development of Industry and the Formation of the Working Class in 19th Century Georgia, Vol. 2) (T'bilisi, 1968), p. 72.
88. I. Ant'elava, "P'eodalur-batonqmuri sistemis rghveva", op.cit., p. 40.
89. P.V. Gugushvili, Razvitie promyshlennosti v Gruzii i Zakavkaz'e, op.cit., p. 38.
90. E. Khosht'aria, Sak'art'velos mredsvelobis ganvit'areba op.cit., p. 71.
91. Ibid., p. 71.
92. Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii (ed. Prof. Sh.K. Chkhetia) "Opisanie goroda Telavi i ego okrestnostei", p. 20.
93. A. Dumas, Adventures in the Caucasus (London, 1962), p. 182.
94. P.V. Gugushvili, Razvitie promyshlennosti v Gruzii i Zakavkaz'e, op.cit., p. 108.
95. Ibid., pp. 222-223.
96. Ibid., p. 223.
97. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., pp. 216-221.
98. E. Khoshtaria, "Sak'art'velos mredsvelobis ganvit'areba", op.cit., p. 85.
99. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 220.
100. Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, "Dokladnaya zapiska obshchestva grazhdan g. Gori", op.cit., pp. 450-51.
101. Shot'a Lomsadze, Samtskhe-Javakhet'i, op.cit., pp. 464-65.
102. E. Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba XIX saukunis 30-50-ian dslebshi", op.cit., p. 103.
103. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 23.

104. R. Kharadze, Gruzinskaya semeinaya obshchina, op.cit., p. 69. Because West Georgian vines tended to be of the high-branched variety and demanded less care, nobody was specially engaged in viticulture.
105. I. Ant'elava, "P'eodalur-batonqmuri sistemis rghveva", op.cit., p. 42.
106. Ibid., p. 43.
107. D. Shavdia, "Agraruli krizisis shesakheb rep'ormandel amierkavkasiashi" (On the agrarian crisis in pre-reform Transcaucasia), Matsne, no. 4, 1971, p. 37.
108. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 22.
109. I. Ant'elava, "P'eodalur-batonqmuri sistemis rghveva", op.cit., pp. 44-46.
110. Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, "Opisanie g. Tbilisi", op.cit., pp. 63-64.
111. Ibid., p. 104.
112. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 45.
113. A. Surguladze, "Dasavlet' sak'art'velos ekonomhuri ganvit'areba", op.cit., p. 91.
114. Ibid., p. 90.
115. E. Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba XIX saukunis 30-50-ian dslebshi", op.cit., p. 102.
116. D. Gogoladze, Kapitalisturi sadsarmoebi, op.cit., p. 33.
117. E. Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba XIX saukunis 30-50-ian dslebshi", op.cit., p. 104.
118. Ibid., p. 104.
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121. Ibid., p. 20.
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123. A. Mik'ava, "K'ut'aisis sotsial-ekonomhuri ganvit'areba rep'ormis shemdgom khanashi, 1870-1900 ds ds" (The socio-economic development of K'ut'aisi in the post-reform period 1870-1900), Matsne, no. 4, 1974, p. 27.
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128. Iveria, (T'bilisi), April 2, 1893.
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131. P.V. Gugushvili, Razvitie promyshlennosti v Gruzii i Zakavkaz'e, op.cit., p. 209.
132. A.L. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi meurneobebi sak'-art'velos sop'elshi XIX-XX saukunis mijnaze" (Capitalist farms in the Georgian countryside at the turn of the century), Matsne, no. 1, 1968, p. 76.
133. Zapiski kavkazskogo obshchestva sel'skogo khozyaistva, 1862, no.3-6, p. 7, cited in V. Adamia 'Razvitie tovarnogo proizvodstva', op.cit., p. 49.
134. V. Adamia, Razvitie tovarnogo proizvodstva v sel'skom khozyaistve Gruzii, op.cit., pp. 53-54.
135. Ibid., p. 56.
136. Ibid., p. 57.
137. Ibid., p. 58.
138. R. Kharadze, Gruzinskaya semeinaya obshchina, op.cit., pp. 62-63.

The Peasant Reforms of 1864-71 and their Impact on the Process of Integration

Although the traditional patterns of life in Georgia evinced clear signs of change in the first 60 years of the 19th century after several hundred years of imposed torpor, it nevertheless remained the case, as in Russia itself, that the survival of serf relations was impeding the further social and economic development of the country. As has been indicated in the previous chapter, the expanded role of commerce in the country's economic life and the reduction in the power of the t'avadaznauroba since Russia annexed K'art'l-Kakhet'i in 1801 had already done much to inject a degree of social fluidity into Georgian society: the aristocracy found itself increasingly in the debt of merchants and money-lenders and forced to mortgage its properties, a new relatively rich group of peasants was emerging, and as the demand for labour grew from Georgia's fledgling industry so the country's urban population began to swell to the rural's expense and the barriers to national integration presented by a self-contained, traditional society, showed signs of erosion. While, however, baton-qmoba continued to have the sanction of law and almost a third of the country's inhabitants remained tied to the estates of an often impoverished nobility, it was clear that the pace of progress would be impeded.

3.1 The Emancipation of the Georgian Peasantry

The defeat of the Imperial armies in the Crimean War, internal criticism and the mounting frequency of peasant rebellions within European Russia were sufficient to convince the newly crowned tsar, Alexander II, that if Russia was to assume a position of predominance in the world, changes would have to be made to the structure of society. As the tsar recognised, the price for failing to instigate reform could lead not just to Russia's fall from the forefront of European states, but might also precipitate a social upheaval that could topple the Romanov dynasty from power.

Reform, therefore, had not only become a necessity for appeasing the opinion of a disenchanted intelligentsia, but also for soothing internal dissent and paving the way for economic advance.

Whilst the threat of rural revolution never reached the same proportions in Georgia as it did in many parts of Russia, the level and frequency of outbreaks of violence between the peasantry and the t'avadaznauroba intensified during the 1850s, culminating in the period during and after the Crimean War, when the onus on the peasantry to provide both men and supplies for the fighting edged them further towards confrontation with the regime. According to Soviet sources, which unfortunately do not define what constitutes a disturbance or an uprising, whereas between 1825 and 1854 the incidence of peasant disturbances averaged 24 a year, between 1855 and 1861 the number rose considerably, averaging 79 a year.¹ West Georgia, as one of the main fronts of the war, suffered particularly severely and peasant and

t'avadi alike were forced to abandon their lands to be devastated by the advancing Turkish forces. On returning, however, the Imerian and Megrelian nobility attempted to recoup their losses at the peasantry's expense. Initial protest from the peasantry took the form of petitions, but as it became aware of the ineffectiveness of this approach, it turned increasingly to violence. A spate of incidents in Samegrelo in 1856 and 1857 climaxed in May of that year with the occupation of Zugdidi, the capital of the principality, by a force of some 20,000 peasants.² Perhaps of more concern to the t'avadaznauroba than the action itself, however, were the eight demands presented by the leader of the uprising, Ut'u Mik'ava, a blacksmith, to the Governor General of K 'ut'aisi Gubernia, Kolubikin, in which he called for an end to the ownership of man by man, an end to the slave trade, an end to individual increases in taxation, the granting of individual rights to peasants, the establishment of a rural administration based on a system of laws and not the whim of landlords, the abolition of torture, the legalisation of peasant ownership of land and for greater respect to be shown to the customs of the people.³ Peasant violence, though still unorganised and spontaneous in nature, was now beginning to give rise to the articulation of demands which specifically called for an end to batongmoba.

Although conditions in Samegrelo were undoubtedly worse than in most parts of the country at the end of the 1850s, where torture and the slave trade did not feature among the complaints of the peasantry, uprisings were by no means confined to this part of West Georgia. In Gori district virtually every landlord encountered acts of resistance from

their serfs and in 1860 Prince Machabeli was confronted by the combined action of 60 villages.⁴

Thus, whilst it is clear that the agrarian reform in Georgia only came about as a consequence of the wider reform in European Russia, it is equally the case that conditions in the Transcaucasus and, in particular, Georgia were giving the tsarist administration cause for serious concern. A major factor in the regime's anxiety was Georgia's strategic position, the importance of which was emphasised during the Crimean War, when in 1855, the Turkish General, Omar Pasha, invaded West Georgia and succeeded in winning the support of many peasants by promising an early end to serfdom.⁵

Unable to ignore the possible consequences of further deterioration in both its own and the Georgian nobility's relations with the Georgian peasantry, and sensitive to the dangers inherent in persistent armed suppression of the population, the government resolved to extend its planned peasant reforms to the Transcaucasus. In 1857, the Georgian nobility was given its first warning of what was to come with the distribution of an official circular on the subject, and a request that Prince Bariatskii, the current Vice-Regent, and two leading Georgian public figures, Prince Gr. Orbeliani and Dmitri Qipiani, draw up a report on the situation in the Transcaucasus. It was not until April 1862, however, with the convocation of a congress of the t'avadznauroba of T'bilisi Gubernia, that preparations began in earnest.⁶ In the meantime, relations with the peasants had continued to deteriorate as the Georgian nobility sought to salvage as much as possible from the impending reform. Writing to Tsar Alexander II in July 1863, the latest Transcaucasian Vice-Regent, Grand Duke Mikhail

Nikolaevich, observed of the peasant question that,

...its settlement has to be achieved without delay, because relations between the peasantry and the landowners are exceptionally bad throughout the Transcaucasian region. This is especially felt here (Akhaltsikhe district) and in Gori district, and we have been compelled to send out punitive expeditions. Very often the peasants refuse to pay the taxes which, in accordance with custom, their fathers and forefathers have paid since ancient times. In anticipation of emancipation the peasants have been committing acts of disobedience ... and together with this, there have been occasions, and by no means rare occasions, when the landlords, seeing that the moment of the resolution of the peasant question is drawing near, attempt to use the remaining time to take from the peasants as much as they can and to squeeze the last drop of juice from them.⁷

Despite undoubted sympathy for the peasants among much of the intelligentsia and no doubt in certain government circles too, the administration's concern for the economic position of the peasantry was born not of any altruistic desire to ameliorate its living standards, but primarily to provide the peasants with sufficient means to satisfy the state's tax requirements and prevent the transformation of a large section of the rural population into landless wage labourers. Fear of this arising stemmed in large part from the experience of the land reforms in the Baltic provinces between 1816 and 1819, which granted peasants personal freedom without land. Introduced in the hope that the area might emulate the agricultural achievements of England, the reforms succeeded only in creating a landless and often impoverished peasantry, scarcely able to pay its taxes. It may have been the case too that many of those drawing up the reforms opposed land reform along the English and Prussian lines on ideological grounds, believing that the future of the Russian nation lay in the preservation of the mir and

the people's intimate relationship with the soil. Additionally, advocacy of emancipation with land provided the regime with a convenient sop to offer in the direction of the conscience-stricken intelligentsia.

On the other hand, however, the intention of the government to prevent the formation of a class of rural wage-labourers by granting the right to the perpetual use of the land was a source of great concern to the Georgian nobility. The problem, even more so than in Russia, was that the greater part of the Georgian nobility, in this case predominantly the aznaurni, was comprised of small-scale landowners who owned very few serfs. Even after the reforms had increased the size of their estates, the average area of land owned by T'bilisi Gubernia's t'avadaznaurni was only 54 desyatin, and by those living in K'ut'aisi Gubernii even less at 16 desyatin.⁸ In fact these figures exaggerate the size of the estates owned by most aznaurni since they include the estates of the wealthiest owners. 53.55 per cent of the t'avadaznaurni of T'bilisi Gubernia possessed less than 25 desyatin of land and only 21.12 per cent had over 100 desyatin. The situation was rather worse in K'ut'aisi Gubernia where 89.78 per cent owned less than 25 desyatin and only 2.9 per cent had over 100 desyatin.⁹

The position regarding ownership of serfs was little different. According to census investigations carried out in 1860 and 1861, there were 1,751 t'avadaznauri families in T'bilisi Gubernia, of whom 1,537 owned peasants with land and 214 owned peasants without. Of these, 869 or 49.6 per cent of the total owned less than 22 male serfs and a further 41.6 per cent had between 22 and 100. Only two

landowners owned more than 1,000 male serfs.¹⁰ In K'ut'aishi Gubernia, where 4,785 t'avadaznaurni owned 7,896 estates and 24,136 peasant households, 78.9 per cent owned less than 22 male serfs and a further 17.4 per cent had between 22 and 100.

Their estates reduced by family divisions in the 19th century and squandered through debt, the vast majority of these small-holding aznaurni depended largely on the tax derived from their peasants for a living. It was this section of the Georgian population which put up the most stubborn resistance to the reform. The problem for the government was that having expended so much time and effort to transform the t'avadaznaurni into loyal executives of the tsarist will and a pool for recruitment into the service bureaucracy, there was now a real danger of alienating them once more by providing the peasantry with an adequate basis for maintaining itself from the land. Attempting to resolve this dilemma, the government asked the representatives of the T'bilisi and K'ut'aishi Gubernii t'avadaznaurni to draw up projects for the reform.

The first meeting of the representatives of the t'avadaznaurni of T'bilisi Gubernia to discuss the reform met in April 1862 with clear instructions from the government to prepare a project outlining their ideas on the forthcoming emancipation of the sabatono peasants. The vast majority of the delegates, reflecting the mood of the small and middle level Georgian nobility, approached the meeting in a mood of begrudging resignation, but not before they had sent a petition to the government which went straight to the roots of their concern:

As soon as the peasants are declared free, our families will immediately be placed in an impoverished condition. We will have to sit sadly in the courtyards and beg for alms. We will have neither servants nor workers for the fields and vineyards, neither shepherds for the livestock nor governesses to bring up our children.¹²

Now, however, under threat from the government that the reform would go ahead with or without their participation, they came to the meeting determined to salvage what they could of their position. Having discussed the issue for five days the t'avadaznaurni mandated Dimitri Qipiani¹³ to draw up a project reflecting their views. Addressing the assembly, Qipiani made it quite clear that his own opinions closely reflected the mainstream of the nobility's thought on the reform:

Our general will [he declared] is that the serfs should be given their freedom, that we should be given money in exchange and that the land remain ours.¹⁴

Qipiani went on to place considerable emphasis on the role batonqmoba played in society:

The relationship which has been established since ancient times between ourselves and our serfs greatly resembles the relationship between the members of one family, between the children of one house. We have never regarded our serfs as slaves or prisoners, but have always considered them as our colleagues, as the co-creators of a common enterprise. Neither have they seen us as tyrants and oppressors: they have regarded us as their protectors and as the managers of the general domestic economy.¹⁵

In this way he hoped to demonstrate to the tsarist government that batonqmoba was a form of contract agreed upon under equal conditions by landlord and peasant alike. Consequently, if the peasant was to be permitted to terminate his side of the contract, justice demanded that

the landlord be allowed to abandon any responsibilities, including the provision of land, that he had had towards the peasants.

Whether or not batongmoba ever did attain the ideal form described by Qipiani, it is clear first of all that the relationship was never an equal one, and secondly that by the mid-19th century the intrusion of Russian law and the gradual evolution of Georgian society itself had already done much to destroy the fine balance of custom and written law upon which batongmoba was based. As a contemporary writer, by no means unsympathetic to this institution, wrote in 1884:

Following the arrival of the Russians, a completely new life began in Georgia and batongmoba, as the fruit of a long historical process, clearly had to collapse under the influence of very different circumstances and conditions...¹⁶

Qipiani's project was presented in April 1863 to a second meeting of the representatives of the t'avadaznaurni of T'bilisi Gubernia. The main burden of it addressed the issue of most concern to the landlords - land; and on this the majority of landlords, whose views found their clearest expression in Qipiani's report, would concede nothing. Basing themselves, however fallaciously, on a mixture of written and unwritten Georgian law, the T'bilisi nobility refused to countenance granting the peasantry personal freedom and land. In this they received the support of most of the other projects written in the period between the two meetings. The so-called minority project, which reflected the views of 14 of the 240 t'avadaznaurni representatives, differed only insofar as it suggested that the reform should

recognise the peasant's right to the ownership of everything he had created with his own labour. Thus the vines in a vineyard would belong to the peasant who had cultivated them, but not the land itself. Another project presented by one of the largest landowners in Georgia, Prince Mukhran-Batoni, also reminded the government of the historic role batonqmoba had played in Georgian society and proposed that if, as seemed inevitable, the peasants had to be emancipated, they should be freed without land and be free to enter into new contracts with their previous or other landlords as tenants (moiJaradreebi).¹⁷

It was the issue of land that brought into question the nature and depth of the t'avadaznauroba's conception of paternalism. Qipiani's project advocated that liberated sabatono peasants should acquire the status of khiznebi, a category of peasant that had existed since the Middle Ages in Georgia, but which had become particularly common during the late 18th and early 19th centuries as landlords' estates split up. Essentially, the term khizani described two types of peasants: free peasants who rented land from landowners, but had the right to use it in perpetuity so long as they paid their rent and dues, and the so-called qma-khizani, who belonged to one landlord but because, for instance, of land shortage was compelled to seek land on another landlord's estate.¹⁸ Certainly the familiarity of the Georgian peasantry with the concept of khiznoba was an advantage, but it could not disguise the fact that it meant freedom without land, a fact which contradicted the basic premises of the emancipation reform.¹⁹ The peasantry would, in effect, be at the mercy of whatever terms the nobility dictated.

final analysis, to have amounted to little more than the protection of the nobility's interests, often at the expense of the peasantry's. Thus, despite the fact that Vakhtang VI's laws²⁰ expressly provided for free access for the peasantry to all forest land and unencumbered use of rivers, streams and springs, and that the same customary law upon which he based the nobility's land claims also demanded that "the lord should not deprive him [the serf] of his land without reason", and despite the peasantry's customary right to the hereditary use of the land it worked,²¹ the project envisaged depriving the peasantry of these rights.

In defence, Dimitri Qipiani argued that the nobility was dependent on taxes for its existence and that in certain cases nobles' entire estates were farmed by peasant households, so that if freedom was granted with land some aznaurni would be left completely destitute. Besides, he pleaded, the Georgian nobility was not suited to any other kind of existence. Of trade he wrote,

...our hereditary and historically formed character has until now stubbornly opposed involvement in commercial activity and one has to confess that we have not yet revealed any ability in this direction.²²

Neither did they have the financial means, knowledge or experience to live from industry, and as for agriculture,

...until we stop seizing property and land from each other, until we find time to live on our estates and acquire knowledge and experience for the improvement of agriculture, until we attract voluntary, hired labour as opposed to compulsory, until we have means of communication, and on top of all that, until we are able to breath somewhat more freely from the debts oppressing us - who amongst us will be in a position to base his hopes for existence on agriculture?!²³

In short, Qipiani argued that the t'avadaznaurni had only two realistic means of support: the peasantry and the land. But, in truth, the debates within the t'avadaznauroba of T'bilisi Gubernia, and a year later of K'ut'aisi Gubernia, were a reflection of the gulf that more than ever before divided ethnic Georgian society. Under the stress of socio-economic changes, an expanding population and land shortage, the family relationship to which Qipiani referred, if it had ever existed at all, had all but disappeared. There was an air of desperation in the efforts of the nobility to stave off reform, or, at the very least, to make it tolerable.

As the nobility on the one hand became more assertive of its claims, on the other, the peasantry, aware that the reform had already been enacted in Russia and suspicious of the intentions of the landlords, became more aggressive in the defence of what it increasingly perceived as a fundamental right - the right to own the land it worked. In this way, the build-up to the reform intensified the tendency examined in the previous chapter for social relations between the two Georgian class elements in Georgian society, the peasantry and the t'avadaznauroba, to become sharper just at the moment when in other respects the pattern of the country's development was leading it further towards national integration.

But if the gulf between these classes widened during the 1860s, this was also a period in which people of both sides of the growing class divide developed a greater consciousness of their corporate identity. To a large extent the government was the unwitting sponsor of this development

when it encouraged the t'avadaznauri congresses of 1862, 1863 and 1864 for the discussion of the peasant reform. For the first time since Russian rule had been imposed, the small and middle nobility were presented with a forum for expressing and sharing their views. Isolated and insecure, the aznaurni unexpectedly broke with tradition in late 1863 by electing Qipiani as Marshal of the nobility of T'bilisi Gubernia, instead, as was customary, of limiting their choice to one of the more illustrious t'avadi families.²⁴ Until that point, the differences that existed between the lesser and the greater nobility had been largely unstated. The debate on the reform, however, brought their differences acutely into focus. The largest landowners were almost wholly integrated into the tsarist regime and were the greatest beneficiaries of Russian rule. Wealthy and secure, most of them were not unduly perturbed by the impending reform and indeed saw it as an opportunity for greater agricultural efficiency.²⁵ They did not share the anxieties of the aznaurni and in most respects were greater removed in social terms from the lesser nobility than the latter were from their serfs.

Thus, as the majority of delegates discovered their shared fears and concerns for the future, so they became conscious of the distance separating them from the wealthiest and most influential of their number. Convinced that their best interests could no longer be defended by an Orbeliani or a Mukhran-Batoni, the nobility invited Qipiani to stand as candidate for the office of Marshal. Despite official opposition and the anger of the grandest aristocratic families, Qipiani went ahead and in February 1864 was elected by 273 votes to 4 with 35 abstentions.²⁶

ities, because in rejecting their advice and choosing Qipiani, the nobility made clear its firm opposition to the government's recommendations for the reform. Furthermore, whilst their new-found solidarity was not much of an obstacle to the passage of reform, it did represent a far greater threat to the government's desire completely to assimilate the Georgian nobility into the dvoryanstvo. More aware now of its corporate class and national identity, the t'avadaznauroba increasingly became a source of opposition to Russian rule in the Transcaucasus.

Despite the opposition encountered from the nobility, the Russian administration remained resolved to effect reforms based on those introduced to Russia in 1861. Its prime concern was that Transcaucasia fulfil its potential as a colonial dependency of the empire, and in this respect the deterioration of relations between the peasantry and nobility was an impediment that required removal. Thus, although the government may have sympathised with the t'avadaznauroba, its priorities lay in producing the optimal conditions for the exploitation of the Caucasus.

As has been stated above, this, in the administration's view, meant providing the peasantry with some claim to the land and the promise, at least, of purchasing some of it in the future. As a guiding principle, the 1861 reform attempted to ensure that peasant plots be sufficient "to assure their livelihood and the fulfilment of all their obligations to the government and the landlord".²⁷ In this way, so it was argued, the peasantry could be prevented from forming a rural proletariat and would at the same time be

capable of fulfilling its tax obligations.

The law abolishing serfdom was introduced into T'bilisi Gubernia on 13th October 1864, and was followed, with some changes to suit local conditions, on 13th October 1865 in K'ut'aisi Gubernia (Imeret'i, Guria and Ratcha), on 1st December 1866 in Samegrelo, on 8th November 1870 in Ap'khazet'i, and on 8th October 1871 in Svanet'i.²⁸ On the basis of these laws the peasants of Georgia acquired their personal freedom, exemption from paying personal tax to the nobility, the right of ownership of real estate constructed by themselves on the land they used, and the right to the constant use of the land they had worked prior to the reform. This land was not yet, however, recognised as their private property. It remained the inalienable property of the nobility and although on the basis of article 9 of the Additional Rules Concerning the Emancipation of Sabatono Peasants, a peasant was granted the right to redeem his plot either in part or in whole, he could only do so with his landlord's consent.²⁹ Until such time as the peasant was able to buy the land he worked and his landlord was prepared to sell it, the former remained "temporarily obligated" to pay tax for the use of the land.

These rights were, however, tightly circumscribed by a number of restrictions which further weighted the balance of the reform in the favour of the t'avadaznauroba. Thus freedom of movement was limited by an article which forbade the peasant to leave his plot for a period of nine years, and even thereafter the right of movement was fraught with difficulties.³⁰

The size of the plot allotted to the peasant by the landlord was in theory to be determined by mutual agreement.

They were given two years in which to draw up the documents (ustavnye gramoty) detailing their new relationship.³¹ In the event of their failure to agree the peasant was to keep what land he had used before the reform and the case to be presented for examination by an arbitrator (mirovoy posrednik). As their title suggests, the arbitrators were supposedly intended to seek a neutral and just resolution of the rival claims.³² Leaving aside the issue of the neutrality of the mirovye posredniki, it remains the case that in practice the reform was weighted against the peasantry.

As in Russia, maximum land plots were established which, because of the varied nature of the climate and environment in Georgia, varied from region to region. Broadly, however, it was laid down that the maximum size plot for a household in East Georgia should be five desyatiny if irrigated and 10 if not,³³ and that the maximum for West Georgia should be 4.5 desyatiny.³⁴ Peasants who had had more than this prior to the reform could be deprived of the surplus if the owner wished. In fact, the reform was more flexible than this insofar as the landlord was able to treat all the peasant households on his estate as a collective unit. Thus, if on average the size of their plots exceeded five desyatiny, he could reduce the area available to them. The reform further allowed that the largest peasant household could be three times the size of the average maximum plot of five desyatiny if the landlord permitted it. Since this reduced the area of land available to the remaining peasant families, it could quite clearly become a measure that benefitted the richer peasants at the expense of the poor.³⁵

A series of other clauses cut further into the land previously used by the sabatono peasants. Landlords were entitled to keep up to 50 per cent of their estates for themselves, a rule which often seriously restricted the area of land available to the peasantry. Furthermore, the t'avadaznaurni were empowered to keep at least 60 k'tseva (approximately 30 desyatiny) of land, an expanse which, given the size of nobility estates in Georgia, was often in excess of 50 per cent of their estates.³⁶ In West Georgia, where land was scarcer, the nobility was entitled to keep at least 22.5 k'tseva. Landowners in T'bilisi Gubernia with less than 60 k'tseva and in K'ut'aisi Gubernia with less than 22.5 were not obliged to provide any land at all.³⁸

Unlike in Russia where, in accordance with the stated intention of the reform to provide the peasantry with the means to live and pay its taxes, the landlords were expected to provide the peasantry with a minimum area of land, no such obligations faced the t'avadaznauroba. Basic plot sizes amounting to half the maximum plot size were established, but landlords were not required to pay heed to them. Thus peasants with less than 2.5 desyatiny in East Georgia and less than 1.5 desyatiny in West Georgia remained that way.³⁹

Landlords were now entitled to tax peasants for the use of forests and water located on their properties. As stated above, the Georgian peasantry had traditionally had free access to forests and water and both played an important part in the peasant economy. The deprivation of this right further drained their stretched resources.

It would appear, therefore, that in its attempt to resolve the peasant question in Georgia, the administration

sought to both appease the t'avadaznauroba through the introduction of the concessions described above, and ensure that the peasantry was capable of fulfilling its obligations to the landlords and state. Ultimately, by trying to achieve both ends at once, it failed to secure either.

Conscious of the small scale of most of the nobility's estates, the government went out of its way to protect them from suffering losses from the reform. In addition to the measures already described, they also received 25 rubles per male serf and 50 rubles if they had less than 21 male serfs.⁴⁰

Rather foolishly, given the aims of the reform, less attention was devoted to ensuring that the peasantry would be capable of fulfilling its envisaged role. Even in the rich black earth areas of Russia, it was estimated that a peasant family required at least five desyatin of land per male member to meet its minimum requirements. In Georgia, however, so much was done to ensure the livelihoods of the t'avadaznauroba that the peasant families' minimum requirements were measured not in terms of desyatin per male member of the family, but in desyatin per household or komli. 2.5 desyatin was recognised as a basic, but not a legal requirement for ex-sabatono peasant families in East Georgia.⁴¹ From this, which included their farmsteads, fields and vineyards, the peasantry was both to feed itself and fulfil its fiscal duties.

3.2 Deteriorating Social Relations

It is one of the ironies of the reform that the means by which the Transcaucasian administration had hoped to lay the basis for more harmonious peasant relations, and hence a more stable environment for the economic exploitation of the region, should have been transformed into one of the focal points of a class confrontation that the reform had supposedly been intended to avoid. It had been envisaged that the process of drawing up the title deeds (ustavnye gramoty) would be complete within two years of the introduction of the reform but, in fact, the peasantry offered such resistance to the terms it was being asked to accept, that in many cases the process dragged on far longer than anticipated.

The peasants of Nakhida in Gori district informed the local mirovoy posrednik that, following the announcement of the Supreme Manifesto, they no longer considered themselves obligated to pay taxes to their owners,⁴² and in K'ut'aisi Gubernia refusal to sign the deeds became one of the main forms of resistance among the peasantry.⁴³ Moreover, settlements were not only delayed by disputes between the peasants and the landowners, but also among the landowners themselves. Whilst they could not agree over the precise location of estate boundaries, work could not even commence on the allocation of land to the peasantry.⁴⁴

The initial responsibility for drawing up the title deeds rested on the t'avadznaurni, who then forwarded them to the state arbitrator or mirovoy posrednik for inspection, (the mirovoy posrednik was elected from among the local nobility).⁴⁵ Upon his approval they would be presented to the peasant families concerned. If they refused to sign the case would be referred to the gubernia office and a

temporary deputy would be sent to arbitrate. His decision was final and the peasantry had no means of appeal.⁴⁶

The deeds determined the size of the allotment to be granted to the temporarily obligated peasantry and listed the taxes to be paid for different types of land. The size of the ghala and kulukhi was set at 25 per cent by the reform and the sabalakhe or hay tax at 33 per cent, but the method of payment and the size of the duty on fruit and nut orchards was to be negotiated between the landlords and peasants.⁴⁷ The contents of these title deeds were to set the tone of the relationship between the ex-sabatono peasants and the nobility until the institution of temporarily obligated peasants disappeared.

Predictably, land emerged as the main source of contention from the reform and the title deeds process. The measures designed to protect the small-holding t'avadaznaurni resulted in a considerable reduction of the area used by the sabatono peasants prior to the reform, leaving most still more vulnerable to economic exploitation than before. This is not to say, however, that the peasantry suffered in all cases. Indeed, there were occasions when the landlords did make gifts of land to their peasants,⁴⁸ and there was probably enough truth in the predominantly mythical accounts of familial serf-owner relations to have ameliorated the lot of some peasant households. By and large, however, it appears that landowners made the most of the reform to bolster their own position at the peasantry's expense.

Detailed figures published by the T'bilisi Gubernia office during the 1870s indicate that while the peasantry suffered no losses to their farmstead plots, vineyards and

orchards, their arable and meadow lands were dramatically reduced. Thus, of the 77,643.5 desyatin of field lands used by the sabatono peasants previous to the reform only 48,223.5 desyatin remained, a reduction of 37.8 per cent. The total area granted to the temporarily obligated peasantry now amounted to 55,265 desyatin.⁴⁹

Whereas the average household plot had been 5.9 desyatin in pre-reform T'bilisi Gubernia, it now fell to 3.9 desyatin.⁵⁰ In West Georgia the average size fell to 2.5 desyatin.⁵¹

Table 10: The Average Size of Land Plots Used by Temporarily Obligated Peasants in T'bilisi Gubernia

Districts	Area of Land in <u>Desyatin</u>							
	Per Household				Per Male			
	Up to the Reform		After the Reform		Up to the Reform		After the Reform	
	All Types	Field Land	All Types	Field Land	All Types	Field Land	All Types	Field Land
T'bilisi	9.26	8.89	4.73	4.36	2.43	2.34	1.24	1.15
Dushet'i	5.07	4.83	3.96	3.72	1.26	1.20	0.99	0.93
Gori	5.62	5.26	3.25	2.88	1.30	1.21	0.75	0.66
Sighnaghi	4.27	3.64	2.94	2.32	1.09	0.93	0.75	0.59
T'elavi	5.59	4.50	5.24	4.15	1.44	1.15	1.34	1.06

As is evident from the table the land allocated to sabatono families in T'bilisi Gubernia was in every case below the minimum considered necessary for the needs of one male living in the black earth region of Russia.⁵³

It is estimated that 75 per cent of the losses suffered by the peasantry were due to the clauses in the reform

protecting the nobility,⁵⁴ but there was also a tendency among the t'avadaznaurni to count unirrigated land as irrigated, thus cutting the amount due to the peasantry, and for them to expropriate plots which the peasantry claimed as private property through transactions completed before the reform and occasionally even before the advent of Russian rule. The acrimonious nature of the argument was fuelled by the fact that such transactions had often been completed without documentary evidence, or, if there had been papers, they were now lost. Thus, the Georgian peasantry, used to dealing with customary practice, became the victim of the Russian administration's predilection for judging cases through its own legal framework. As noted above, the same problem was plaguing the attempts of the nobility to settle the boundaries of its estates.

Although the reform did at least offer the Georgian peasantry the prospect of being able to purchase its own land, the terms upon which it could do so were extremely disadvantageous. The government was prepared to grant the peasantry state loans to be repaid over a period of 49 years, but whereas in Russia these covered 80 per cent of the costs, in Georgia a maximum loan of 350 rubles was established. Because of the high cost of land, this rarely covered more than 50 per cent of the value of the property. In fact, this rather understates the peasantry's predicament, because government loans could not be extended to vineyards, orchards or pastures at all. These, like the rest of the allotment, could only be purchased with the landlords' agreement and had to be paid to him in full by the peasant.⁵⁵ The scale of the repayment terms,⁵⁶ shortage of money and a general lack of comprehension of the loan

system were further disincentives to the peasantry.

Such was the weight of the tax burden, moreover, that many who might have desired to make use of the loans were unable to. Ghala and kulukhi, for instance, which had never been set above 10-20 per cent of the harvest in K'ut'aishi Gubernia, were now set at 25 per cent by the government's decree,⁵⁷ while the sakarmidamo (farmstead) tax was exacted at an average rate of 12 rubles p.a. The difficulties of the peasantry were further compounded by the t'avadaznauroba's preference for receiving the tax in the form of produce. The peasantry felt that monetary tax worked out cheaper and that as it was not subject to annual fluctuations, provided greater incentive to work. Moreover, it was of obvious benefit to those peasants able to take their produce to local markets and to those employed as wage labourers.⁵⁸ Precisely because it worked out cheaper, however, many landlords preferred to keep things as they were.

Although the new tax rates established by the reform were a source of conflict between the peasantry and the nobility, the greatest resentment revolved around the charges now established for the use of forest areas and the rent charged for the use of land that had previously been part of the peasant allotments. Thus the post-reform data indicates that the temporarily obligated peasantry continued to use virtually the same quantity of land after the reform as before, but that for the land rented from the landlords they had to pay up to 66 per cent of the harvest.⁵⁹ Such was the extent of land shortage that 42 per cent of the ex-sabatono peasants of T'bilisi Gubernia had become tenant farmers by the 1880s and over 60 per cent in West Georgia.⁶⁰

According to the newspaper Kvaili (the furrow), 80 per cent of all peasants in Guria were forced to work other people's land, much of which was situated far from their own. Another paper, Shroma (Labour), described the situation in Guria as follows:

It is rare to find a peasant who has enough land to keep him working for a year and to provide for his family. The great majority of the peasantry works on other people's land for a share of the crops; in other words, under conditions where he has to give half the results of his labour to the land's owner.⁶²

On top of this peasants had to pay their state taxes and to perform the begara (labour) duty for the landlord, the state and the local community. This involved repairing roads and bridges and providing one's own horses, buffalos and carts as means of transport. In itself a heavy burden, it was often made doubly so by its coincidence with the most intensive periods in the agricultural calendar.⁶³

Under these conditions it is scarcely surprising that relations between the peasantry and the nobility, which the reform had supposedly been intended to settle, should have taken a turn for the worse. Once the euphoria had worn off and the reality of the reforms sunk in, the mood in the villages began to change. Agitators for a destructive campaign against the title deeds became increasingly common and the Georgian equivalent of the narodniki, the khalkhosnebi, began to acquire a stronger foothold. Outbreaks of violence over land disputes, although not expanding into a widespread rebellion until the beginning of the 20th century, became an almost permanent feature of rural life.⁶⁴ Between 1865 and 1870 28,012 complaints were registered by peasants and landlords on over 40 different

This in large part explains the slow pace at which redemption payments were concluded in Georgia. But other important factors impinged as well. Of considerable significance was the relatively parlous state of the t'avadaznauroba itself, for the nobility was forbidden to sell property that was mortgaged. Given the very high percentage of Georgian aznaurni who found themselves in a state of debt one can assume that this disqualified a large number of peasants from escaping from temporarily obligated status.

Another factor of particular importance in Georgia was the absence of the mir to mediate between the peasantry and the state. In Georgia communal ownership of land was rare and becoming more so, and the peasantry, unlike in most parts of Russia where the mir bought the land on its behalf, acted as separate individuals. Without the support of the community or village of which he was a part, it was clearly more difficult for a peasant to redeem his lands.

In Russia only 14 per cent of ex-corvee serfs were still temporarily obligated by 1879 and in 1881 the category was completely abolished. This piece of legislation was not extended to the Transcaucasus, however, and it remained the case that even by 1904 only 47.6 per cent of ex-sabatono peasants in Georgia had succeeded in purchasing land.⁶⁶ In the meanwhile, the growth of the population and mounting debts had reduced the quantity of land available to each household. Thus, whereas in 1865 the average allotment had been between 3.7 and 3.9 desyatiny, by 1903 it had fallen to 1.7 desyatiny per household.⁶⁷ In these circumstances large numbers of temporarily obligated peasants were forced to abandon their land and seek employment as wage labourers

elsewhere. Thus, inadvertently, the authorities in the Transcaucasus had achieved what they had set out to avoid: a rural proletariat.

The 1860s reforms in Georgia were described by 34 members of the State Duma in 1908 as,

... the greatest act of expropriation of land from the people by the ruling class in the social history of the Caucasus.⁶⁸

By its actions the Georgian nobility did much to destroy the lingering possibility that the two largest ethnic Georgian social groups in the country could find a basis for future common action.⁶⁹

3.3 The Impact of the Peasant Reforms on Economic Integration

The reforms of 1864-71 did little to bring about an immediate shift in the balance of power in the countryside. The land became still more concentrated in the hands of the t'avadaznauroba, whilst for the majority of peasants there was little cause for optimism in the provisions for land purchase. Nevertheless, through the abolition of the personal dependence of some 70,000 peasant households⁷⁰ on their landlords and the concession of the legal right to buy the plot of land they worked, the reforms prised open the grasp of batonqmoba on Georgian society sufficient to accelerate the process of economic and national integration.

As has been indicated above, the reforms exacerbated the economic position of the majority of ex-sabatono peasants by reducing the size of their plots, raising the taxes to be paid for them and by increasing their need to rent land. The nobility, on the other hand, now that it had

been deprived of the gratuitous labour that had been the mainstay of its existence in the past, inclined increasingly towards leasing its land in return for 50 per cent or more of the produce derived from it.⁷¹ Under these conditions the peasantry found itself squeezed more than ever before.

The requirement to market produce to acquire the money needed to pay state taxes now found positive encouragement with the prospect, however unreal for most, of purchasing their own land. This, in turn, compelled the peasantry to strengthen its ties with the market and led towards further regional agricultural specialisation as it sought to exploit the varied natural conditions of the country to best advantage. As this tendency to specialisation, already present in the pre-reform period, acquired deeper roots, so domestic trade expanded and market towns became the focal points of economic life in the districts and regions. The interdependence of the different parts of Georgia grew deeper as the peasants came to rely on produce from the various parts of the country to meet their basic requirements. Thus the mountain regions came to deal primarily in livestock and dairy produce, Kakhet'i in wine, K'art'li in cereals, fruit and vegetables, Imeret'i in wine and silk, Guria and Samegrelo in corn, silk and poultry, and Ap'khazet'i in tobacco and corn.⁷² Rather later, as their commercial significance became more apparent, more people took to growing tea and citrus fruit. However, in the last decades of the 19th century more traditional crops predominated. Writing to the tsar in 1891 the Viceroy of the Transcaucasus, Dondukov-Korsakov, noted of Kakhet'i that,

In recent times viticulture has had the most striking success. In Kakhet'i arable land is

gradually being transformed into vineyards so that in the wealthy district of T'elavi the inhabitants have already been forced to buy bread elsewhere in order to feed themselves... the wine centre is Kakhet'i.⁷³

Although written some 20 years after the reform the Viceroy's report is still a reflection of the trends already taking place in the Georgian village of the 1870s.

Among state peasants, of course, all taxes, excluding the provision of labour for the repair of roads and bridges and such like, had been paid with money since the fiscal reform of 1845 referred to in the previous chapter. Consequently, although Georgian state peasants were not entitled to purchase their plots from the state as their Russian counterparts were,⁷⁴ they already had firmly established links with the market.

The impetus given to the development of commodity relations in the countryside became further apparent with the growing social differentiation of the peasantry. As the small-holding peasants fell victim to the money-lenders and merchants, they increasingly surrendered their claims to their plots to wealthier peasants and to urban merchants anxious to invest their commercial capital in agriculture. Gradually land concentrated in the hands of a relatively small group of rich peasants, leaving many with either nothing at all, or with insufficient to pay taxes and provide for their households' basic requirements. In such circumstances it became incumbent upon the members of the family to supplement any income derived from the land by selling their labour. A consequence of this process, which affected state and ex-sabatono peasants alike, was the emergence of peasant consumers who, unable to produce enough for

themselves, were more or less wholly reliant on the market for survival. Thus, through their misfortune, the rural poor made their own contribution to the further integration of the national economy.

The government did, in fact, try to prevent this happening among state peasants by attempting the artificial transplantation of the customs and practices of the Russian obshchina or commune into the Transcaucasus. For example, it hoped that by enforcing the periodical redistribution of land, a practice familiar to many Russian peasants, it could prevent the process of social differentiation.⁷⁵ However, whilst the policy met with some success in those parts of Georgia where communal or t'emobriv ownership had not yet died out, it appears, in the main, to have failed. Even writers like A.M. Argutinskii and S.V. Machabeli who helped compile the government report on the Georgian state peasants in the mid-1880s and who upheld the view that communal ownership was predominant in East Georgia at least, were forced to conclude that it was in decay even here. Thus, Argutinskii concedes that there were some villages where there was no reallotment at all,⁷⁶ and that even where it did exist the incidence of repartition was declining.⁷⁷ He concluded that in practice communal land ownership was being destroyed by the success of the rich peasants, or kulaks as he called them, in accumulating land at the poor's expense.⁷⁸

It would appear, however, that the authors of this work exaggerated the role of the commune in Georgia during this period. Certainly, they failed to discuss the role of the state in imposing and maintaining communal forms of administration derived from a completely alien environment. Even

where there may have been survivals of communal ownership in Georgia, the imposition of Russian practice was often quite unsuited to the requirements of Georgian peasants. An example from S.V. Machabeli's contribution to the survey is indicative of the sort of problem that arose from arbitrary attempts to implant Russian methods into foreign conditions. In this case, the decision to introduce the principle of even redistribution of land into a village in T'bilisi district left poor families with relatively large plots, but without the bullocks or men to work them. Despite the fact that they were unable to use a large part of the land given them, they were, nevertheless, taxed for the whole of it.⁷⁹

Other contemporary observers emphasised the weakness of the commune, or t'emi, in Georgia. Thus M.M. Kovalevskii, a leading contemporary authority on comparative studies of the commune, wrote that,

The structure of the commune in Georgia appears in great contrast to the Armenian system. The unimpeded movement of peasants from the property of one landlord to another, the widespread practice of liberating peasants and the system whereby the peasants inherited a perpetual lease on the land they worked makes it clear to us that the peasant commune was far from being the dominant form of rural settlement here.⁸⁰

N.L. Abazadze emphasised the impact of the process of economic integration and the gradual collapse of the self-sufficiency of families and villages on communal forms of ownership.

Far from the highways and railways, far from the trading posts, in the deserted corners of the Caucasian mountains - that is where even today one may come across villages with family communes. But here too this type of communal existence appears only in the form of a relic from the past.⁸¹

It is clear even from the government report of the 1880s that communal ownership had ceased to exist in West Georgia with the virtual exception of Ratcha province,⁸² and that while in East Georgia it continued to exist it did so in reduced form. All the available evidence points to the gradual disappearance of the t'emi amongst all categories of peasant and to its almost complete disappearance among ex-sabatono peasants, a fact which further underlines the role of the government in maintaining the commune among state peasants. It was also predominantly the case that even in T'bilisi Gubernia farmstead land, vineyards, orchards, vegetable gardens and much of the best and closest arable land was not subject to redistribution but remained the inheritance of individual households.⁸³ Only the more distant land and often less fertile arable land remained communal property.⁸⁴ Pastures and woodlands, as among the ex-sabatono peasants, also remained in communal ownership but were not subject to redivision. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, one of the leading lights of the Georgian radical intelligentsia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the author of a number of writings on Georgian ethnography, observed that,

In the eyes of the peasantry there is no way and no indicator by which... these lands can be distinguished from private property, although if you were to ask a peasant he would tell you that they are state or treasury-owned. Such lands are inherited from one person to the next; the peasants, as guardians of the land, mortgage and sell it to each other freely and without hindrance.⁸⁵

There were, moreover, a number of practical difficulties facing the administration's attempt to standardise Georgia's state peasants along Russian lines. Unlike in

Russia, for instance, it was extremely common for villages to consist not just of one category of peasant, but of private land-owning peasants, temporarily-obligated peasants, khiznebi and state peasants. Consequently, it was no simple matter to organise village affairs on a communal basis. Furthermore, the intensive nature of viticulture, which was the predominant branch of agriculture in East Georgia, and the time required to cultivate and care for a vineyard were all factors that discouraged all but the poorest peasants from demanding frequent repartitions of the land.⁸⁶

Following the reform it is apparent that commerce developed rather faster in the villages of West Georgia than it did in the east, despite the fact that T'bilisi continued to dominate the economic development of the Transcaucasus, and that an undoubted factor in this was the virtual absence of the commune in this part of the country, either amongst ex-sabatono or state peasants. Thus, rich peasants were able to accumulate land uninhibited by the threat of redistribution, and growing numbers of poor peasants were forced to supplement their income from the land by seeking employment as hired labourers.

There were, of course, a number of other factors, not least being the fact that land shortage, despite the greater fertility of the soil in the area west of the Surami range, compelled a relatively higher proportion of the peasantry to seek wage labour than in the east. By 1903 the average area of cultivatable land used by all categories of peasant in K'ut'aisi Gubernia was only 2.69 desyatiny per household, whereas in T'bilisi Gubernia the average was 8.18

desyatiny.⁸⁷ However, perhaps the most crucial developments in the post-reform period were the reunification of the Black Sea port of Bat'umi to Georgia in 1878 following Turkey's defeat in the Russo-Turkish War, and the completion of the Transcaucasian railway line between Baku on the Caspian, T'bilisi and Bat'umi in 1883. These were to play a considerable role in furthering the economic integration of this part of the country.

Discussion of the idea of building the railway began in the 1850s, as the government examined the different means by which it could optimise the economic exploitation of the Transcaucasus, but work did not actually commence until 1865. Under the direction of English engineers, the first stretch of the T'bilisi-P'ot'i line between the capital and Zestap'oni was completed in 1871, while the remaining stretch to the port of P'ot'i came into operation the following October.⁸⁸

Britain actually maintained an isolated and apparently depressed Vice-Consulate in P'ot'i for much of the latter half of the 19th century, thanks to which there is some first-hand information, albeit scanty, in English on the state of trade in the town. A report submitted to Lord Granville by Vice-Consul Wilkinson, dated 1 July 1872, notes that,

The Vice-Consulate of Poti is more commercial than political; there is no kind of industry, except two sawmills; the produce of this district is chiefly Indian corn, and timber, but large quantities of boxwood and walnut wood come to this place from the interior of the country.⁸⁹

Commenting on the state of commerce, Wilkinson pointed to the boost anticipated from the completion of the

The amount of business began to increase in 1868 on account of a few British vessels that arrived at Poti, and British workmen for the railway, but there is no doubt that business will increase after the opening of the railway from Poti to Tiflis, which will take place by the end of August next.⁹⁰

Business did increase as expected, but P'ot'i's days as the main Georgian Black Sea port were numbered, for the reunification of Bat'umi with Georgia in 1878 provided the government with port facilities and a location far superior to those of P'ot'i. On the link-up of Bat'umi with Samtredia on the T'bilisi-P'ot'i line in 1883 and the completion of the T'bilisi-Baku line the same year, P'ot'i was doomed to a position of secondary importance, becoming a railway transit point and retaining just enough of Georgia's foreign trade to keep its town status. Bat'umi, however, flourished. A dilapidated garrison town of some 3,000 or so inhabitants in 1878,⁹¹ it began to expand rapidly as a port and industrial and commercial centre. By 1886 the population had risen to 14,803 and by the time of the 1896 All-Russian census to 28,508.⁹² The fate of P'ot'i was not unusual in this period and it had itself been the cause of the decline of another Black Sea town, Qulevi.

As the volume of goods transported along the railway grew, a number of new towns and trading centres sprang up involving the interior deeper in the country's domestic and foreign trade. Others that had previously occupied prominent positions along the old caravan routes found themselves by-passed or completely isolated and went into decline. Towns and villages like Zugdidi, Qvirila,

Samtredia, Zestap'oni, and Khashuri benefited from their proximity to the line, but for small settlements like Orpiri, Dzveli Senaki, Qulevi and Tseva it sounded the death-knell. Even as prominent a town as Akhaltsikhe found that some of its trade was drawn off.⁹³

The importance of the railway was reflected in the fluctuating fortunes of the gubernia town of K'ut'aisi, which prior to the construction of the railway had witnessed a period of steady if not spectacular growth. The T'bilisi-P'ot'i line, however, missed K'ut'aisi by some eight kilometres and the town began to face competition from a number of smaller settlements located nearer to the railway. Trade fell off, the population grew smaller and the value of property dropped by 200-300 per cent. Sergi Meskhi, one of the outstanding figures of the new intelligentsia, described its decline. What is particularly interesting is that his description was written in early 1872, just before the railway link up with P'ot'i had been completed, suggesting that the impact of the railway must have been almost immediate. He writes:

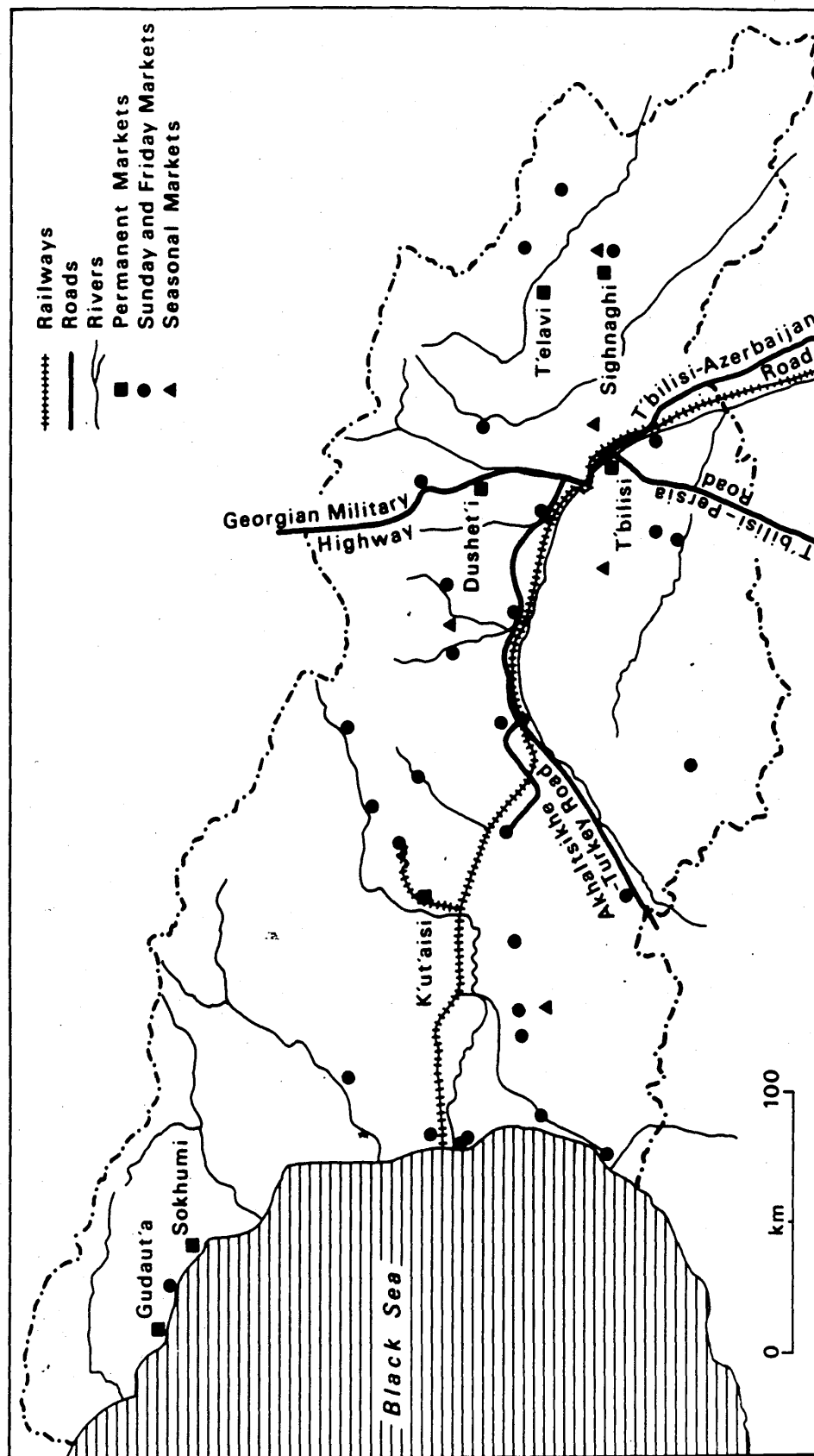
...K'ut'aisi's streets seem somehow to have a lost and abandoned air about them: people are hardly to be seen, there is no traffic, and none of the life without which it is impossible to imagine an Imerian. There is quiet along the boulevards, quiet in the streets and quiet in the bazaar... everyone is quarrelling over one thing or another and words of kindness, comfort or hope are to be heard from very few. The merchants complain that there is no trade, houseowners are searching for tenants and can find them nowhere; nobody is building new houses: it's hard enough renting out the old ones, never mind building new ones! Owners of land are selling it at half its value, rooms are empty in the hotels... Is it possible that the railway's by-passing K'ut'aisi is alone responsible for having such an impact on the K'ut'aisians material and moral well-being?⁹⁴

On the construction of a connecting line in 1877, however, the town's fortunes began to revive sufficiently to recover its former status.⁹⁵

In the immediate post-reform period cereal crop cultivation was the predominant form of farming in Georgia, and up to the 1890s the area of land sown to grain crops increased significantly. Whilst 377,686 chetverts of wheat were sown in East Georgia in 1862 and 1,391,063 chetverts harvested, 548,423 chertverts were sown in 1887 and 2,849,911 harvested,⁹⁶ so that although there was no dramatic rise in productivity and probably even a fall in productivity per man if one considers the rise in population, there was, nevertheless, a considerable increase in the total, achieved largely through the cultivation of virgin lands.

Productivity continued to be the victim of obsolete farming practices and equipment, methods of land tenure and over-intensive cultivation of the soil, but the rise in output was sustained up to the end of the century. Georgia's total grain harvest in 1874 was 25 million puds, but by the 1890s was averaging 40 million puds per annum.⁹⁷ An increasing share of this was marketed, with the result that during the mid-1890s 15-20 per cent of East Georgia's cereals was sold in T'bilisi Gubernia's towns and settlements annually,⁹⁸ and more was either exported to Russia and Western Europe or sold in the markets of K'ut'aisi Gubernia.⁹⁹ Whilst the percentage of grain marketed in East Georgia was not particularly high, it is worth noting that the main commercial crops in T'bilisi Gubernia were vines, fruit and vegetables and that by the 1890s grain production

Fig.5 Market places and roads in Georgia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century



had suffered something of a depression because of competition from America and Russia.

In West Georgia, however, and particularly in the provinces of Guria and Samegrelo, the cultivation of corn was so extensive that it verged on being the sole crop. Specialisation to this degree inevitably brought close ties with the market. In the early 1860s annual exports had averaged about one million puds, but by the mid-1880s, stimulated by the advent of rail transport linking the main grain areas to the Black Sea ports, exports amounted to 30-35 per cent of the crop, or 5-6 million puds per annum.¹⁰⁰ More was bought at the local markets by highlanders and by merchants from the major towns and settlements sprouting up in the path of the railway. T'bilisi, as the unchallenged nodal point of the economic and political life of Georgia, was also the grain centre of the Transcaucasus and much of West Georgia's corn found its way by road or rail to the T'bilisi bazaars. As in the past, however, the bulk of this trade was concentrated in the hands of merchants and money-lenders and the few landlords and peasants wealthy enough to be able to market their own produce.

Little information is available on inter-gubernia trade, but it is clear that the emphasis on the cultivation of Indian corn in K'ut'aisi Gubernia led to a steady demand for wheat and other crops from the east of the country. Statistics are at least available for railway transportation of goods and it appears that 100-300,000 puds of wheat were transported to West Georgia from T'bilisi Gubernia per annum.¹⁰¹

The growing debt of impoverished peasants and aznaurni to the commercial bourgeoisie was also contributing to the further cultivation of crops for purely commercial purposes, but even by the end of the century small and medium-holding peasants continued to be the main producers of grain.

Table 11: The Quantity of Corn Marketed in West Georgia¹⁰²

Districts and Regions	Corn Marketed by Peasantry (in Puds)	Corn Marketed by Land Owners (in Puds)	Corn Marketed by Shemsqid-velebi* (in Puds)	Total Commodity Corn in Puds
K'ut'aisi	514,000	84,000	28,000	626,000
Ozurget'i	400,000	500,000	-	900,000
Zugdidi	400,000	400,000	200,000	1,000,000
Shorapani	NO	CORN	WAS	MARKETED
Senaki	1,500,000	500,000	50,000	2,050,000
Ratcha	NO	CORN	WAS	MARKETED
Lechkhumi	8,000	4,000	-	12,000
Bat'umi	60,000	-	10,000	70,000
Sokhumi	1,000,000	500,000	-	1,500,000
Total for West Georgia	3,882,000	1,988,000	288,000	6,158,000

* Shemsqidveli - This term refers to those individuals who toured the villages buying-up grain from the peasantry, usually at well below the market value, to sell in the towns and elsewhere.

The relatively high price offered for corn in the late 1880s provided peasants with the incentive to continue investing in its cultivation, but in the 1890s American competition and improved harvests in Russia caused a slump in demand for Georgian grain and for corn in particular. From

the peak of the late 1880s and early 1890s exports plummeted to 75,800 puds in 1895 before sustaining a gradual recovery thereafter.¹⁰³

Although the profitability of corn undoubtedly suffered in this period, some compensation was found in the expansion of demand from the domestic market. Again, fully accurate accounts of the state of internal sales of grain are impossible because of the absence of records, but the figures detailing the transportation of grain by rail over the period 1885 to 1894 give some indication.

Table 12

Crop	1885-89	1890-94	104
Corn	613,000 puds	1,719,000 puds	
Wheat	3,187,000 puds	5,258,000 puds	
Barley	4,079,000 puds	4,595,000 puds	

Falling profits in this sphere provided the rural population with encouragement, albeit of a negative kind, to turn to the cultivation of other crops, some of which were already being sold in the towns and villages on a considerable scale. Viticulture was the second most extensive form of agriculture in Georgia and, as was noted in the previous chapter, had already acquired firm links with the market well in advance of the reform. Subsequently, these links grew considerably stronger.

Whereas prior to the 1860s some 30-40 per cent of Georgian wine was marketed every year, by the 1870s and 1880s, 55 to 60 per cent was being sold,¹⁰⁵ the bulk of which was consumed within the country. In 1870 Georgia produced 82,173,520 litres of wine, 43.61 per cent of the total

produced in the Russian empire and two-thirds of that made in the Transcaucasus. By 1894, however, output in East Georgia alone reached 69,640,718 litres, 52.8 per cent of which was sold in Georgia, whilst West Georgia produced 57,264,000 litres, 49.2 per cent of which was marketed within the country.¹⁰⁶ By the end of the century the main wine province, Kakhet'i, was selling some 23,860,000 litres per annum. Production of spirits, moreover, which in Georgia was largely an offshoot of viticulture, was almost entirely for the market.

In a country where the vast majority of the population held so little land, viticulture was a particularly appealing branch of agriculture. Requiring relatively little land to achieve profitability, it afforded the producer an income comparatively higher per desyatina than most other crops. It was in part because of this, but also because most Georgian landowners chose to lease their land rather than farm it themselves, that 76.2 per cent of the area of land under vines in the 1870s was owned by peasants.¹⁰⁷ In T'elavi district 86 per cent of the vineyards were less than one desyatina and in Signaghi district 89 per cent. According to one correspondent of the journal Kavkazskoe Sel'skoe Khozyaistvo (Caucasian Agriculture) writing in 1899,

With the exception of a limited number of cases the vineyards of Kakhet'i and K'iziqi, the main viticultural centres of the Transcaucasus, belong to state peasants, whilst the average area of land used by each viticulturalist does not exceed half a desyatina.¹⁰⁸

In West Georgia, where land shortage was an even greater problem, the average size of a vineyard did not exceed one k'tseva, rather less than half a desyatina.¹⁰⁹

The improvements made to Kakhet'i's roads achieved through the use of gratuitous peasant labour,¹¹⁰ and the completion of a pass over the Tsivi-Gombori range bisecting the most direct route between T'bilisi and Kakhet'i, provided a fresh impetus to viticulture and further encouragement for peasants to convert arable land into vineyards. According to a report in Kavkazskii Kalendar (The Caucasian Calendar), the 1870s witnessed a growth of 8-10 per cent in the area of land under vines.¹¹¹

In West Georgia there were similar developments and in all probability still more emphasis would have been placed on viticulture had not Imeret'i in particular, but also the rest of K'ut'aisi Gubernia, not been badly affected by vine diseases that resulted from a largely misguided government decision to import European vines for experimentation. As a consequence, many indigenous vines were brought to the verge of extinction.¹¹² Many simply abandoned viticulture altogether and turned to growing cereal crops. An attack of phylloxera in the 1880s wreaked still more damage and output in K'ut'aisi Gubernia plummeted from 5 million puds in 1885 to 1,500,000 in 1895.¹¹³ The completion of the railway, however, provided a considerable boost to the development of commercial viticulture in spite of the disease. Taking advantage of the fact that the Baku-T'bilisi line missed out Kakhet'i, West Georgian wines began to challenge the dominance of Kakhian wine in the main urban centres, because despite the improvements made to their roads the Kakhian peasants were not able to transport their wine either as cheaply or as quickly as their West Georgian counterparts. In Ratcha province, the site of the most acute land shortage in the country, the peasantry had made wine purely for

personal consumption during the 1870s, but in the 1880s, benefiting from the railway and the fact that the nature of their vines and the climatic conditions of the province enabled them to escape the worst effects of the disease, they concentrated almost exclusively on viticulture and taking advantage of the profitability of wine and spirits production, marketed a steadily growing proportion of their output. Peasants had even begun to clear strips of forest up to 12 miles from their farmsteads to plant vineyards.¹¹⁴

Because too of the level of crop specialisation in K'ut'aisi Gubernia wine, like many other crops, became a commodity in considerable demand. Thus, although the railway now made the transportation of West Georgian wine to T'bilisi a relatively simple exercise, only 12.9 per cent of the wine transported in this way was actually sold in the capital city: eight per cent went to K'ut'aisi, a further 11.7 per cent to the towns of Khashuri and Surami, and 32 per cent to villages in Samegrelo and Guria: 36.4 per cent, it is true, went to the ports of Bat'umi and P'ot'i, but much of this was for export to Russia.¹¹⁵

By no means all wine was transported by rail however. Considerable quantities were moved by carts and pack animals along the roads through the mountain passes from Ratcha-Lechkumi and the north-eastern parts of Shorapani district to Surami to meet the requirements of the local population and the military garrison. K'ut'aisi district too maintained a steady trade with Akhaltsikhe across the Zekari pass. But the main buyers were the owners of wine stores and shops in the towns and localities and the indigent wine merchants and speculators, who continued to tour the country

buying up wine at depressed rates from indebted peasants in urgent need of money. In K'ut'aisi Gubernia, the arrival of the railway enabled many peasants to avoid having contacts with the chalandarebi, as they were known in this part of the country, but in East Georgia, and particularly in Kakhet'i, the sirajebi continued to strengthen their hold over the wine trade.

As noted above, the railway missed out Kakhet'i and in so doing opened the way for competition from other parts of the Transcaucasus. Most notably, there was a big increase in the quantity of poor quality but cheap Azeri wine on the Transcaucasian market. Unable to rely on the discerning palates of the local population the Kakhian wine industry suffered considerable damage. Despite the capacity of the population for consumption, the resulting glut on the T'bilisi market caused a marked fall in prices and raised the urgency of Georgian wine finding a wider export market.

Aided by the appearance of a number of large-scale wine enterprises using modern techniques owned by rich merchants and leading members of the Georgian aristocracy, as well as by the railway,¹¹⁶ the quantity of Georgian wine exported increased steadily, although the bulk of output continued to be consumed locally. Thus, between 1876 and 1880, 195,932 puds of wine were taken by rail to Russia, whilst from 1891 to 1894, 1,036,574 puds were exported, primarily to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Stavropol, Vladikavkaz and Odessa.¹¹⁷ By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, by which time trade with Russia had been facilitated by the link-up of the Transcaucasian railway with the Russian network, over two million puds of wine were exported to Russia every year.¹¹⁸

Although it can be argued that the commercialisation of viticulture in Georgia worked primarily to the advantage of the larger producers, in that they were able to exploit the poverty and land shortage of the peasantry, there can be little doubt that it also played an influential part in promoting the economic integration of the country. Not only were peasants increasingly reliant on the towns and various scattered regions of Georgia, they were also developing closer ties with the Russian market.

Outside of wine and cereals production, the two foremost branches of Georgian agriculture in the late 19th century, there were changes in all other leading areas. Thus, after the reform, livestock rearing showed a tendency to decline in areas where it was auxiliary to the main form of farming and to increase in areas where it already predominated. As a consequence, the existing interdependence of Georgia's mountain regions and its plains and valleys was further emphasised, and the numerous district markets and stores assumed greater significance in the economic life of the rural population. Urban growth expanded demand and T'bilisi alone was consuming 300,000 to 350,000 head of cattle per annum by the 1880s.¹¹⁹ In much of West Georgia the scarcity of livestock left the inhabitants almost wholly reliant on producers from the North Caucasus and from Akhaltsikhe and Akhalk'alak'i districts.¹²⁰

Of the other traditional occupations sericulture, despite European competition, became almost entirely orientated towards the market. In the 1880s 14,000 Georgian peasant households were engaged in rearing silk cocoons and in the 1890s they marketed 40-60,000 puds of cocoons, their

entire output. During the 1890s fruit orchards occupied 11 to 12,000 desyaty and vegetable gardens 10,000 desyaty of land,¹²² some 60 per cent of the produce of which was marketed, virtually all locally, whilst cotton, which for a while benefited from the effects of the American Civil War on U.S. output, declined when American competition revived in the 1880s.

The blow suffered by Georgian corn farmers in the last decade of the century proved to be not without its benefits, for as a consequence, measures were undertaken to develop crops for the most part unavailable elsewhere in the empire. Hence this period saw the beginnings of the Georgian tea industry and the first citrus fruit plantation in Atchara and Ap'khazet'i. Although their contribution to the economy was as yet small, they attracted considerable investment from the wealthier of Georgia's t'avadznaurebi and bourgeoisie.

Tobacco, already a leading commercial crop in pre-reform Georgia, was given a fillip by the establishment of a 14 ruble per pud tariff on imported tobacco in 1877 and was producing four million rubles worth of produce by the turn of the century.¹²³

By 1900 annual income from agriculture had reached 75-80 million rubles, by far the greatest part of which was still produced by the peasantry using traditional equipment and methods, and plots so small and scattered that they were far from conducive to the introduction of more efficient techniques.¹²⁴ 70 per cent of the sown crops in Georgia was grown by peasants, 70 per cent of the fruit and wine and 50 per cent of the tobacco and cotton, whilst 80 per cent of the country's livestock was owned by peasants.¹²⁵ Thus,

although the traditional barriers to the integration of the country were being rapidly eroded, it is apparent that the country still remained largely dependent on an impoverished peasantry using out-dated techniques for its food supply. A major factor in this, alluded to above, was that the reform left the vast bulk of the land in the hands of the t'avadaz-nauroba and the state. Under conditions in which there was a heavy demand for land, its price became so high that it became more profitable for the nobility to rent it out rather than attempt to farm it themselves and introduce more rational methods. As a result, the peasantry, excluding rich peasants, was responsible for 65 per cent of the income derived from agriculture in Georgia.¹²⁶ Although only 45 per cent of this was actually retained by the peasantry,¹²⁷ it is nevertheless a reflection of the degree of commercialisation of agriculture in West Georgia at least, that there, by 1904, 33,597 ex-sabatono households, or 58.8 per cent of the total, had managed to become private owners of land without borrowing from the state.¹²⁸

Despite the backwardness of Georgian agriculture, the process of integration had by the end of the century progressed to the point where the economic interdependence of the different parts of the country was virtually complete. Throughout Georgia towns were emerging as the focal points of local trade and industry, and coordinating district economic activity. T'bilisi was the undisputed centre not just of Georgia but of the Transcaucasus. Besides T'bilisi, however, other towns like Bat'umi and K'ut'aisi were beginning to assume the importance to the development of the West Georgian economy that T'bilisi had had to East Georgia's

both before and after the reforms. Once K'ut'aisi had been joined up to the railway in 1877, it began to justify its status as the gubernia centre. The roads emanating from the town were all improved and linked up to the main trading centres like Khoni, Oni, Lailashi, Chkhavi, Senaki and Baghdadi, moulding West Georgia's provinces into a close economic unity of which it was the centre. Aside from these, the railway and a number of highways extended eastwards to Surami and onwards to Gori and T'bilisi, and westward to Samtredia, Bat'umi, Zugdidi and Sokhumi, whilst roads linked the gubernia town to Ratcha-Lechkhumi in the north, and via the Zekari pass, to Akhaltsikhe in the south. Only Svanet'i, isolated in the most inaccessible part of the Caucasian mountains, remained out of reach for much of the year.

The K'ut'aisi bazaar is crowded with people who conduct their trade with goods brought in from villages hereabouts,

wrote a correspondent for the journal Kavkaz (The Caucasus) in 1860.¹²⁹ By the end of the decade, as the status of the town's market grew, its annual trade turnover was exceeding 2.5 million rubles and it was selling goods from Europe, Russia and Turkey, as well as from all over Georgia.¹³⁰ By the 1870s 10,000 rubles worth of goods were being sold at the bazaar and in the streets leading down to the River Rioni every day,¹³¹ and by the turn of the century, 11 million rubles of cereals, wine, silk and tobacco goods were being brought every year to the K'ut'aisi market alone.¹³²

Despite the peasant reforms, the overwhelming majority of usable land in Georgia remained in the ownership of either the t'avadaznauroba or the state treasury department. In 1883 the latter alone held 48.3 per cent of the available land in T'bilisi Gubernia and 43.2 per cent in K'ut'aisi Gubernia,¹³³ whilst in the 1890s 73.1 per cent of land in T'bilisi Gubernia and 86.3 per cent in K'ut'aisi Gubernia was used either by the state or the nobility.¹³⁴ However, the area left to ex-sabatono peasants, as was noted above, was reduced.

Whilst little new land was made available to the peasantry during the last 30 years of the 19th century, population growth continued to benefit from the relative stability brought to the Transcaucasus by Russian rule, with the total population of Georgia rising from 1,351,000 in 1865 to almost two million in 1897, and over two million if one was to include the districts of Zak'at'ala and Artvin,¹³⁵ an increase of 38.5 per cent.¹³⁶

Table 13: The Population of Georgia 1865-1897

	East Georgia	West Georgia	Total
1865	651,000	700,000	1,351,000
1886	808,143	870,872	1,679,015 ¹³⁷
1897	966,808	1,002,101	1,968,909

As a direct consequence, the average quantity of land available to each peasant household gradually shrank and competition to acquire it rose substantially. But the pressure of the population on the land, particularly acute in K'ut'aisi Gubernia, where mountainous terrain made much of

the territory unfit for farming of any sort, was by no means the only problem facing the peasantry. Although the average area of land afforded to state peasants in Georgia in 1884 was at 4.3 desyaty per household in K'ut'aisi Gubernia and 17.67 desyaty per household in T'bilisi Gubernia,¹³⁸ rather higher than among temporarily obligated peasants, much of this was in fact unusable. It included not just orchards and arable land, but pastures, forests, shrubland and even outcrops of rock. If one takes into account arable and orchard land alone, the average per household was 2.27 desyaty in K'ut'aisi Gubernia and 5.66 desyaty in T'bilisi Gubernia,¹³⁹ still more than that of ex-sabatono peasants but rather less impressive than the overall figures would suggest. Moreover, the equivalent figures for 1903 indicate that the situation was becoming worse. In K'ut'aisi Gubernia the average area of arable land per household had fallen to 1.90 desyaty, and in T'bilisi Gubernia to 10.92 desyaty.¹⁴⁰ More important, however, was the distribution of land among the peasantry.

After the peasant reforms of 1864-71 khiznebi, ex-sabatono and state peasants alike, found themselves increasingly dependent on the sirajebi, mevakhsheebi (usurers) and merchants as the need to market their produce acquired greater urgency. Equally, the majority of them, barely able to survive even after a good harvest once they had paid their taxes and covered their costs, found that in the event of a poor harvest they had no one else to turn to for financial assistance. The liberal intelligentsia, it is true, did succeed in introducing a number of commercial societies and savings cooperatives designed to protect the peasants' interests and encouraged the establishment of

public grain stores in the villages to alleviate the worst effects of bad harvest years,¹⁴¹ but were unable to do more than scratch at the surface of the problem. In Signaghi and T'elavi districts, where during the 1890s over one million rubles of loans were given to the peasantry by money lenders,¹⁴² one observer, conducting government sponsored research in the area, wrote that,

Among the peasants, selling one's entire property to meet a debt, or giving away one's children to mevakhsheebi as domestic servants in order to pay off one's debts... have become such everyday events, that no one here pays any attention any-more.¹⁴³

In these circumstances the bulk of the peasants, whatever category they belonged to, found themselves increasingly impoverished, whilst the richer peasants, who frequently included money-lending among their activities, were able to accumulate land. Unable to secure credit from any other source, it appears that the poorer peasants were prepared to accept interest rates from 80 to 120 per cent, with the inevitable result that they found themselves ensnared in a state of permanent debt. Unable to escape they were forced to sell their land at ludicrously low prices. Thus A. Argutinskii, describing the economic situation of state peasants in the Kakhian village of Akhasheni, noted that land valued at 600 rubles per desyatina was being sold for anything between 40 and 80 rubles.¹⁴⁴ A writer for the agricultural journal Mosavali (The Harvest) described the modus operandi of the money-lender as follows:

Poverty and need visit us all at one time or another, but call rather more frequently on the village peasant. We can boldly state that 95 out of every 100 faces difficulties. Unable to help

himself, he turns reluctantly to the village money-lender. Now what kind of money-lender would the latter be if he didn't make the most of his opportunity. At first he deliberately refuses, claiming that he has no money. He pretends to sympathise, but offers no assistance. However, once the applicant has pleaded enough and promises to pay good interest, the money-lender suddenly softens and gives him a loan at an exorbitant rate.¹⁴⁵

Because of the shortage of land and the fact that so few owned any cattle, ¹⁴⁶ the majority found themselves dependent on a few wealthy individuals. Moreover, with land in such demand, those fortunate enough to have a surplus were able to lease both it and their work animals at great profit.¹⁴⁷ Even in T'bilisi Gubernia, where the principle of periodical redistribution of the land was supposedly at its strongest, particularly among state peasants, it emerges that not only was there inequality within villages where state peasants were settled, but also between these villages. Thus whilst 11 had no land at all, 120 had over 50 desyatin per household.¹⁴⁸

Table 14: The Distribution of Land Among Villages Inhabited by State Peasants in T'bilisi Gubernia¹⁴⁹

Total No. of Villages	Villages Without Land-Plots	Villages Possessing Plots of Land					
		Up to 5 des	5-10 des	10-16 des	16-25 des	25-50 des	Over 50 des
932							
No. of Villages	11	213	193	123	120	152	120
% of Villages	1.18	22.85	20.70	13.19	12.87	16.30	12.87

According to Argutinskii's report of 1886 most state peasant households in Kakhet'i had only three desyatin of orchards and arable land which, since one third of it lay

fallow at any one time, was insufficient to provide for a household's needs.¹⁵⁰ In Akhalk'alak'i district, the situation of the peasantry in 1895 was such that of the 11 state village communities comprising the district, only one was not in debt and it was composed of colonists. On average each household owed 170 rubles, for which they paid 34 rubles interest per annum, or 150 per cent of the combined total of state saerobo (rural government) and sat'emo (community) taxes.¹⁵¹ (See Table on page 173.)

Migration in search of employment or land had become a popular solution to land shortage prior to the 1860s, but now, as a consequence of the concentration of land in fewer and fewer hands, the growing number of landless peasants and mounting debts, it acquired an unprecedented urgency. Moreover, since ex-sabatono peasants had now acquired their personal freedom, the obstacles to movement were no longer so great. For many, though, the greatest stimulus to migration was the advent of rail travel, a development which not only furthered the economic expansion of Georgia, but also contributed to bringing the country closer together insofar as even those living at opposite extremes of the country were now hardly more than a day's journey apart. T'bilisi, the hub of the nation, became suddenly more accessible and more real for the more distant members of the population, while in the outlying districts even the spectacle of the train disappearing and returning along the line was a constant reminder of a world outside the villager's immediate experience. In his mind, it now became a little easier to conceptualise the country of which he was an inhabitant.

Table 15:

The Area of Land in Use by State Peasants in K'ut'aisi

Gubernia in the mid-1880s¹⁵²

	Number of Peasant Households	Percentage of Peasant Households
Landless	398	1.90
Up to one <u>desyatina</u>	2142	10.20
1-2 <u>desyatiny</u>	4427	21.09
2-3 <u>desyatiny</u>	4016	19.12
3-4 <u>desyatiny</u>	3368	16.04
4-5 <u>desyatiny</u>	1955	9.31
5-6 <u>desyatiny</u>	1441	6.86
6-7 <u>desyatiny</u>	865	4.12
7-8 <u>desyatiny</u>	602	2.87
8-9 <u>desyatiny</u>	445	2.12
9-10 <u>desyatiny</u>	283	1.35
10-20 <u>desyatiny</u>	834	3.97
20-154.50 <u>desyatiny</u>	221	1.05

Although the peasant reforms released the flow of labour required by the country's still nascent industry for its expansion, the period up to the middle of the 1880s did not witness any dramatic increase in the urban population at the expense of the rural. In East Georgia, Gori and T'elavi recorded notable percentage increases, but from relatively low numerical bases, while T'bilisi's population reached 78,445 in 1886, only 15.7 per cent up on its 1865 level (see table on page 175). In West Georgia the picture was rather different. Here the impact of the railway on the economy, the emergence of Bat'umi as the country's most important port and K'ut'aisi's growing stature as the Gubernia centre were all important factors in the 206.7 per cent increase in the urban population. However, impressive though this figure may be, it conceals the fact that even more than in East Georgia, the urban population was starting from a very low base.

In East Georgia the rural population actually increased marginally faster at 23 per cent than did the urban population, and although in West Georgia urban growth was beginning to draw the peasantry from the villages, the rural population still increased by 23.3 per cent in this period.¹⁵³

At this stage in their development, it appears that Georgia's towns were not able to absorb the labour now at their disposal. Short of capital and deprived of a sufficiently large workforce before the reforms, industry, even in T'bilisi, was not able to change gear overnight. Crafts manufacture and small-scale enterprises, which rarely employed more than 10 workers, continued to predominate up to the mid-1880s. T'elavi, East Georgia's third town after T'bilisi and Akhaltsikhe, was a typical case. Although it

was expanding relatively rapidly thanks to its favourable location as a trading centre in the country's foremost viticultural area, it was not until 1900 that the first industrial factory organised along capitalist lines was established in the town.¹⁵⁴

Perhaps of equal significance, however, was that as yet, in the aftermath of the reforms, most peasants still clung to the hope of purchasing their own land. Thus, whilst many might have been prepared to seek seasonal labour, few were ready to sever links with the country entirely.

Table 16: The Population of Georgian Towns 1886-1897¹⁵⁵

T'bilisi Gubernia	Town Population in 1886	Percentage Growth Since 1865	Town Population in 1897	Percentage Growth Since 1886
T'bilisi	78,445	15.7	159,590	103
Akhalk'alak'i	4,303	89.0	5,440	25.5
Akhalksikhe	16,116	38.8	15,357	-
Dushet'i	2,027	-	2,566	27
Gori	7,243	43.8	10,269	42
Shulaveri	-	-	4,553	-
Sighnaghi	10,604	9.4	8,994	-
T'elavi	11,214	53.6	13,929	24.6
TOTAL	129,952	22.4	220,698	69.8
K'ut'aisi Gubernia	Town Population in 1886	Percentage Growth Since 1865	Town Population in 1897	Percentage Growth Since 1886
K'ut'aisi	22,643	91.8	32,476	43.5
Akhali Senaki	-	-	1,248	-
Bat'umi	14,803	-	28,508	92.5
Oni	-	-	1,255	-
Ozurget'i	1,472	-	4,710	215.8
P'ot'i	4,709	261.5	7,346	56.1
Qvirila	-	-	2,010	-
Sokhumi	412	-	7,998	1839.0
Zugdidi	1,078	-	3,407	232.9
TOTAL	45,117	206.7	88,958	97.2
ALL GEORGIA	175,069	44.7	309,656	76.8

Nevertheless, although few peasants settled permanently away from their homes the economic imperative of poverty gradually forced them to accept the need for mobility. This did not necessarily mean moving to a town. Such was the competition for land that many peasants were compelled to rent it from a number of different sources and to accept plots that could be located well away from their villages. Bakhtadze, describing the economic life of state peasants in Shorapani district in the mid-1880s, noted that many had taken to renting land in the relatively uncrowded district of Gori, some 35 miles away.¹⁵⁶ Families who were able to would send one of their number away to work the land, but when, as was often the case, there were not enough adult males in the family, the entire household would move. Migration of this sort was particularly common among Osian and Georgian highlanders from P'shav-T'ushet'i, many of whom sought to rent land as khiznebi in Gori district. Initially, landlords in the area were happy to accept them on this basis, but as the competition for land in surrounding parts of the country spilled over into the district, many sought to revoke their agreements with the peasants and to force the acceptance of short-term contracts.¹⁵⁷ Inevitably this both further soured peasant-aznauroba relations and exacerbated the economic position of the peasantry.

However, whilst the first 20 years after the reforms emerge as a period of undramatic change and development, the 1890s stand out as a decade in which a number of processes already present in the preceding period suddenly intensified, and as a period in which the interdependence of town and country, district and district became firmly established.

As is clear from the table (above), one feature of the last years of the 19th century was the sudden growth in the urban population, most particularly in East Georgia, where by 1897 159,590 people lived in T'bilisi alone, almost double the number in 1886.¹⁵⁸ In large part due to the dominant role played by the capital city in the economic and administrative life of the gubernia, 22.8 per cent of its population was urban by 1897.¹⁵⁹

In West Georgia the picture was somewhat different, for, despite the development of K'ut'aisi and Bat'umi, only 8.8 per cent of the population could be described as urban¹⁶⁰ and 11.7 per cent of these lived in villages of under 5,000 inhabitants.¹⁶¹ However, if one takes the population of Georgia at this time as a whole, it emerges that 15.72 per cent of it was urbanised, rather higher, in fact, than the average for the Empire's Russian gubernii, which stood at 12.76 per cent at the time of the census.¹⁶²

Although immigration from outwith Georgia and natural increase within the towns were significant factors in the 71.7 per cent increase in the urban population in these years,¹⁶³ a major role was also played by immigration from the rural areas of the country. Thanks to the 1897 census information on the place of birth of the empire's inhabitants, it is possible to gain an accurate picture of migration processes in the late 19th century. It is clear, for instance, that in T'bilisi Gubernia that even though 52 per cent of the urban population in 1897 was actually born in the towns,¹⁶⁴ 14.4 per cent immigrated from T'bilisi Gubernia and a further 5.3 per cent from K'ut'aisi Gubernia.¹⁶⁵ 20,832 immigrants in the 16-40 age group moved from K'ut'aisi Gubernia to T'bilisi Gubernia and only 5,348 in

the opposite direction,¹⁶⁶ reflecting both East Georgia's greater urban development and the land shortage in the West of the country. Of rather greater significance, however, was the level of migration within the gubernii. This, of course, was nothing new in East Georgia, but for K'ut'aisi Gubernia, where in the past most migrants had graduated towards the towns and less crowded countryside of K'art'li-Kakhet'i, it was a major change. 41.2 per cent of the urban population of K'ut'aisi Gubernia moved from within the gubernia and only 22.8 per cent were born in the towns.¹⁶⁷

Central to this process were the emergence of big industries in the main towns and the steady concentration of commercial activity, which in turn had been the product of a number of developments within Georgia since the 1860s. One of these, already discussed above, was the construction of the Transcaucasian railway, which not only did much to further the flow of goods and people between the various parts of the country, but also contributed enormously to Bat'umi's emergence as Georgia's second industrial centre by linking it up with the Caspian Sea oil city of Baku.¹⁶⁸ The construction of the railway itself, moreover, led to the establishment of a number of new industrial branches, and through its auxiliary enterprises, workshops and depots the railway became the single largest employer by the end of the century.¹⁶⁹

Also important, however, were the changes made to the structure of urban economic life and the appearance of several banking organisations prepared to provide the credit needed for the transformation of Georgia's predominantly small-scale enterprises into large-scale capitalist

concerns. Prior to the 1860s the guild structure in the towns, and particularly in T'bilisi, imposed so many regulations on the number of apprentices and journeymen that craftsmen could employ, the maximum working day, and the number of rest-days and festivals that had to be observed,¹⁷⁰ that it had become a major obstacle to the country's economic progress. However, the guilds or amk'rebi suffered a major setback in 1865 when the antagonism between themselves and the city's larger businesses led to the latter encouraging the government to make up the city's financial deficit by imposing new taxes on the city's craftsmen, and on the markets, coffee houses and restaurants traditionally used by them.¹⁷¹ Bloody riots ensued in June which ultimately provided the government with the pretext for streamlining the local guild structure along Russian lines and drastically curtailing its powers. Thus freed from the interference of the old city patriarchate, new businesses were able to develop relatively unimpeded.

Although official policy continued to view Georgia and the rest of the Transcaucasus as a colonial outpost, whose prime purpose was to consume Russian manufactured products and supply the empire with raw materials, industry did, nevertheless, make some advances, encouraged in part by the growing availability of banking credit. Thus in 1866, a department of the State Bank opened offices in T'bilisi, in 1871 the capital's foremost merchants and industrialists founded the T'bilisi Commercial Bank, in 1873 the Mutual Creditors Society opened, in 1874 the T'bilisi Nobility Bank and in 1875 the K'ut'aisi Nobility Bank, and throughout the remainder of the century the number of institutions offering credit steadily increased opening in Bat'umi, K'ut'aisi,

P'ot'i and Tchiat'ura. While in 1874 the T'bilisi Commercial Bank loaned only 1.4 million rubles, by 1896 it was able to loan 16 million and to open an office in Bat'umi.¹⁷²

It was against this background that Georgian industry began to expand in the late 1880s and 1890s. Whereas previously industrial expansion had been achieved primarily through the tendency of crafts producers to change over to commodity production and through the growth of small-scale enterprises characterised by a limited division of labour and predominance of manual techniques, now machine production began to break into virtually all the main branches of industry, leading through the 1890s to a gradual decline in the relative importance of manufacturing and small-scale capitalist production. By 1900 factory production occupied the majority of Georgia's workers and was responsible for the greatest part of the country's industrial output, although, as in the past, light industries such as silk weaving, tobacco and food processing, breweries, shoes and clothes manufacture predominated (see table below). While these were predominantly located in and around T'bilisi, Bat'umi was, nevertheless, rapidly establishing itself as Georgia's second most important industrial centre. By 1900 there were over 10 factories in the town employing over 3,500 workers to make tin drums and wooden crates for the export of Baku's oil abroad,¹⁷³ as well as a number of saw mills, brick factories, machine tool and boiler workshops and the ubiquitous artisan's businesses.

Table 17: Industry in Georgia in 1900¹⁷⁰

Small-Scale Enterprises

Branches of Industry	No. of Enterprises	No. of Workers	Value of Production (1000s of rubles)
Bakeries	149	519	764,0
Brick and Tiles	300	1900	600,0
Carriages	12	84	105,0
Cheese	-	-	-
Chemical (Paints)	-	-	-
Confection- aries	4	26	74,0
Felt	-	-	-
Glass	-	-	-
Gut Manufac- ture	-	-	-
Joinery and Veneer	33	270	185,0
Leather Tanneries	40	160	100,0
Marble Works	-	-	-
Matches	-	-	-
Mechanised Mills	-	-	-
Metal Working	29	151	125,0
Mineral Water	-	-	-
Mineral Water Export	-	-	-
Polygraphics	40	280	190,0
Saw Mills	85	500	290,0
Shoes	20	78	81,0
Silk	-	-	-
Soap and Candles	12	45	200,0
Spirits, Araqi, Cognac, Beer	750	3000	630,0
Tin Drums and Crates	-	-	-
Tobacco	-	-	-
Transcaucasian Railways Main Workshops	-	-	-
Weaving and Cotton	2	12	25,0
Wooden Barrels	-	-	-
Wool Rinsing	-	-	-
TOTAL	1482	7046	3,386,0

Manufacture

Branches of Industry	No. of Enterprises	No. of Workers	Value of Production (1000s rubles)
Bakeries	-	-	-
Brick and Tiles	-	-	-
Carriages	3	69	66,0
Cheese	-	-	-
Chemical (Paints)	-	-	-
Confection- aries	5	75	150,0
Felt	-	-	-
Glass	-	-	-
Gut Manufac- ture	2	31	40,0
Joinery and Veneer	5	80	85,0
Leather Tanneries	-	-	-
Marble Works	-	-	-
Matches	-	-	-
Mechanised Mills	-	-	-
Metal Working	6	94	56,0
Mineral Water	3	42	85,0
Mineral Water Export	-	-	-
Polygraphics	-	-	-
Saw Mills	-	-	-
Shoes	1	68	67,0
Silk	2	166	96,0
Soap and Candles	-	-	-
Spirits, Araqi, Cognac, Beer	-	-	-
Tin Drums and Crates	-	-	-
Tobacco	2	53	46,0
Transcaucasian Railways Main Workshops	-	-	-
Weaving and Cotton	-	-	-
Wooden Barrels	5	184	269,0
Wool Rinsing	-	-	-
TOTAL	41	984	1,200,0

Factory Production

Branches of Industry	No. of Enterprises	No. of Workers	Value of Production (1000s rubles)
Bakeries	-	-	-
Brick and Tiles	4	104	96,0
Carriages	-	-	-
Cheese	1	24	38,0
Chemical (Paints)	1	12	90,0
Confection- aries	-	-	-
Felt	1	170	325,0
Glass	2	145	172,0
Gut Manufac- ture	-	-	-
Joinery and Veneer	1	10	50,0
Leather Tanneries	2	300	880,0
Marble Works	1	35	36,0
Matches	1	150	83,0
Mechanised Mills	1	25	36,0
Metal Working	4	304	316,0
Mineral Water	-	-	-
Mineral Water Export	1	42	200,0
Polygraphics	8	442	382,0
Saw Mills	11	363	1,249,7
Shoes	1	424	553,0
Silk	-	-	-
Soap and Candles	3	95	500,0
Spirits, Araqi, Cognac, Beer	3	102	1,174,0
Tin Drums and Crates	5	2040	7,388,5
Tobacco	7	1218	2,119,8
Transcaucasian Railways Main Workshops	1	2265	?
Weaving and Cotton	1	460	530,0
Wooden Barrels	-	-	-
Wool Rinsing	1	50	31,0
TOTAL	64	9004	16,513,0

Throughout Georgia the number of enterprises almost quadrupled to 1,597 between 1886 and 1900, while the value of industrial output rose from 8,280,200 rubles to 21,099,000 in 1900.¹⁷⁴ Seen in terms of value of output per head of the population, this constituted a rise from 4.8 rubles in 1886 to 10 rubles in 1900.¹⁷⁵

The coincidence of industrial expansion with the appearance of growing numbers of landless and impoverished peasants does much to explain the sudden growth of the urban population at the close of the century, but the most significant development in Georgia's economy during this period, and one which partly explains the decline in the tendency of West Georgian peasants to move eastwards to T'bilisi Gubernia and the growing numbers migrating within K'ut'aisi Gubernia, was the emergence of Georgia, and particularly West Georgia, as a mining centre of world significance.

Aside from some relatively minor successes in copper and oil mining in East Georgia, the most remarkable advances were made in coal and manganese mining in K'ut'aisi Gubernia. The discovery of rich coal deposits near Tqibuli in K'ut'aisi district aroused hopes that it could be transformed into a major centre, but the problem of transporting the coal once it had been extracted inhibited investors. Moreover, even after the completion of the K'ut'aisi-Tqibuli line in 1887, lack of capital continued to present problems. Nevertheless, from a starting point of 175,000 puds in 1870, output rose to 380,000 puds in 1880, to 600,000 in 1890 and to 3,857,000 in 1900.¹⁷⁷ Coal extraction, however, paled into insignificance besides the manganese industry. The Georgian poet and publicist, Akaki Dserete'li, who first discovered the shavi k'va or black rock in Tchiat'ura in

1878, failed in his initial attempts to attract local capital and turned instead to Russia and Western Europe. Once local business men and landowners realised the potential profit to be gained, however, they began to offer serious resistance to foreign investors. Rather than invest themselves though, the majority sought to exploit the ore deposits with a minimum of input. Consequently, efficient and large-scale mining methods were not introduced to Tchiat'ura until the 1890s. Ilia Tchavatchavadze characteristically bemoaned the petty-mindedness that was frustrating the progress of Georgia's potentially most precious asset. Writing for the newspaper Iveria in 1886, he accused Georgians of building golden towers and moving mountains in their dreams but of standing idle when it came to taking action and argued that envy, enmity, petty-mindedness and groundless self-esteem were at the root of the country's problems.

People are only concerned with making sure others don't get anything [he wrote], and in this way providing for themselves. Everyone is trying to appropriate as large a plot for himself as possible, to grab a large piece and leave everyone else empty-handed. In a word, envy, enmity and petty-mindedness have brought the manganese business to such a pass that the black rock really has almost turned the producer himself, the owner of the ore and his worker into 'black rock and ashes'.¹⁷⁸

Gradually, however, the industry was placed on a more rational basis and by 1900 Georgia was supplying 50 per cent of the world's manganese exports.¹⁷⁹

If one includes workers used as bearers, as well as face workers, the Tchiat'ura mines were employing over 6,000 by 1900. Add to this the substantial number who must have been engaged in the Tqibuli coal mines and it is clear that together they absorbed much of K'ut'aisi Gubernia's

Table 18: Manganese Mining in Georgia 1890-1900¹⁸⁰

Year	No. of Miners	Annual Output in 1000s of Puds	Annual Exports in 1000s of Puds
1890	2605	10,468,1	8,400,4
1894	2186	11,012,0	9,599,5
1899	3250	34,131,0	25,073,4
1900	3701	40,363,4	28,698,3

itinerant labour.¹⁸¹

This, therefore, and the expansion of industry in Bat'umi and K'ut'aisi makes clear why, despite the marked increase in the number of peasants leaving the land in search of employment in the last quarter of the century, there was actually a decline in the percentage who moved to the east of the country. It is also, of course, a further indicator of the extent to which national integration had progressed by the end of the century.

Unlike in the pre-reform period, industry's demand for labour was now easily met;¹⁸² conditions in the countryside continued to deteriorate, the average area of land available to each peasant household was constantly shrinking¹⁸³ and the process of social differentiation within the peasantry had become more pronounced. Moreover, the tendency towards specialisation, detailed above, left many peasants vulnerable to the vicissitudes of both the market and the weather. In areas like Kakhet'i, for instance, where the peasantry lived in constant fear that winter hail storms would destroy their vineyards, one bad harvest could ruin a household and place it in absolute dependence on the money-lending community.¹⁸⁴ Nothing illustrated the vulnerability of the peasantry more than the vine diseases of the 1870s and 1880s. Those who were dependent on marketing their wine suddenly

found themselves with virtually nothing to sell and left with no choice but to work for someone else or seek employment in the towns.

Land shortage, too, forced the peasantry into over intensive cultivation of the soil. Argutinskii's report on Kakhet'i in 1886, for example, notes that even in the naturally fertile conditions of the Alazani valley, the peasants were only achieving moderate harvests. He concluded that the root cause of this was that the soil had been exhausted by the intensive cultivation it had been subjected to by peasants desperate to make a living.¹⁸⁵ Writing for the journal Iveria in 1905, N. Marr made the same point when analysing the cause of revolutionary upheavals in Guria that year:

The cause of the Gurians dissatisfaction is their shortage of land. Lack of land is a serious concern not just for the peasant in Guria, but for the aznauri as well... Arable land is in short supply and its owner is unable to let his land lie fallow. The orchards have been transformed into fields... and one cannot talk of fertilising the exhausted land since they scarcely have any domestic cattle in the villages - the Gurians (because of the land shortage) are unable to keep them.¹⁸⁶

It is against this background that migration became so widespread a feature of Georgian rural life at the end of the century. The contemporary press was full of descriptions of the problem. Kolkhida (Colchis) described migration to the towns as "an exceptionally important phenomenon",¹⁸⁷ whilst the minutes of a discussion of rural government organisation by the K'ut'aisi Gubernia office in 1909 note that,

As a result of land shortage and the mountainous terrain covering much of this gubernia, so disadvantageous to the development of agriculture, its population is resigned to an itinerant life-style in search of a living. Almost the entire working able-bodied population of Svanet'i, Ratcha, Lechkhumi, Guria, Samegrelo and Upper Imeret'i spends the greater part of the year not just far away from their villages, but often beyond the boundaries of the gubernia as well.¹⁸⁸

In 1867, 7,042 passports were issued in K'ut'aishi Gubernia, but by 1892, 6,635 were being issued in Ratcha province alone and 21,059 in the gubernia as a whole. In 1897 10,994 people left Ratcha, 15.6 per cent of the population, and in 1910, 14,151. It is estimated that in the first decade of the 20th century, 70-80 per cent of the male able-bodied working population left the province in search of work.¹⁸⁹ In 1897, some 35,000 peasants were issued work passports in the gubernia as a whole, while in T'bilisi Gubernia, where the pressure on the land was not so intense, 28,846 peasants left their villages to look for work.¹⁹⁰

It is important too to note that although migration did result in the swelling of the urban population, a very large proportion of the peasantry worked in the mines, towns and villages of Georgia on a seasonal basis. In West Georgia, where so many peasants were already private owners of plots of land, however minute, this was particularly the case. If able to do so, peasant households sent at least one, preferably young and unmarried, member of their families to secure daily or seasonal labour, either nearby or in more distant towns and villages. Generally, these left in the early autumn and returned in late spring, but as the financial difficulties of many families grew worse, so the tendency to stay away longer became more marked.

The main significance of migration of this sort lay not so much in the role it played in furthering the development of national consciousness among the Georgian peasantry, though this too was important, as in the strong links it established between the urban and rural parts of the country. Because of the relatively small size of Georgia, by the end of the 19th century there was nowhere that was very far from one of the main towns, ports or mining centres. Rail travel, too, at least for those able to make use of it, had made distances seem very much shorter. Consequently, it was not difficult for a peasant to live in Bat'umi or T'bilisi and yet retain strong links with his village. The full implications of this very quickly became obvious as the Georgian Social-Democratic movement acquired mass support in the early 1900s, and in the events of 1905. Seasonal labourers moving backwards and forwards from the villages became the bearers of socialist ideas, picked up or half picked up, as the case may be, in the major towns. Socialism in Georgia became the ideology not just of the urban masses, but of much of the peasantry too.¹⁹¹

It is clear, therefore, that much changed in Georgia during the 19th century. Russia's far from disinterested protection laid the basis for the country to break free from the traditional mould that had held Georgian society over the centuries of Persian and Turkish vassalage, and the peasant reforms of 1864-71, in particular, did much to achieve the economic integration of the country that had been so markedly absent previously. Such indeed was the level of interdependence by the end of the century and so extensive was the mobility of the population, that despite

the tsarist regime's efforts to divide the native population against itself by encouraging petty rivalries both between and within the nationalities inhabiting the country, and the continued political and administrative division of Georgia into gubernii, that the initial awareness of a shared identity, language and past was crystallising among all the components of Georgian society into a consciousness of Georgia's unique national identity. Awareness of the national idea and of national liberation movements elsewhere in Europe was producing an increasingly vocal intelligentsia that more and more turned to the peasantry for its audience. Even if one was to apply Stalin's excessively precise and inflexible definition of the nation as "a historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up, manifested in a common culture", there can be little doubt that Georgia fitted the description by the late 19th century.

1. I. Ant'elava, "Saglekho rep'orma sak'art'veloshi" (The peasant reform in Georgia), Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T. 5, op.cit., p. 272.
2. I. Ant'elava, "Klasovbrivi brdzolis gamdsvaveba" (The exacerbation of the class struggle), Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi T. 5, op.cit., p. 232.
3. Ibid., p. 234.
4. Ibid., p. 240.
5. Paata Gugushvili, Sak'art'velos da amierkavkasiis ekonomikuri ganvit'areba XIX-XX ss T.2 (The Economic Development of Georgia and the Transcaucasus XIX-XX cc V.2.), (T'bilisi, 1956) p. 552.
6. Abel Kikvidze, Sak'art'velos istoria XIX-XX ss (The History of Georgia 19th-20th cc), (T'bilisi, 1959), p. 9.
7. I. Ant'elava, "Batonqmobis gauk'meba aghmosavlet' sak'art'veloshi" (The abolition of serfdom in East Georgia), Matsne (T'bilisi, 1965), no. 3, p. 56.
8. Paata Gugushvili, op.cit., p. 641.
9. Ibid., p. 649.
10. V.C. Bakhtadze, Ocherki po istorii gruzinskoi obshchestvennoi mysli 60-90 gg XIX stoletiya, (T'bilisi, 1960), p. 24.
11. Ibid., p. 25.
12. R.G. Suny, "The peasants have always fed us": The Georgian nobility and the peasant emancipation, 1856-1871. The Russian Review, Vol. 38, 1979, p. 32.
13. Dimitri Qipiani was a relatively minor landowner from Surami in Gori district. In 1834 he was arrested for his supposed participation in the plot to restore the Georgian monarchy and exiled. He subsequently achieved prominence in government service in Georgia.
14. "The opinion of D. Qipiani on the fundamentals of the serf law" (Georgian). Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, Seriya II, Tom 1. Gruzia v periode burzhuaznykh reform (1862-72). Chast' vtoraya (T'bilisi, 1960), document 113, p. 537.
15. Ibid., p. 537.
16. Niko Khizanishvili, "Chveni glekh-katsobis istoriidam" (From the history of our peasantry), Iveria, 1884, No.2, p. 104.

17. In addition to the main projects submitted by the nobility of T'bilisi and K'ut'aisi Gubernii, a number of projects, including Mukhran-Batoni's, were submitted by individuals, or as in the case of the so-called minority project, by small groups wishing to express a particular view. One of these, supposedly submitted by Ilia Tchavtchavadze, demanded that the peasantry be given their land. However, its radical tone is in stark contrast to the opinions held by the vast majority. Such was the excitement raised by Tchavtchavadze's attack on the t'avadaznauroba (of which he was a leading representative) that one aristocrat had to be physically restrained from plunging his kindzhal into Tchavtchavadze's chest. (See Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, Seriya II, Tom 1, Chast' vtoraya, document 148, pp. 717-743 for the text. Also P. Ratiani, Ilia Tchavtchavadze da glekht'a gant'avisuplebis problema (Ilia Tchavtchavadze and the Problem of the Emancipation of the Peasants) (T'bilisi, 1963), which also includes the text as well as the author's analysis of its likely source of origin.
18. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, Sak'art'veloshi sotsialuri urt'iert'obis istoriidan (From the History of Social Relations in Georgia) (T'bilisi, 1967), p. 129.
19. S. Esadze, Istoricheskaya zapiska ob upravlenii Kavkazom, op.cit., p. 325.
20. Sbornik Zakonov Gruzinskago Tsarya Vakhtanga VI op.cit., Article 172, p. 51.
21. Niko Khizanishvili, op.cit., p. 90.
22. "Doklad D. Kipiani s'ezdu dvoryanstva Tbilisskoi gubernii ob otmene krepostnogo prava" in Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, op.cit., doc. 124, p. 603.
23. Ibid., pp. 603-4.
24. A number of prominent t'avadebi attempted to pressurise Qipiani into backing down, but without success. Interestingly, however, the government was not so concerned by his election. Baron Nikolai wrote a report to the tsar in which he praised Qipiani's abilities fulsomely. He did not consider him a threat commenting that "he is sufficiently intelligent to realise that unconditional obedience to the Russian government is the only guarantee of his country's existence". As to the view that Qipiani was a supporter of Georgian autonomy, the Vice-Regent cynically observed "that Qipiani is not able to exist without material support from the government and that having a family he must of necessity subordinate his heart's dreams..." As Baron Nikolai noted, the fact that Qipiani did not belong to one of the country's major families was something of an advantage, because not having a large estate he did not have a large enough income to render him economically independent of the government. Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii, op.cit., pp. 699-710.

25. N. Natsvlishvili, "Memamuluri meurneobis kapitalisturi evolutsia K'art'lshi" (The capitalist evolution of the landed gentry's farming in K'art'li) Matsne, No. 5, 1965, pp. 147-160. Natsvlishvili gives details of those who did make the transition to more rational methods. In nearly all cases such landowners came from the wealthier members of the t'avadaznauroba.
26. R.G. Suny, op.cit., p. 36.
27. P.I. Lyashchenko, History of the National Economy of Russia (New York, 1949) p. 381.
28. I. Ant'elava, "Rep'orma dasavlet' sak'art'veloshi" (The reform in West Georgia) Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi T.5, op.cit., p. 292.
29. I. Ant'elava, "Rep'orma aghmosavlet' sak'art'veloshi" (The reform in East Georgia) Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi T.5 (T'bilisi, 1970), p. 291.
30. I. Uturashvili, Realizatsia krest'yanskoi reformy v Gruzii (T'bilisi, 1976) p. 24.
31. S. Esadze, op.cit., p. 329.
32. Ibid., p. 332.
33. I. Ant'elava, "Rep'orma aghmosavlet' sak'art'veloshi", op.cit., pp. 288-89.
34. I. Ant'elava, "Rep'orma dasavlet' sak'art'veloshi", op.cit., p. 293.
35. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 25.
36. Ibid., p. 25.
37. I. Ant'elava, "Rep'orma dasavlet' sak'art'veloshi", op.cit., p. 294.
38. G. P'urtseladze, "Saglekho rep'ormis t'aviseburebani imeret's da guriashi" (Peculiarities of the peasant reform in Imeret'i and Guria) Matsne, 1967, no. 3, p. 158.
39. Ibid., p.155.
40. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi meurneoba sak'art'velos sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 73. According to this author, 7 million rubles were paid out to the t'avadaznauroba by the Russian government.
41. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., pp. 26-27.
42. T'eo Gitsba, "Droebit'valdebul glekht'a brdzola gadasakhadebis dsinaaghmdag aghmosavlet' sak'art'veloshi" (The struggle of temporarily obligated peasants against the taxes in East Georgia) Matsne, 1976, no. 1, p. 70.

43. M. Akhobadze, "K'ut'aisiis mazris glekht'a modzraobis istoriidan" (From the history of the peasant movement in K'ut'aisi district) Matsne, 1971, no. 2., p. 109. According to Akhobadze 58.8 per cent of temporarily obligated peasant households in K'ut'aisi district had yet to sign in 1869.
44. G. P'urtseladze, "Sadsesdebo sigelebi, rogorts mnish-vnelovani dsqaro saglekho rep'ormis realizatsiis shes-dsavlisat'vis aghmosavlet' sak'art'veloshi" (Title deeds as an important source for studying the realization of the peasant reform in East Georgia) Moambe, (The Herald), 1963, no. 2, p. 131.
45. The mirovoy posrednik was invariably elected from among the local nobility, a fact which inevitably put strain on his impartiality. See Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 36.
46. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., pp. 58-59.
47. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
48. G. Purtseladze, "Sadsesdebo sigelebi...", op.cit., p. 136.
49. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 74.
50. Ibid., p. 74.
51. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 10.
52. I.I. Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 77. Unfortunately there is insufficient information to provide an accurate picture of the distribution of the land among the peasantry. It is clear, however, that there was considerable inequality and that as the century progressed social differentiation became more pronounced.
53. Cross comparisons of this sort are, of course, of limited value given that so many variables are involved. Thus, in part of T'bilisi Gubernia the peasantry was able to avoid the worst effects of land shortage by turning to intensive crops like the vine, which had a relatively high income yield per desyatina. Field crops like wheat and barley naturally required much more space. Aleksandre Bendianishvili ("Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi" - The development of capitalist relations in the country) Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi T.5, p. 352 makes the point that in some parts of Georgia one desyatina of vineyard could bring an annual income of 400-500 rubles, though this would depend, of course, on a number of conditions being met. Nevertheless, by and large, the Georgian peasantry, and particularly those in K'ut'aisi Gubernia, were rather less favourably placed than their Russian counterparts.
54. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 78.
55. Ibid., p. 158.

56. Ibid., p. 158. See too R.G. Suny, op.cit., pp. 43-44.
57. Ibid., p. 135.
58. T'eo Gibbsba, op.cit., p. 82.
59. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 15.
60. Ibid., p. 15.
61. Ibid., p. 18.
62. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
63. M. Khetsuriani, "Glekhis ekonomhuri mdgomareobis gan-msazghvrelis dzirit'adi p'ak'torebis shesakheb rep'ormis shemdgomdroindel sak'art'veloshi" (On the definitive, fundamental factors of the peasant's economic situation in post-reform Georgia) Matsne 1977, no. 4, p. 77.
64. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 47.
65. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 150.
66. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 5.
67. M. Khetsuriani, "Glekhis ekonomhuri mdgomareobis gan-msazghvrelis dzirit'adi p'ak'torebis shesakheb..." op.cit., p. 75.
68. I. Uturashvili, op.cit., p. 102.
69. The temporary obligations of the ex-sabatonos peasantry were formally abolished in Georgia in 1912.
70. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 7.
71. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani sak'art'veloshi 1890-1917 ds.ds. (Agrarian Relations in Georgia, 1890-1917) (T'bilisi, 1965), p. 46.
72. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi (1865-1900)" (The development of capitalist relations in the country, 1865-1900) Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., p. 330.
73. V.I. Adamia, "Iz istorii razvitiya zemlevladieniya v Gruzii v kontse XIX v (Ha primere vinogradarstva i vinodelya v Kakheti)", Matsne 1974, no. 1. p. 46.
74. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 128. Russian state peasants acquired the right to purchase their plots in the 1880s, but Georgian state peasants did not even win the right to the "constant use" of the land they worked until the 1900 peasant reform.
75. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani sak'art'veloshi, op.cit., p. 111.

76. A. Argutinskii, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan' Telavskogo uезда..."
77. Ibid., p. 25.
78. Ibid., p. 28.
79. S.V. Machabeli, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan' Tiflisskogo uезда..." T.5, op.cit., pp. 203-4.
80. M. M. Kovalevskii, "Sel'skaya obshchina v Zakavkaz'e" in Yuridicheskii Vestnik, 1889, pt. 6, p. 342.
81. N. L. Abazadze, "Semeinaya obshchina y Gruzin", op.cit., p.13.
82. I.L. Bakhtadze, "Ekonomicheskii byt' gosudarstvennykh krest'yan Shorapanskogo uезда...", op.cit., p. 183.
83. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani... op.cit., p. 114.
84. Ibid., p. 115.
85. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebani (Collected Works), (T'bilisi, 1928), T.8, pp. 206-8.
86. Paata Gugushvili, op.cit., p. 506.
87. Ibid., p. 659.
88. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 42.
89. British consular report July 1, 1872.
90. Ibid.
91. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 45.
92. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897g Kuttaisskaya Guberniya Tom LXIV (St. Petersburg, 1905), p. 1.
93. M. Nikoleishvili, "Metok'eoba sak'art'velos k'alak'ebshoris rep'ormis shemdgom periodshi" (Competition between Georgia's towns in the post-reform period) Matsne 1978, no.2, pp. 51-4.
94. Sergi Meskhi, "Sami Kvira Imeret's" (Three Weeks in Imeret'i), Nadserebi Sergi Meskhisa (The Writings of Sergi Meskhi) T.1, (Tp'ilisi, 1903) pp. 72-73.
95. M. Nikoleishvili, "Metok'eoba sak'art'velos k'alak'ebshoris..." op.cit., p. 49.
96. V. Adamia, "Iz istorii razvitiya tovarnogo proizvodstva...", Matsne 1974, no.1, op.cit., p. 36.
97. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 331.

98. Ibid., p. 332.
99. Ibid., p. 332.
100. Ibid., p. 332.
101. V. Adamiya, "Razvitie tovarnogo proizvodstva...", op. cit., p. 39.
102. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 335.
103. V. Adamia, "Razvitie tovarnogo proizvodstva...", op. cit. p. 59.
104. Ibid., p. 60.
105. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 335.
106. Et'eri Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba da krediti", op.cit., p. 415.
107. V. Adamia, "Iz istorii razvitiya zemlevladieniya v Gruzii...", op.cit., p. 106.
108. V. Adamia, Sotsial'no ekonomicheskoe razvitie gruzin-skoi derevni v poreformenny periode (1870-1900 gg) (T'bilisi, 1976), p. 127.
109. Ibid., p. 102.
110. A.M. Argutinskii, op.cit., p. 3.
111. V. Adamia, "Razvitie tovarnogo proizvodstva...", op. cit., p. 46.
112. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 334.
113. V. Adamia, Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe razvitie gruzin-skoi derevni..., op.cit., pp. 96-97.
114. Ibid., p. 90.
115. Ibid., p. 100.
116. Despite pleas from Kakhian landowners and merchants, plans for constructing a line to T'bilisi did not get serious consideration until 1909 (Mosavali, The Harvest, June 1, 1909, No. 2, p. 16). The line was finally completed in 1915.
117. Et'eri Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba da krediti", op.cit., p. 414.
118. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani..., p. 71.
119. Ibid., p. 72.

120. Ibid., p. 72.
121. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 336.
122. Ibid., p. 337.
123. Ibid., pp. 336-7.
124. Ibid., p. 337.
125. Ibid., p. 338.
126. Ibid., p. 338.
127. Ibid., p. 338.
128. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 5.
129. A. Mik'ava, "K'ut'aisis sotsial-ekonomiuri ganvit'areba rep'ormis shemdgom khanashi...", op.cit., p. 25.
130. Ibid., p. 26.
131. Ibid., p. 26.
132. Et'eri Orjonikidze, "Vatchroba da krediti", op.cit., p. 414.
133. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 82.
134. Paata Gugushvili, op.cit., p. 640.
135. The region of Artvin was annexed by Russia following the successful conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War in 1878, and subsequently became part of K'ut'aisi Gubernia. Since it was soon to be returned to Turkey, however, Artvin is not included in my population statistics for West Georgia. As regards Zak'at'ala district, although it contains a sizeable Georgian population, the majority are Azeris, and the area is now part of Soviet Azerbaijan. For this reason I have excluded it from the figures for T'bilisi Gubernia.
136. Pervaya veseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897 g Kutaisskaya Guberniya Vol. LXIV (St. Petersburg, 1905) p. V, and Tiflisskaya Guberniya Vol. LXIX (St. Petersburg, 1905), p. VI.
137. E. Khoshtaria, "K'alak'ebis da savatchro-samredsvelo dabebis ganvit'areba" (The development of towns and trading-industrial centres), Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T. 5, op.cit., p. 429.
138. Paata Gugushvili, op.cit., p. 657.
139. Ibid., p. 657.
140. Ibid., p. 657.

141. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani...op.cit., p. 80.
142. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba sop'elshi", op.cit., p. 347.
143. A.M. Argutinskii, op.cit., p. 307.
144. Ibid., p. 61. According to the law, land was valued at 10 times the average annual income derived from the land. Since the very minimum that one could anticipate from one desyatina of land in Kakhet'i was 60 rubles, the peasantry was clearly being grossly underpaid.
145. E. Khramelashvili, "Dsvrili seskhi sop'lad" (Small-scale loans in the country) Mosavali (The Harvest) No. 6, 1909, p. 7.
146. During the 1880s in T'elavi district, 976 state peasant households owned 1-2 oxen; 578 2-3; 310 3-4; 140 4-5; and 245 over 5. The latter group had 3,818 oxen between them. 7,000 peasant households in K'ut'aisi district had none at all and 11,000 in Shorapani district.
147. A.M. Argutinskii, op.cit., pp. 98-99. Argutinskii notes that peasants who did not own bullocks (or enough bullocks) were at the mercy of those who did. Many peasants also had to hire ploughs, since in no village in T'elavi district did more than 16 per cent of the peasants own their own ploughs. On average 10-12 per cent had ploughs.
148. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 90. The majority of state peasants with over 30 desyatiny of land were concentrated in T'ianet'i district, a fact which can be explained by the predominance of cattle and sheep farming in the area.
149. Ibid., p. 90.
150. A.M. Argutinskii, op.cit., p. 10.
151. Paata Gugushvili, op.cit., p. 825.
152. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 94.
153. E. Khoshtaria, "K'alak'ebis da savatchro-samredsvelo dabebis ganvit'areba", op.cit., p. 427. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiiskoi Imperii... op.cit., Vo. LXIV, p. 1 and Vol. LXIX, p. 1.
154. Calculated from the above statistics.
155. A. Mik'ava, "T'elavis ekonomiuri ganvit'areba rep'ormis shemdgom khanashi" (The economic development of T'elavi in the post-reform period), Matsne, 1977, No. 4, p. 34.
156. I.L. Bakhtadze, op.cit., p. 197.

157. Some peasants were able to negotiate long-term contracts, but those leasing out land preferred to do so on a short-term basis because the price of land was rising so fast. Short-term contracts, however, gave tenants no incentive to improve the land and led directly to over intensive cultivation. Since rent was worked out as a percentage of the harvest, landowners may ultimately have been doing themselves a disservice.
158. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiskoi Imperii... op.cit., Vol. LXIX, p. 1.
159. Ibid., p. 1. Calculated from statistical information contained in the census.
160. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiskoi Imperii... op.cit., Vol. LXIX, p. 1.
161. Ibid., p. 1.
162. E. Khoshtaria, "K'alak'ebis da savatchro-samredsvelo dabebis ganvit'areba", op.cit., p. 431.
163. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiskoi Imperii... op.cit., Vol. LXIX, p. 2.
164. Ibid., Vol. LXIX, p. IX.
165. E. Khoshtaria, Ocherki sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi istorii Gruzii (T'bilisi, 1974), p. 169.
166. Ibid., p. 169.
167. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiskoi Imperii... op.cit., Vol. LXIV, p. 2.
168. I.A. Chakhvashvili, Rabochee dvizhenie v Gruzii (1870-1904 gg) (T'bilisi, 1958) P. 10. Tqibuli was linked up with K'ut'aishi in 1887, Tchiatura with Shorapani junction in 1895, Borjomi with Khashuri junction in 1894, T'bilisi with Kars in 1899, Bakuriani with Borjomi in 1902 and Baku with Rostov in 1899. The Kakh-et'i line was not completed until 1915.
169. E. Khoshtaria, Mredsvelobis ganvit'areba da mushat'a klasis chamoqalibeba, T. 1. op.cit., p. 215. Transcaucasian railways employed 2,265 people in 1900.
170. Paata Gugushvili, Razvitie promyshlennosti v Gruzii, T.1, op.cit., p. 125.
171. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., pp. 32-34.
172. Et'eri Orjonikidze, op.cit., p. 424.
173. I.A. Chakhvashvili, op.cit., p. 29.

174. E. Khoshtaria, "Mredsvelobis ganvit'areba" in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., p. 391.
175. Ibid., p. 393.
176. E. Khoshtaria, Mredsvelobis ganvit'areba da mushat'a klasis chamoqalibeba... op.cit., pp. 214-15.
177. I.A. Chakhvashvili, op.cit., p. 13.
178. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli, T.4, (Essays. The Complete Works V. 4), (T'bilisi, 1955), pp. 216-18.
179. E. Khoshtaria, "Mredsvelobis ganvit'areba", op.cit., p. 400.
180. Ibid., p. 399.
181. Ibid., p. 400.
182. During the 1890s the movement of the population off the land reached the point where it was exceeding the capacity of Georgia's industry to provide employment. This was the backdrop against which the first Georgian Social-Democratic group Mesame Dasi (The Third Group), made its appearance.
183. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, op.cit., p. 106. According to Ant'elava, state peasants suffered a 13.84 per cent reduction in the amount of land available to them between the 1880s and 1900.
184. A.M. Argutinskii, op.cit., p. 107.
185. Ibid., p. 95.
186. Paata Gugushvili, Sak'art'velos da amierkavkasiis ekonomikuri ganvit'areba... op.cit., p. 661.
187. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'ier'obani... op.cit., p. 134.
188. Paata Gugushvili, Sak'art'velos da amierkavkasiis ekonomikuri ganvit'areba... op.cit., p. 777.
189. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani... op.cit., p. 357. Al. T'oidze, Iveria 22.1.1894 no. 16, Ra mizezia?!! (What's the point?!!) T'oidze claims that the mamasakhlisebi, the village elders responsible for issuing passport tickets in Ratcha, usually over-charged so that few could afford to buy a one-year ticket. Consequently many arrived without tickets at all, which suggests that the official figures may understate the actual scale of migration.
190. A. Bendianishvili, "Kapitalisturi urt'iert'obis ganvit'areba...", op.cit., p. 357.

191. Since many of those working in Bat'umi during the early 1900s maintained very strong links with the countryside and often even owned land there, when strikes broke out in February 1902 against factory conditions, a large contingent simply returned home to their villages until their aim had been achieved. See Paata Gugushvili. Sak'art'velos da amierkavkasiis ekonomikuri ganvit'areba... op.cit., p. 868.

The Emergence of the National Question as a Political Issue

4.1 The Indigenous Origins of the Georgian National Movement

Although it was not until late in the century that Georgian national consciousness reached the point where it cut across all sectors of society, involving peasant, artisan, entrepreneur and noble alike, in varying degrees of concern for the future and integrity of their homeland, national sentiment had found political expression considerably earlier.

As was noted in the first chapter, the Georgian t'avadaznauroba attempted to restore the Bagratid dynasty in 1832 through an ill-conceived and poorly planned conspiracy against the Russian administration. Motivated as much by a desire to restore their own prestige as by their love of Georgia many, if not most of those involved, thought to return the country to the vicissitudes of the previous 500 years by trusting in the assistance of Persia and Turkey.¹ However, not all of those involved were monarchists and not all were motivated by a desire for self-aggrandisement.

Some Soviet Georgian historians have presented the period between the annexation of Georgia in 1801 and the emergence of a radical intelligentsia in the 1860s as an intellectual void in which nothing of worth was either written or achieved,² but whilst one might argue that little was done to advance the development of social ideas in this period, it is clearly the case that the patriotic sentiments expressed by the leading literary figures of the Georgian intelligentsia between 1832 and the 1860s had a marked

influence on the views of the new generation in the post-reform period.

If one ignores those members of the t'avadznauroba who, in response to the erosion of their authority and the changes being wrought in Georgian society since the advent of Russian power, sought to reconsolidate their position by appealing to the shah of Persia and the Ottoman sultan, the spirit of conservative patriotism of this period is perhaps best exemplified in the poetry of one of the more eminent members of the aristocracy, Prince Grigol Orbeliani. Reflecting both his own and many of his peers' pre-occupation with Georgia's past, Orbeliani's early poems stand out for their romantic depiction of Georgia's history.

Although the restoration of the monarchy and the power of the t'avadznauroba figured prominently in their aspirations, this group clung romantically to the vision of an independent Georgia uncompromised by a need to pay tribute to Russia, Persia or Turkey.

No doubt giving expression to the views of many others like himself, Grigol Orbeliani wrote in his poem Givi Amilakhvari (Givi Amilakhvari),

By whom, where, in what country is freedom
brought without sacrifices, without blood?
I will perish for my fatherland,
I know it, I feel it and declare it.³

In this way Orbeliani did not simply express his determination to restore the traditional rights of his class, but also declared Georgia's right to an independent existence, thus revealing the effects of his and his colleagues exposure to the nationalist ideas then being advanced by the intelligentsia of Central and Eastern Europe's numerous

national minorities. It is just a little ironic that the means by which the Georgian aristocracy had been brought into contact with current European thought, incorporation into Russia, should now lead to demands for the restoration of Georgia's independence.

However, the nation for which the patriotic Orbeliani was so ready to spill his blood was one that remained tightly bound to the narrow class interests of the t'avadaznauroba. His Georgia was populated by heroes performing acts of selfless courage against the Muslim foe, by individuals whose social origin was the same as his own. It was a Georgia in which his own poetic interests - patriotism, heroism and chivalry, were the society's guiding precepts, and at its core was the system of batonqmoba.

Like others of his class who sought to retain their privileges during the lead up to the peasant reforms of the 1860s, Orbeliani maintained that batonqmoba was one of the prime distinguishing features of Georgia's national identity and that the system of allegedly mutually beneficial relations upon which it was based, had provided his oppressed country with the means for its survival against encroaching enemies. In the imagery used to reflect this relationship, the peasantry was traditionally depicted as the country's plough, tilling the soil and providing Georgia with the material sustenance for its survival, whilst the t'avadaznauroba was portrayed as a sword, a militaristic caste whose duty was to protect their native land and its defenceless workers.

This in large part explains the backward looking, introverted patriotism of much of the aristocracy in the

1820s and 1830s, for whether or not this romantic version of the feudal relationship between themselves and the peasantry had any basis in truth, it was clearly the case that once Georgia had become a protectorate of Russia that the rationale for the t'avadaznauroba's existence was fading. In effect, its traditional role in Georgian society was becoming redundant.

It was this awareness of the threat posed by change to the traditional structures of Georgian society that led them to a rather qualified acceptance of the views being exposed by advocates of the national idea in Central Europe. Thus, Orbeliani's translation into Georgian of the poem Nalivaiko by Kondratii Ryleev,⁴ a Decembrist of republican sentiments, in which the author portrays the Ukrainian struggle for national liberation from the Poles in the 16th century, plays down the radical-democratic spirit of the original, but emphasises its patriotic content.⁵

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It is indicative of the heterogeneous composition of those involved in the plot of 1832 that alongside the narrow defenders of aristocratic privilege and the patriotic conservatives, there should be individuals whose patriotism revealed a far greater sympathy for the democratic views of the more radical of the Decembrists and who identified, in particular, with the struggle of the Poles for freedom from Russia. Thus, Simon Dodashvili, a man from a poor clerical background, who for a brief spell before his death in exile in 1836 became one of the leading figures in the Georgian intelligentsia, became associated with the demand for the establishment of a Georgian republic, the integrity of which, however, he readily conceded, could only be guaranteed by Russian patronage. But while he linked

ref?

Georgia's fortunes with those of Russia, Dodashvili clearly did not have in mind the Russia of Nicholas I. Rather, and in this way anticipating the intelligentsia of the 1860s, he pinned Georgia's hopes to the prospect of social upheaval in Russia and the emergence of a more democratic society in the north.

However, the national and individual aspirations of all these groups suffered a crushing blow with the failure of the 1832 conspiracy, from which they were never fully to recover. The mass exile of virtually all the leading figures in the country's small intelligentsia both underlined Georgia's impotence in the face of Russian power and left the country in a mood of resigned demoralisation.

Whilst the patriotic spirit of those who had participated, the so-called gazarmelebi,⁶ was held in considerable esteem by those left behind, it was equally clear that their cause had been of the utmost futility. The t'avadaznauroba, in particular, understanding that it would have radically to revise its attitudes to Russia if it were to retain its privileged position in society, began the process of transforming itself into a loyal arm of the tsarist cause. Russia, it argued, meaning tsarist Russia, was the best defender of Georgia's interests, by which it meant the preservation of the traditional structure of Georgian society. In return for loyal service to the tsar it hoped that the Russian crown would maintain its status in Georgia.

The policy of Nicholas I towards the gazarmelebi was in no small part responsible for this apparent volte-face. Realising the advantage of having grateful rather than hostile subjects in a sensitive border region and

appreciating the advantages to be gained from recruiting the indigenous nobility into the service of the regime, the tsar elected to exercise clemency towards those in exile and permit the majority to return to active life in Georgia long before their sentences had expired. It is probable too that Nicholas I calculated that a subservient Georgian nobility could be a useful ally in the war against the Muslim tribes of the Caucasus and in the regime's efforts to expand its influence into Persia.

Grigol Orbeliani presents an excellent example of the repentant Georgian nobility. Although continuing to express his patriotism in the poem Sadghegrdzelo (The toast), he was already a different man from the one who had protested his eagerness to shed his blood for the freedom of his native land. In Sadghegrdzelo Orbeliani pronounces the loyalty of Georgians to the Russian tsar,⁷ and his hope that Nicholas I would restore "the days of T'amar, the days of glory" to Georgia.

Interestingly, both Georgian radicals and Georgian conservatives were now reconciled to the fact that the fate of Georgia was inextricably bound up with that of Russia, although they had very differing hopes and expectations of their northern neighbour. Nevertheless, this pronounced political orientation towards St. Petersburg, consolidated over the ensuing years by the successful incorporation of the t'avadznauroba into the Russian service nobility and by the increased experience of the Georgian intelligentsia of higher education in Russia's universities, combined with the surviving and strong spirit of patriotism to shape the attitudes of the emerging generation of Georgian public figures.

Although Georgian hopes of independence were extinguished in 1832, patriotism was harder to eradicate and would almost appear to have been kindled by the failure of the plot and the subsequent exile of its main participants. The trauma of banishment to distant and frozen outposts of the Russian empire and the sorry spectacle of the Georgian queen being taken under arrest to Moscow were events that left indelible marks on the consciousness of a generation of Georgians. Living in an atmosphere that was steeped in national sentiment and knowing that independence was beyond their grasp, many found the temptation towards a romantic appraisal of the past hard to resist. Konstantine Mamatsashvili, a contemporary and biographer of the Georgian romantic poet Nikoloz Barat'ashvili, recalled a conversation with the poet which gives some impression of the prevailing mood of the time:

I remember one July night in 1838 when Tato (Barat'ashvili) and I went for a walk together... Tato was in fine spirits... then the conversation settled on our past life and the tragic finale to the 18th century, on King Irakle's infirmity through old age, on the sacking of our Tp'ilisi in 1795... and so on. During this conversation Nikoloz's expression, always laughing and cheerful, changed and he began to wipe tears away with his handkerchief. Very agitated, he said to me: 'Our own inability has destroyed us!' And with a sigh, he added: 'Our poor Georgia's destiny!'⁸

Although few Georgians felt any sense of elation at the union, an increasing number was prepared to acknowledge that Georgia's best interests could only be served as a protectorate of Russia. Nikoloz Barat'ashvili gave poetic voice to this conflict between the goals of national security and independence in a celebrated epic poem entitled K'art'lis bedi (The Fate of Georgia), in which the author used real

characters and real events to express the dilemma facing Georgian society. The central theme of the poem concerns the political orientation of Georgia following the invasion of the country by Agha Mohammed Khan in 1795. Opening with the Battle of Krtsanisi, in which a force of 5,000 Georgians repulsed an army of 35,000, Barat'ashvili presents the address of King Irakle to his troops in heroic and patriotic terms.⁹ After the fall of T'bilisi the poet follows the flight of the king and his chancellor, Solomon Leonidze, into the mountains and there, against the dramatic background of the Caucasus, he depicts a debate between the two men on the best future course of action for Georgia. Irakle favoured seeking Russian protection, but Leonidze, expressing the fears of a generation of Georgians living 40 years later, questioned the wisdom of this.

Do you know, my king, that the Iverians/ will be
content in Russian hands?/ Unity of state
religion/ is of no benefit when/ the character of
the nations is different./ Who knows how/ Russian
power will behave towards present-day K'art'li./
What if the Russians were to assimilate the
Georgians?/ How would the Russian crown heed the
wishes of Georgian society?/ And then my king,
how many true men/ will suffer in silent torment?/
Who then will praise Irakle's memory?¹⁰

Leonidze concluded that whilst Georgia retained its independence and Irakle remained king, Georgians would make light of their misfortunes. Irakle did not contradict his chancellor, but retorted that only with Russian protection would Georgia be able to wreak its revenge on Persia. He added, moreover, that Georgia's survival was at stake and that sooner or later it would have no alternative but to turn to its Russian neighbour.

Although both sides of the argument are strongly put, one is left with the impression that Barat'ashvili's sympathies lie more with Leonidze than they do with King Irakle, for the final say in the debate is given to the chancellor's wife on his return home. Presented in idealised, patriotic form, Leonidze's wife confounds his expectations by scorning the idea of a protectorate and the lure of a fashionable life in the Russian capital. What pleasure, she asked rhetorically, was there to be had in living homeless and orphaned in a foreign land, imprisoned like a nightingale in a cage?¹¹

Three years later, however, in 1842, by which time some of the anguish of the thirties had perhaps had time to settle, Barat'ashvili redressed the balance in another poem, Sap'lavi mep'is Iraklisa (The Grave of King Irakle), in which he acknowledged that the union with Russia advocated by Irakle had brought Georgia peace, security and education.¹²

The shift in emphasis from ambivalence to acquiescence apparent in Sap'lavi mep'is Iraklisa again captured the shifting mood of the t'avadaznauroba. Increasingly conscious of the permanence of Russia's presence and the advantages derived from it, the greater part of the nobility resigned itself to making the most of its unavoidable predicament and accepting service in the tsarist army or administration. Moreover, with the consolidation of Russia's influence in the Transcaucasus, there came a growing acceptance of the values of a hitherto relatively alien lifestyle. Many Georgian nobles, particularly the wealthier among them, now began to distance themselves from their traditional environment and gravitated towards the capital, T'bilisi,

where under the influence of Viceroy Vorontsov, they were encouraged to live more in the manner of the European and Russian aristocracy. The benefits of a European education became highly prized, but whilst this may have broadened the vision of some, it merely resulted in the crass imitation of another culture amongst others. The ability to speak Russian, or better still French, became a symbol of status and cultural advancement and a tendency emerged for the elite of Georgian society to communicate in Russian rather than in their native language. In another gesture of their apparent readiness to accept cultural assimilation, the t'avadaznauroba began to Russify their own names.¹³ e.g.?

The repentant participants in the 1832 conspiracy now justified the tsar's clemency by transforming themselves into a loyal arm of Russian power in Georgia and the Caucasus. Thus when in 1841, 1853 and 1865 peasant rebellions broke out in different parts of the country, the Georgian nobility were the first to turn to the use of force.¹⁴ In 1848, mindful of the events taking place elsewhere in Europe, the Georgian aristocracy felt compelled to write directly to Nicholas I informing him of their unswerving loyalty:

Each one of us feels pure love and devotion towards the Russian autocratic monarchy... we desire that our services be requested, either within the country's boundaries or without, if the disorder now threatening Western Europe should endanger the prosperity of the state to which Georgia now has the honour of belonging to.¹⁵

By destroying the traditional rationale for the t'avadaznauroba's existence and position in Georgian society, the strengthening of Russian power pushed the nobility to try to justify itself through military or

administrative service. This, however, further reduced the ties linking peasant to landlord, for where in the past the t'avadi had always lived on the land and shared the peasantry's customs and traditions, he now moved to the administrative centres, cultivated new habits and gradually alienated himself from his background. The same process also encouraged greater differentiation within the ranks of the t'avadaznauroba itself, since most aznaurni lacked the means to maintain themselves as absentee landlords in the extravagant atmosphere of T'bilisi high society and consequently remained on their estates and preserved their traditional way of life. Many, it should be added, wanted nothing else.

By no means everyone, moreover, judged civilisation in terms of an individual's ability to ape Russian manners. Closer links with Russia had brought Georgians greater educational opportunities, and a new intelligentsia, admittedly still very small, emerged from the trauma of the 1830s conscious of a mission to awaken Georgians' pride in and consciousness of their culture and history.

Deeply influenced by the German romantic movement of the late 18th century, the Georgian intelligentsia concurred with the view of the nation as a natural, historical unit. In their desire to prove Georgia's national credentials, they embarked on a systematic study of the country's history, language and culture. A contemporary Georgian historian, Sul Khan Barat'ashvili, explained the need to know one's own nation's history in almost religious terms.

This [he said] is the sacred duty of everyone, and that is why I began to gather together documents and other historical materials.¹⁶

Their efforts were complimented by those of M-F Brosset, a French academic recently arrived in St. Petersburg. Brosset devoted his considerable energies to the study and systemisation of Georgian sources and in the process gave respectability to the new discipline of Kartvelology, or Georgian studies, and provided Georgian researchers with the confidence and belief in the value of their work to persist.

However, perhaps because the atmosphere was more conducive to study, St. Petersburg became a more active centre of Georgian studies in this period than T'bilisi. In the Georgian capital, a combination of zealous censorship and lack of funds, facilities and organisation prevented so much as the publication of a single journal until the 1850s - although not for the want of trying¹⁷ - so that despite small pockets of activity, the intellectual life of Georgia appeared fractured and isolated. Konstantine Mamatsashvili summed up the problems facing himself and his colleagues in the 1840s and 1850s in an article written for Droeba:

If three or four of us so much as joined together and respectfully began to discuss literature and public affairs, even this was considered daring and worthy of great rejoicing.¹⁸

Moreover, despite the folk emphasis of the German romantic movement, the Georgian historians of this period do not appear to have concerned themselves with the history of the Georgian people and its traditions and culture. Perhaps this can be explained by the nature of the immediately available sources and the fact that historiography was as yet at an embryonic stage in Georgia. Whatever the reasons,

the prime focus of interest in the years up to the peasant reforms remained the lives of the Bagratid kings and queens and the development of Georgian literature.

Their isolation was compounded too by the nature of the society they were operating in, for despite the changes taking place within the country, Georgia remained a traditional society, as yet only dimly aware of its corporate existence and which, because of the survival of batonqmoba, continued strictly to define the rights of much of its population. Education and literacy, soon to be accorded enormous importance in the awakening of national consciousness by a new generation of the Georgian intelligentsia, were still the preserve of a limited few and they, as yet, had not come to regard the nation as synonymous with the people that comprised it.

4.2 Georgia and the Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia

Despite the absence of journals and newspapers in the 1830s and 1840s, the commitment of a number of individuals ensured that a bridge existed between the qazarmeledi of the 1830s and the appearance in 1852 of the literary journal Tsiskari (The Dawn), which at last provided the small Georgian intelligentsia with a point of focus. As the sole Georgian journal, it was perhaps inevitable that it should become the scene of the first major intellectual rift in the ranks of the nobility and of the appearance of a radical intelligentsia that drew ~~not~~ just from Georgian patriotism and German romanticism, to which it was undoubtedly indebted, but also from Russian thinkers like Herzen and Belinsky, from the emerging populist movement and from the Italian Risorgimento and the experiences of the numerous

The new generation of Georgian youth emerged from the changing socio-economic and political conditions of Georgia and the Russian empire in the mid-19th century, when the once unchallenged authority of the aristocracy was being eroded by Russian political control, by the Armenian bourgeoisie's domination of the country's economic life and the growing tendency of the peasantry to question the role of batonqmoba. The emerging leaders of Georgia's intellectual renaissance came predominantly from those middle ranking and lower t'avadznauri families most exposed to the upheavals shaking Georgian society and it was they, rather than the more powerful t'avadebi, who suffered most from the loss of political authority to the Russians and they, too, who felt the encroachments of the bourgeoisie and the growing dissatisfaction of the peasantry.

Fully aware that traditional Georgian society was crumbling about them and that there was no way back to the "golden age" of Georgian history, Georgia's "angry young men" sought ways towards national regeneration. While sharing their parents' love of Georgia, their patriotism differed from the previous generation's, insofar as it rejected the backward-looking, romantic depiction of Georgia's past so evident in the poetry of Grigol Orbeliani as not merely non-productive, but as an active impediment to the long overdue progress of the nation.

Picking up the threads left by Simon Dodashvili and Nikoloz Barat'ashvili, among others, it is scarcely surprising that the "sons" of Georgian society should now turn towards their contemporaries in Russia for intellectual inspiration, for in the north, despite the limitations

imposed by the government on freedom of expression, Russian social thought was as vital and creative as anywhere else in Europe. In Georgia, however, where the intelligentsia remained very small and most of the population continued to live on the land, the atmosphere was far from conducive to the development of ideas. There were, of course, no institutions of higher education.

It was against this background, and confronted by the dead-weight of tradition, that young Georgians turned in increasing numbers to the universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow. Charged with a sense of moral duty to serve their people, they crossed the Caucasus with the deep conviction that through their studies they would be better able to map out their country's path to progress.

By the end of the 1850s, there were 30 Georgian students enrolled at the University of St. Petersburg,¹⁹ enough to form a separate circle and to become aware of their corporate existence and their joint tasks and responsibilities. This group formed the nucleus of the future Georgian publicists, writers, poets, historians and scientists who were soon to become known in Georgian society as the t'ergdaleulni; literally, "those who have drunk from the River T'ergi", an epithet which pointed to their Russian education, the T'ergi (or Terek) being the river that marked the border between Georgia and Russia.

In St. Petersburg, the Georgian students became actively involved in radical student politics; so much so, in fact, that 13 of their number found themselves incarcerated in tsarist prisons following student demonstrations in 1861.²⁰ Greatly influenced by the Russian populists and by

Chernyshevsky, in particular, they came to share his abhorrence of serfdom and the autocracy and his desire for social justice and equality.

Governed by a faith in the innate goodness of man, the t'ergdaleulni, like the populists, believed that if they could rid themselves of the oppressive influence of the tsarist regime and somehow harness the advances of science and technology to the creative energies of the people, they would be able to usher in a new age of democracy and progress. The fundamental task, as the failure of the 1848-49 uprisings in Europe had taught them, was not the granting of political rights, which in themselves were meaningless to the untutored masses, but the education and enlightenment of the peasantry and its material well-being. Without these, no amount of political rights could secure the equality considered so essential by the young Georgian radicals.

In a development which underlines their debt to the Russian radical intelligentsia, a number of the t'ergdaleulni began to write literature which took as its subject, not romantic yearnings for a distant past or the spiritual concerns of isolated individuals, but the very real and specific problems facing Georgian society and, in particular, the survival of batonqmoba.

"Poetry", said one contemporary Georgian poet, Spiridon Chitorelidze, "is a reflection of life, or to put it better, poetry is life itself...",²¹ a view which was supported by one of the leading figures in Georgian public life over the next 40 years, Giorgi Dseret'eli.

A writer [he said] is but one member of society, one of the individuals who taken collectively comprise that society. It is he who feels and reflects the joys and torments of society.²²

However, the distance of St. Petersburg from T'bilisi, and the fact that the sole Georgian literary journal, Tsis-kari, was in the hands of the liberal and conservative aristocracy, impeded the initial efforts of the t'ergdaleul-ni to make an impact. Nevertheless, the first example of the new, realist style of writing made its appearance in 1857 with a poem by the future founder of modern Georgian theatre, Rapiel Erist'avi, entitled Mt'khovneli msajulisadmi (The Suppliant to the Judge),²³ in which the author equated batonqmoba with slavery and questioned the morality of a system that allowed one man to regard another as his personal property. Despite the importance of this poem to the radical Georgian youth, however, the real breakthrough in Georgian literature came with the publication in 1859 of Daniel Tchonk'adze's novel, Suramis tsikhe (The Fortress of Surami), by Tsiskari. Not only did Tchonk'adze depict the iniquities and moral degradation caused by batonqmoba, he also implied that force was the only solution to the peasantry's problems, since the t'avadaznauroba was incapable of reforming itself.

An extract from the book describes the fate of a peasant boy, Osman Agha (Nodari) and his mother, following the accidental death of the boy's father.

After his death, [said Osman-Agha] everything was in turmoil in our house: first the landlord took away our vineyard on the grounds that we were no longer able to take care of it, then, one by one, he took our buffalos, and finally he ordered my mother to settle in his house as his servant... Lord, how the poor woman implored him to leave her in peace and not destroy her family, but the landlord hardly seemed to listen - 'Oh, she'll cry and cry and then she'll calm down!' That's what some of these landlords believe. They don't see us as people; they think we're incapable of love or

Osman-Agha goes on to narrate how when the landlord decided to sell him, he and his mother escaped and went into hiding in T'bilisi. Soon recaptured, however, their fortunes took an even worse turn. The landlord tied both of them to the threshing board and literally worked his mother to death. Finally, when the landlord raped the girl he loved, Osman-Agha took his revenge by killing him and his family.

The impact of this parable-like story was all the greater for the fact that it diametrically opposed the old view, recently upheld in Tsiskari by Alexandre Orbeliani, that batonqmoba was a harmonious, mutually beneficial relationship. In the ensuing furore, Tsiskari was filled with indignant letters from the outraged t'avadaznauroba, but despite their irate opposition, the volume of literature condemning the social injustices and inequalities of Georgian society continued to grow. Ilia Tchavtchavadze and Akaki Dseret'eli, both students in St. Petersburg and soon to become the most distinguished representatives of the late 19th century Georgian renaissance, both began to write critically of the established social order.

Between 1858 and 1862, the former wrote a number of poems in which he sought to make the point that batonqmoba led not just to the degradation and humiliation of the peasantry, but was the cause, too, of the nobility's moral degeneration. If Georgian society was to progress, it was essential, he argued, that serfdom be abolished. In his poem Gut'nis deda (The Ploughman), moreover, and his novel Katsia-adamiani?! (Is This Man a Human Being?!) which first

appeared in 1861, Tchavtchavadze called on the peasantry to fight for their freedom if necessary.²⁵ Akaki Dseret'eli, ^{quote} needed too, contributed to widening the gulf between the "fathers" and "sons" of Georgian society with poems like Mushuri (A Worker's Poem)²⁶ and Imeruli nanina (An Imerian Lullaby),²⁷ which focused on the hard lot of the peasantry and the injustice of a system in which one element of society existed solely through the labour of others.

On their return to Georgia in the early 1850s, the t'ergdaleulni presented a coherent opposition to the t'avadaznauroba's efforts to salvage as much of its position as it could from the impending peasant reforms. As one writer for the journal Iveria put it in an article on Georgian literature written in 1883:

Although the Georgian nation had adapted to the times, serfdom nevertheless remained immovable. Nobody had considered how it could finally be overthrown, or how the injustices of their ancient forebearers could be rectified. The general thought of the nation was confused. Wherever one turned one heard the groans of slaves in one's ears. This situation was corrected only when the new generation, returning from their studies, raised their voices openly and clandestinely against the injustice of serfdom... the 'sons' immediately employed their energies and wits to destroy the old injustices and to destroy serfdom. They tried to seize the whip and knout from over the heads of the serfs and bring them into the country as men.²⁸

However, whilst there is little, if anything, in this to distinguish the t'ergdaleulni from the Russian populists, they did differ in one crucial respect. Whereas the latter were predominantly concerned with social and class issues, the Georgian students in St. Petersburg and Moscow, while not unmindful of these, were also acutely conscious of their national identity and of a sense of duty towards the

Georgian nation. The sole purpose of their presence in Russia was to assimilate European ideas and knowledge in preparation for the struggle to put Georgia on its feet again. This sense of duty and mission was heightened by their conviction that the future hopes of the Georgian people were embodied in them, and that the knowledge they had acquired was useless unless put to the service of the nation.²⁹ Thus, at a meeting of Georgian students to discuss their participation in a large student demonstration in St. Petersburg in 1861, one of them, K'irile Lort'k'ip'-anidze, argued against participation on the grounds that they had a responsibility to the Georgian people and that their imprisonment could set back the struggle against ignorance and lethargy in Georgia.³⁰

However, while it is clear that the t'ergdaleulni were influenced by current Russian radical thought, it is also the case that in St. Petersburg they came into contact with a number of students from the other national minorities populating the Russian empire and, in particular, Polish students, whose dedication to the continuing struggle for national liberation made a lasting impression on the Georgians. Awareness, too, of the numerous national-liberation movements across Europe and perhaps also a growing sense of nostalgia for their own homeland intensified their feelings of commitment and hardened their resolve to achieve national liberation for Georgia.³¹ Ilia Tchavtchavadze, who emerged as the leader of the Georgian student body in St. Petersburg, was later to reflect the views of his companions in an article published in 1881.

Our country [he wrote] is troubled by a very different pain and is oppressed by completely

different worries... our contemporary life demands something completely different, cries out for something completely different... and that 'something different' is the resurrection of our fallen identity, the need to put Georgia on its feet again and defend it against every conceivable danger... the present children of Georgia have no more important task.³²

The t'ergdaleulni saw no contradiction between this and their aims for social reform, were not burdened by doubts that emphasis on reunification and autonomy might perhaps interfere with their other goals of liberating the serfs and ending the socio-economic and political domination of the t'avadaznauroba. Under conditions in which the very survival of the nation was held to be under threat, in which the country had been relegated to the status of a colonial outpost of the Russian empire and in which the Georgian language and culture were continually denigrated and gradually being excluded from the official life of the country, from the administration, from the courts, from the educational institutions and even from the Georgian aristocratic circles participating in the high society of T'bilisi court life, the t'ergdaleulni argued that the national question must be put before all else. They were not, of course, the first Georgians to attach such importance to the national question, but where they differed from their predecessors was the way in which they perceived the question. For them, it was not simply a matter of how to go about achieving independence from the Russians, or how to restore the Bagratid dynasty, but of how to lay the basis for the nation's revival. Central to this approach and the most significant point of departure from past formulations of the question in Georgia, was their identification of the nation not with its kings and ruling classes, but with the people as a whole,

with their language, their customs and habits and with their social and economic life. In the writings and poetry of men like Akaki Dseret'eli, the terms eri (nation) and khalkhi (people) became almost synonymous.³³ Thus the t'ergdaleulni had no interest whatsoever in perpetuating a way of life in which the creative energies of the peasantry were stifled by the old, traditional, patriarchal social structure. Their desire was for a just, democratic and equal society, in which the creative energies and talents of the people could be utilised to the full. Looking back on the 1860s, another of the most prominent figures of the Georgian radical intelligentsia, Iakob Gogebashvili, noted:

All our lives we have been sincere supporters of equality of rights. We hated any kind of domination and opposed it. We hated the domination of the aznauroba, of the bureaucracy, of the bourgeoisie... In the newspaper Droeba we printed an article in which we expressed the view that until the land was completely owned by those who worked it, neither universal prosperity, equality or freedom could be established in mankind.³⁴

It is apparent, therefore, that the same social attitudes inculcated during the years spent in Russia's universities also informed the t'ergdaleulni's understanding of the national question and that within the Georgian context they regarded national and social issues as inextricably intertwined. Thus to achieve liberation and to overthrow what they felt was a redundant and decrepit social system, it was first necessary to abolish batonqmob. Only when freed from its restrictive influence would Georgian society be able to achieve prosperity and national integration, only then would the peasants "come into the country as men".

However, the emancipation of the serfs, whilst of crucial importance, still left Georgia subject to the

chauvinist, colonialist policies of a government that was, at best, indifferent to the needs and aspirations of the Georgian people. In these circumstances, the t'ergdaleulni, who shared the view of the nation as a natural unit which provided its members with the best means for fulfilling their potential, came increasingly to regard the right to national self-government as a natural extension of the individual's democratic rights to the embodiment of their collective spirit, the nation.

Mankind [wrote Akaki Dseret'eli] consists of various nations and nationalities, each of which must contribute its piece, its creative share to the treasure house of humanity. An individual who does not, first and foremost, serve his native people, cannot be of any use to humanity.³⁵

Since, however, Georgia's size and relative socio-economic backwardness militated against independent revolutionary action, the Georgian intelligentsia came to regard its main task as the spread of education to the masses and through it, the development of national consciousness in preparation for national liberation.³⁶ Meanwhile, in the absence of any independent means of overthrowing the tsarist regime in Georgia, the t'ergdaleulni identified their struggle for national liberation with the struggle of the revolutionary opposition in Russia to overthrow the tsar.

Among the Georgian radical intelligentsia there does not appear to have been any specifically anti-Russian sentiment, but rather hostility and resentment towards the chauvinistic policies practised by the tsarist regime against the national minorities. However, the Georgians drew a sharp distinction between the representatives of the current administration and what they referred to as "young Russia".

We have a high regard for our fraternity, unity and friendship with the peoples of Russia [wrote Akaki Dseret'eli]. It is true that among the Russians there are those who have no sympathy for our fraternal union, but there is also young Russia, with whom we wish to progress arm in arm, not just for the realisation of our national ideals, but also for our social ideals...³⁷

This conception of a divided Russia had a considerable bearing too on their notion of national liberation, for they did not necessarily understand this to mean independence, but rather the right of the Georgian people to choose their own path to progress. As part of the tsarist empire, of course, that right was denied, but as part of a society in which democracy, freedom and equality were to be the guiding precepts, it would have to be acknowledged. The t'ergdaleulni had no desire for independence if by achieving it, they simply became more vulnerable to pressure from repressive regimes in Turkey and Persia. What they were seeking was a guarantee for Georgian national rights as part of an equal and mutually beneficial relationship with a democratic Russia. As an article in Droeba expressed it in 1877:

Georgia should not be whipped up into the body and organism of Russia like some inanimate source of food, but should stand alongside her, as a vigorous, healthy entity marching along the road of progress together with Russia.³⁸

While the exact nature of this relationship does not appear to have been formulated in detail at any time, and account has to be taken of undoubted differences of opinion among the t'ergdaleulni, Giorgi Dseret'eli at least gave an idea of the sort of relationship envisaged in an article for kvali (The furrow), written in 1895. At home he called for: Cap

the granting of every individual private liberty and control over our domestic affairs, [but in foreign affairs] joint endeavour on behalf of the whole state and the defence and consolidation of the state through mutual assistance.³⁹

Having formulated their views in the revolutionary atmosphere of Russian university life in the late 1850s and early 1860s, this first generation of Georgian students now began to return home to face the problem of putting their ideas and theories into practice. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, apparently unable to control his impatience to return to T'bilisi any longer, was one of the first of the t'ergdal-eulni to leave, abandoning his studies in the middle of his final year. Standing before the Caucasian mountains for the first time since leaving Georgia in 1857, he contemplated how he would react to his native land after four years' absence in Russia, and perhaps more importantly, how it would react to him.

How will I respond to my country and how will it respond to me? I wondered what new things I could describe to it and what it would tell me. Who knows, I thought, perhaps my country will turn its back on me, rejecting me as planted and reared in foreign soil? On the other hand, since I do at least bear my country's ineffable stamp within me, it won't turn its back. But what will I do if my country follows me and tells me of its griefs, its sorrows and its joys, its hope and despair? What if I have grown unaccustomed to its language and can no longer understand...⁴⁰

This, then, was his greatest fear, that after so much time abroad he would be out of touch with Georgian reality and would no longer be attuned to the aspirations of Georgian society.

4.3 The T'ergdaleulni and the Language Issue

Ilia Tchavtchavadze's return to Georgia in 1861 coincided with the enactment of the emancipation of the serfs in European Russia and the movement of the reform issue to the forefront of Georgian political life. Tchavtchavadze, however, chose to commence his career as a political activist and publicist not with a direct attack on batonqmoba, but by concentrating on the deceptively innocuous issue of language.

Like all the t'ergdaleulni who followed him back to Georgia, Tchavtchavadze was disturbed by the predominant lack of awareness of Georgian history and of the nation's cultural roots, particularly among the elite of Georgian society. Russification of proper names was, it seemed to him, gradually being accompanied by Russification of the Georgian language and a growing disregard or even disdain for Georgian custom and tradition. For Tchavtchavadze, with his belief in the nation as a synthesis of its past history, culture and language and his commitment to the national regeneration of Georgia, this was an indication of serious degeneration. In his own words,

The prostration, debasement and dilution of the nation begins at the point when it forgets its history, when it loses all recollection of its past... neglect of one's history portends the spiritual and material disintegration, destruction and complete undoing of the nation. The past is the dead basis of the present, just as the present is the platform for the future. These three periods representing three different moments in the life of the nation are bound together in such a way that one without the other is unimaginable, incomprehensible and unrecognisable...⁴¹

It was Tchavtchavadze's resolve to awaken Georgian national consciousness that led him to write a review in the

fourth edition of Tsiskari in 1861 entitled, "A few words on Prince Revaz Shalvis dze Erist'avi's translation of Kozlov's 'The Madwoman'", in which he presented his readers with a critique not just, or even mainly, of Revaz Erist'avi's translation of Kozlov, but also of the style and content of contemporary Georgian literature. It was a deliberate challenge to the older generation of liberal and conservative aristocrats and an attempt to stir up the turbid waters of Georgian intellectual life. Tchavtchavadze had chosen his ground carefully, for appreciating that language and the spread of literacy were going to be crucial to any attempt to nurture a sense of national self-awareness among the population, he realised that Georgian literature had to be wrested from the exclusive control of the t'avadznauroba.⁴² As in many traditional societies literature remained the private domain of an educated elite, which scarcely concerned itself with the interests of the majority of the population. In Georgia, however, the problem of illiteracy was compounded by the fact that literature continued to be written in an artificial, archaic ecclesiastical style which bore little relationship to the current usage of the language.⁴³

Whilst the editorial board of Tsiskari, in its role as guardian of Georgian literary standards, regarded the preservation of this style as a question of preserving the purity of the language, the t'ergdaleulni, with Tchavtchavadze as their foremost spokesman, saw it as another bastion of narrow, class privilege and, as such, an obstacle to the education and enlightenment of the people and the forward march of the nation. In their view, the spread of literacy

was crucial to the struggle for national consciousness and to awareness of a shared history and fate.

...philology and history [wrote Tchavtchavadze] go side by side and interact with each other, because the life of the nation is revealed and illuminated in its language, which accurately reflects every change in its fortunes and mode of existence.⁴⁴

Consequently, any literary form that simply marked time and failed to reflect the broader social and economic changes occurring within a society was, they maintained, an impediment to progress. The literature of a nation, like the language itself, must belong to all the people and depict its life, its shortcomings, and its aspirations. Echoing the sentiments of his colleagues, Tchavtchavadze maintained that;

The language of man grows and develops like an individual personality and to the extent that it grows, it changes, just as we, when we grow, change; it often happens that laws which were once essential turn out to be worthless later; therefore, the new language differs from the old in the same way as a youth differs from an old man.⁴⁵

Thus Tchavtchavadze's critique addressed itself both to the style and content of Revaz Erist'avi's translation and through it, to the style and content of Georgian literature in general. But it is also clear that the t'ergdaleulni saw more at stake here than just literary standards. It was their opinion that the future viability of the Georgian nation was in the balance, that its capacity to survive rested on the ability of the language to adjust to the times and to reflect and be able to express the complexities of modern life.

The development of the nation [wrote Iakob Gogebashvili] is directly dependent on the development of the language... if the language slips back and degenerates, the ability to reason declines, weakens and is impoverished.⁴⁶

To which he added:

Only those peoples who reason and express themselves in their native tongue are able to advance along the road to progress.⁴⁷

The review precipitated a furious response from the Georgian aristocracy, not least because a man as young as Tchavtchavadze had had the temerity to criticise his elders in such uncompromising terms. Readers of Tsiskari complained of his "impudence".⁴⁸ But the nature of the attack was far too serious to be dismissed so lightly. The t'avadaznauroba, or its leading representatives, at least, recognised that the t'ergdaleulni constituted a threat not merely to their cultural hegemony, but also to their social standing. The egalitarian message of the t'ergdaleulni and their criticism of the inertia caused by batonqmoba led the "fathers" of Georgian society to describe them as renegades who had betrayed their native culture for the sake of an education in Russia, to which they responded that patriotism does not consist of blind admiration of one's own country, regardless of its faults, but the recognition of those faults and the struggle to correct them. Yes, they replied, turning the tables on their critics, we were in Russia,

...but we did not come away with a knowledge of art... we did not learn to judge human worth and morality by ranks and decorations, we do not consider bigotry and grovelling to be supreme virtues, but hold dear the interests of the masses and not the idle minority; we are not godless, it is just that our god is the god of equality and brotherhood and not of servility and obsequiousness, the god of the workers and the oppressed and

The growing divide over the language issue and the steady return of Georgian students from the Russian universities encouraged Tchavtchavadze to consider starting a separate journal in which the t'ergdaleulni would be able to express their views without hindrance from the editors of Tsiskari and as freely as was possible under tsarist censorship laws. The decision to go ahead was announced in October 1862 and the first edition of the new monthly journal Sak'art'velos Moambe (The Georgian Herald) appeared in January 1863.⁵⁰

Although primarily a literary journal which set itself the task of revising the accepted norms of Georgian literary practice, Sak'art'velos Moambe included numerous articles on historical and economic themes which concentrated on the two fundamental issues of raising national self-consciousness and the need to oppose batonqmoba. But undoubtedly its most significant service to the t'ergdaleulni was its provision of a focal point around which they could develop their ideas and from which they could counter the arguments of the Tsiskari generation.

As editor, Tchavtchavadze harboured no illusions about his journal's ability single-handedly to transform Georgian society. What he did hope, however, was that it would help expand Georgians' consciousness of their national identity, lead towards the reinvigoration of Georgian intellectual life and generate the nucleus of an intelligentsia that would be committed to his own ideas of progress, democracy and social equality. An article in Sak'art'velos Moambe claimed:

Our concern is with the life of the people of Georgia. Its improvement is our first and last wish.⁵¹

And in the first edition of the journal Tchavtchavadze wrote:

Every man who does not cover his eyes with blinkers sees that the life we had yesterday no longer exists today, that it is changing and advancing forward, bringing new ways with it. Everything changes under its great influence. What yesterday man thought to be an eternal truth and to be respected as an unavoidable necessity, we often come to regard as a crude mistake today, and it surprises us that our predecessors could have believed that such obvious stupidity was an eternal truth. The t'ergdaleulni are attempting to establish the essential need to change our existing life and to explain it through clear scientific evidence. They believe that life is growing more healthy 'with the assistance of knowledge and science, which are themselves the fruits of life'.

Ilia Tchavtchavadze aside, most of the figures who were soon to lead the Georgian intellectual revival of the late 19th century, Akaki Dseret'eli, Kirile Lort'k'ip'anidze, Niko Nikoladze, Giorgi Dseret'eli and Iakob Gogegashvili among them, gathered around the journal in a loose grouping that came to be known as Pirveli Dasi, or the First Group. They did not constitute a formally organised body, but rather, consisted of a number of individuals frequently holding divergent views, but who, nevertheless, were in agreement that the most immediate tasks facing them were the need to mount a strong opposition to batonqmoba, to awaken national self-awareness and to bring the benefits of education and science to the people. These, in their opinion, were the key to national revival.

The comparison with the generation rift in Russian society which the debate between the fathers and sons in

Georgia inevitably brings to mind is, nevertheless, misleading insofar as it conceals the extent of the task facing the t'ergdaleulni. Whereas in Russia the intellectual debates and developments of the 1830s and 1840s prepared much of the ground for the emergence of the so-called "sons", in Georgia there had been very little autonomous development of intellectual life since the effectual silencing of the t'avadaznauroba after the 1832 conspiracy. Thus as well as facing problems of socio-economic backwardness, poverty, ignorance, widespread illiteracy and the coolness of the tsarist administration towards any attempts to improve literacy in the Georgian language, the t'ergdaleulni also had to contend with the often incomprehending opposition of a traditionally-minded aristocracy that saw in their efforts to revitalise Georgian society only a betrayal of a way of life that had survived for hundreds of years. This sense of betrayal felt by the "fathers" towards the iconoclasm of the radical Georgian youth is reflected in a poem by Grigol Orbeliani written in 1874 entitled Pasukhi shvilt'a (An Answer to the Sons) in which he wrote:

They have arrived.. and now what?...
We have been completely let down...
Woe to our hopes... woe to your return!...
We said, now light will be shed on our land!
But the unfortunates,
The pure hearts,
Who went to study have been corrupted.
Despair
and unbelief
have been planted
deep in their pure hearts;
-What use have we for prayer?
Why do we need God?
Our intellect is our god!⁵³

Although the t'ergdaleulni were temporarily set back by the closure of Sak'art'velos Moambe in January 1864 after

just one year in print, the emancipation of the serfs in T'bilisi Gubernia the following November gave rise to a fresh surge of optimism for the future. The reaction of most of the radical intelligentsia was almost ecstatic. Whatever its limitations, and as yet few paid much heed to these, emancipation had removed the bonds tying the serf to landlord and thus opened the way for Georgian peasants to acquire their own land.

The abolition of batonqmoba [wrote Tchavtchavadze in Droebe in 1867] has not only changed the position of the landlords and peasants, but that of the whole of society... in my opinion, we should add that batonqmoba did not harm these two classes alone, but was a disease that hindered the success of the entire country, of every one of its inhabitants.⁵⁴

With the stultifying influence of batonqmoba on Georgia's economic developments now removed, the way was open, they thought, for the initiative of the Georgian peasantry to inspire the country's economic recovery. Nothing was more important than this, for without a sound economic base, there could be no end to poverty, no universal literacy, no cultural advance and no national revival. With the reform appearing to hold out so much, one can understand Giorgi Dseret'eli's optimism.

Do you know [he asked his readers] where I found my courage? In the liberation of the peasants. Yes, from that time when our brothers regained their long-lost justice, from that day I found a brighter, stronger and more just source of life.⁵⁵

Sharing the abhorrence of the Russian Populists for capitalism, the t'ergdaleulni maintained that the surest way to Georgia's recovery was through careful management of the country's agricultural resources. Thus although they

in the future, the imagery conjured up by reports of landless peasants, poverty, disease and poor-houses from the most advanced capitalist state, Britain, induced them to seek ways of avoiding the capitalist mode of production altogether. For the t'ergdaleulni too, there was an additional fear that rapid industrialisation might destroy the cultural roots of the Georgian nation. Ilia Tchavtchavadze argued that:

The first creators of the wealth of a nationality and of a nation were the plough and the soil alone, and they will continue to be the sole creators... The well-being of political and economic life depends on these two factors.⁵⁶

To which he added

Our economic strength continues to be the country and agriculture... our complete attention must be focused purely on the countryside, must belong only to the countryside and if not for ever, at least for the time being.⁵⁷

Moreover, the t'ergdaleulni still believed in the possibility of all social classes pulling together for the greater benefit of society and saw in the development of capitalism a further threat to the unity of the nation. The answer, they felt, to these problems lay in the creation of cooperatives of agricultural associations. One author for the new journal of the t'ergdaleulni, Droeba,⁵⁸ maintained that they were ideally suited to Georgian conditions. In the largely mistaken belief that communal production was a distinctive feature of Georgian agriculture, he thought that associations could increase productivity as well as prevent the fragmentation of the land into thousands of small holdings.⁵⁹ Associations, would help mend class rivalries

and provide for the moral and technical education regarded as so essential to national renaissance. As another writer for Droeba put it:

When both the peasants and the t'avadznauroba are accepted into the associations, then the unity and trust which are essential to economic success will spread between them. They will become more familiar with each other's needs, will come to share common interests and will in this way quickly achieve the best from life and from education.⁶⁰

As is clear from the above, the t'ergdaleulni did not ignore the need for discussion of the country's economic problems and requirements. Given their relationship with the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, of course, it would have been unusual if they had. Nevertheless, in the period immediately after the abolition of batongmoba in T'bilisi Gubernia and into the early years of the 1870s, their emphasis was primarily on education and on the task of awakening national self-consciousness.

4.4 Enlightenment and National Self-Consciousness

The attitude of the t'ergdaleulni in this respect is understandable if one bears in mind that whatever their reservations about the inadequacies of the peasant reforms, they believed that the way had been opened for a breakthrough to a better, more just, more equal and democratic society. It might take more or less time, but the cracks were visibly appearing in the edifice of the old social structure. Furthermore, as Georgia's socio-economic development still lagged behind even that of Russia's, and as they had identified their country's future with the success of the revolution within Russia itself, there seemed

little sense in adopting more precipitate policies. However, whilst they may have been optimistic about the impact of the emancipatory laws on the socio-economic development of Georgia, the t'ergdaleulni were genuinely concerned that the Russian government was threatening the very existence of Georgia and Georgian culture. At a time when the avowed policy of the tsarist regime in the Transcaucasus was to assimilate all the indigenous peoples of the area into the mid-stream of Russian culture, it was therefore argued that there was an urgent need to strengthen the awareness of the component elements of the Georgian population of their shared cultural, historical and linguistic heritage. To some extent, this purpose was already being served by the growing economic integration of the country, but there was the danger here that as the native population came into closer contact with the administrative centres of Russian power in the Transcaucasus, so they would also become more susceptible to Russification.

That Georgians had genuine cause for concern was made clear by a meeting of school directors held in T'bilisi in 1871 to discuss the recent education reform in European Russia and make recommendations for the Transcaucasus. In a demonstration of chauvinist disregard for the indigenous cultures of the area, the meeting resolved to further downgrade the teaching of the native languages:

The teaching of these languages [proclaimed the director of the T'bilisi teachers' training institute, Zakharov] which possess neither their own literature nor grammar, would only be harmful to the schools, which scarcely have enough time to get through the existing courses.⁶¹

To which, with disarming frankness, Ilyashenko, the regional inspector of schools added:

Overall, the solicitude of the government for the teaching of native languages is scarcely opportune, even in its present form, and perhaps even paralyses the success of the Russian language. In any case, by appointing teachers of native languages with official rights to institutions of learning, and by rewarding them with ranks and pensions, we are not moving towards assimilation, which one would imagine should be our main aim; rather, such respect on the part of the authorities for the native languages increases their importance in the eyes of the local population and gives legitimacy to the possibility of their managing with only their own languages in public life, ignoring the state language.⁶²

Ilyashenko's qualms concerning the government's apparent "solicitude" for the native languages of the Transcaucasus stemmed from the official view adopted in the 1840s that not only was it important for Russian officials to be able to understand the languages, customs and traditions of the local populations, but that the latter would be better equipped to learn Russian if they first had a sound grasp of the grammatical structure of their own languages. But such pedagogical concerns aside, the central thrust of this policy, the ultimate absorption of the native peoples, was in complete harmony with the views expressed by Ilyashenko. They differed solely on the means to be employed. However, viewed from Georgian, Armenian or Azeri eyes, even the arrangements of the 1840s and 1850s left much to be desired, for although Georgian was a compulsory part of the educational curriculum for all nationalities, teaching was for the most part conducted in Russian. Not only did this severely disadvantage non-Russian pupils who had to compete in classes and exams with native Russians, it also

discouraged attendance at schools at all.⁶³ A report from the inspector of schools for T'elavi district written in 1863 illustrates some of the problems:

In the town of T'elavi generally all the inhabitants speak Georgian. Even the Armenians speak almost nothing but Georgian, with the exception of two or three families which are trying to maintain their native language... Consequently, when the pupils leave school at two o'clock, they don't hear a single sound of Russian as almost none of them has any contacts with Russians. There is only the period from eight o'clock till two - the time they are at school. Here they just listen to the teacher who explains everything in Russian and asks them questions [in Russian] about the subjects taught them. But the pupils answer the teacher [in Russian] with difficulty and with terrible mistakes... The pupils are made to learn the corrections to their mistakes by heart, but as soon as they leave the school they forget them and the next day the same story is repeated all over again.⁶⁴

The inspector's solution was not to give consideration to teaching in Georgian, but to ban the use of Georgian in conversation within the school. This, of course, was anathema to the radical intelligentsia, who regarded the spread of education in the vernacular as vital to Georgia's hopes of national renaissance. The use of Russian as the medium of instruction, however, downgraded the status of Georgian, set back the task of improving literary standards and acted as a direct impediment to educational attainment among the non-Russian population. Forced even in primary school to use a language they could not understand, Georgian children lost interest in learning.

Throughout the 1860s, moreover, the predicament of the Georgian language grew more critical as the view that its study hindered assimilation gathered support in official circles and in 1867, it ceased to be compulsory for all but Georgians. In the T'bilisi Classical gymnasium the number

of hours devoted to Georgian fell from 19 to 11 a week, whilst the number assigned to Russian rose to 35. Outside the gymnasium, in T'bilisi's primary schools, Georgian and Armenian could now only be studied if the local population could pay the teachers itself.⁶⁵ Perhaps as a consequence of these developments, the percentage of Georgians among the pupils enrolled in T'bilisi's schools declined from 39 per cent in 1859 to 19 per cent in 1871 and a mere 13.7 per cent in 1878.⁶⁶

Following the recommendations of the directors' meeting in 1871, Georgian was effectively removed from the list of official subjects with the ruling in November 1873 that native languages should only be taught in secondary schools and progymnasia, if those desiring instruction paid for it themselves.⁶⁷ Consequently, the status of Georgian language teachers, like that of the subject itself, went into serious decline, so that in 1877 the solitary Georgian teacher at the Technical Gymnasium was paid at a rate of 50 kopecks an hour, whilst teachers in other subjects received on average between three and five roubles.⁶⁸ According to Droeba, the gymnasium had stopped teaching Georgian altogether by 1878 and in other institutions, of which the Aleksandre Teachers' Training Institute was the prime example, the position of the language had reached such a low point that even reading a Georgian book or newspaper was regarded as a punishable offence.⁶⁹

Although directly opposed to one another, both the Russophile administration and the t'ergdaleulni fully appreciated the importance of education. It had become, as Ilyashenko intimated in his comments at the school director's meeting in 1871, a critical weapon in the respective

struggles for national self-awareness and pride on the one hand and Russification and complete assimilation on the other. The t'ergdaleulni maintained that Georgia's prospects of national liberation were to a large degree dependent upon the extent to which education was extended to the mass of the population, for only in this way could the peasantry be eased from the traditional, paternalistic way of life which, for better or worse, had served it for centuries. Only through knowledge and literacy could the peasantry be persuaded of the benefits of science and come to a closer appreciation of its own national identity.

Who does not know [wrote Akaki Dseret'eli] that the happiness of the people depends on its level of consciousness, that without education and without enlightenment, it will be impossible to improve its life, to develop or advance. It will, in other words, be impossible to achieve progress.⁷⁰

But despite their commitment, with the state apparatus lined up against them, they faced an almost insuperable task. Thus their response to the developments of the 1860s and 1870s was muted by the censors and was, in the main, compelled to focus on pedagogical arguments stressing the disastrous effect of government educational policy on the development of the local population. Children were being hopelessly disadvantaged by having to study in an alien language and, consequently, the country's need for expertise and knowledge was being ignored. Nevertheless, such was the inefficiency of the censor, that articles masked in Aesopian language or which, under the guise of describing situations in foreign countries, drew unstated but clearly recognisable analogies with the situation nearer at hand, occasionally appeared in the press. Such was one article printed in

Droebe in 1876, taken from a pamphlet published in Paris in 1869 describing the struggle of the Cretan national liberation movement against the Turks. That the article intended the Cretan nationalists to be understood as Georgians and the Turkish government as tsarist is patently clear, but so poor was the state of the relationship between the Russian and Ottoman empires at the time, that it was taken at face value and allowed to slip past the censors. In a passage closely reflecting the divergence of views over education between the t'ergdaleulni and the Russian administration, the author claimed:

They [the Cretan nationalists] saw education as the prime means of securing popular liberation, particularly as the Turkish government also favoured education, though of a type that would serve its own purposes, whilst the patriots sought to direct education towards serving the people. Consequently, they clashed over this question. On the one side stood might and the axe, whilst on the other stood reason and intelligence.⁷¹

Now that the administration had made clear its commitment to the assimilation of the indigenous peoples of the Transcaucasus, the onus of defending the national culture and language rested predominantly on the shoulders of the radical intelligentsia. With Russian established as the language of tuition in public schools and Georgian now only taught on a voluntary basis, it was clear that the language was genuinely threatened. Under these conditions, the t'ergdaleulni came to regard the creation of a well-educated, patriotic intelligentsia as its more immediate task. The priority was to ensure that the elite of Georgian society was well-educated, not because its members were any more deserving of a good education than the rest, but

because as yet they alone had the means to acquire an education. Once educated, however, it was hoped that the Georgian intelligentsia would put itself at the service of the people.

Our new Georgians [wrote Droeba in 1866] must not distance themselves from the people, but should live among them and inspire their children; they should inspire them with words and with the pen, both from afar and face to face, they should become the teachers of the people.⁷²

Six years later an article by Sergi Meskhi, the editor of Droeba called for an end to the sterile and debilitating arguments between the fathers and the sons of the Georgian intelligentsia. There were simply not enough educated Georgians for them to be able to afford the luxury of debating whose was the greatest contribution to the national cause, when the future existence of the nation was simultaneously being undermined by government policy.

Our country is currently in such a state [wrote Meskhi] that it has become essential for every Georgian to lend a hand to public affairs and help put them on the right path. Every member of society should do everything in his or her power to assist our society.⁷³

Akaki Dseret'eli was not as disposed as Sergi Meskhi to let bygones be bygones, but he too called on all Georgians to unite to preserve their national identity. Explaining the differences between the "old" and "new" generations, he argued that these were essentially differences of attitude, not of age. Thus anyone who sought to keep abreast of the socio-economic developments within society and who sought to serve the common good, belonged to the new generation, whilst those who thought only of themselves and identified

society's interests with their own narrow class interests, belonged to the old generation. Dseret'eli was particularly critical of those of his contemporaries who fitted this latter category, regarding them as useless parasites on the nation. When one's country was threatened, he proclaimed, one has no right to personal indulgence, but is duty-bound to come to its defence. He wrote:

...whosoever has not fulfilled his duty has no right to the love of his mother, his sisters or his wife. It is a disgrace for a man to rest his head on his mother's knee, embrace his sisters, or sit beside his wife, when our brothers are spilling their blood in selfless struggle. Do you not see the predicament of our country?... I cannot wait. I must hurry to where my duty takes me... victory or death.⁷⁴

In the immediate term, therefore, the t'ergdaleulni argued that the intelligentsia, as the most conscious element in the Georgian population, must play the leading role in both protecting the national culture from internal and external threat and in guiding the peasantry towards a time when it would be able to play a fuller, more active and aware part in the life of the nation. By doing this, however, the intelligentsia would be merely fulfilling its debts to the peasantry, for as Meskhi reminded his readers:

What have we done, we the educated, for our people? By whose labours have we been reared? Have we returned even a third of what the people have given us?⁷⁵

Georgians, however, had to take the initiative by establishing their own primary and secondary schools in the towns and villages and by creating a cadre of well-qualified teachers who could teach in the native language, help standardise Georgian grammar and bring literacy to the peasantry.

At stake was the continued existence of the nation, demanding of every Georgian unqualified support of the national cause. Thus, when in 1878 Niko Nikoladze, a prominent figure among the t'ergdaleulni, but one who maintained closer links with Russia than most,⁷⁶ put forward the case that one could serve one's country equally well wherever one lived, and that it did not matter what language Georgians studied in, so long as they studied, Droeba's editor responded with a lengthy and vigorous criticism, the urgency of which was undoubtedly caused by the fact that these claims came from within the ranks of the radical intelligentsia itself. Whilst by the late 1870s differences had emerged among them about the future social organisation of the nation, there was still broad agreement on cultural issues. Nikoladze, however, threatened to undermine this unity and to weaken Georgian resistance to Russification. Meskhi's reply again emphasised the t'ergdaleulni's conviction that all educated Georgians were duty-bound to serve their country, and that they had a debt to repay to the working people.⁷⁷ However, it was on the language question that Nikoladze incurred Droeba's greatest wrath, because it was precisely on this issue that the t'ergdaleulni had placed their greatest emphasis and injected the bulk of their effort.

Nikoladze's arguments, claimed Meskhi, would not only ensure further decline in Georgian linguistic standards, but would also exclude most of the population from the educational process. What sense could there possibly be in educating a child in an incomprehensible language, when it was possible to teach in a language he or she could understand? Already, Georgia's best educated young men wrote and

expressed themselves better in Russian than Georgian, thus raising the very real possibility that the Georgian intelligentsia would soon no longer be able to communicate with its own people and would lose touch with its own roots.⁷⁸

However, whilst this difference of opinion emerged from within the ranks of the t'ergdaleulni, it is clear that Nikoladze's was a minority view. A considerable part of the former's efforts were, in fact, directed towards the creation of privately run schools sponsored by the Georgian community and in which the medium of instruction was Georgian. Sponsorship of this kind was considered particularly important since, unlike the Armenian community which was predominantly concentrated in the urban centres and had considerable funds at its disposal, the Georgian urban population was mostly poor and the t'avadaznauroba was scattered across the country and often far from the nearest school.

In 1877, a joint statement of the T'bilisi Gubernia t'avadaznauroba indicated its readiness to put aside a definite sum of money every year to provide for the teaching of children from impoverished noble families, and at the end of the same year, the gubernia's t'avadaznauroba set up its own society whose express purpose was the establishment of its own schools and the provision of material aid to talented pupils at other schools. Funds were provided by private donations, membership fees and contributions from the t'avadaznauroba bank.⁷⁹

The T'bilisi t'avadaznauroba school was opened in 1879 with two classes, expanding in 1881 to three. The emphasis in these was on acquiring a sound knowledge of Georgian before progressing to learning Russian, the importance of

which was, nevertheless, stressed.⁸⁰ By the turn of the century, the school taught all eight secondary classes, had 665 pupils from all the social classes and in 1902 had to turn down 500 applications for lack of space and staff.⁸¹ Referring to the school, Ilia Tchavtchavadze proclaimed:

Georgian society should give its whole-hearted support... if it does not wish Georgia's name and all trace of its existence to be swept like dust from the face of the earth.⁸²

However, the t'ergdaleulni did not confine their activities to the promotion of teaching in the native language, but sought to use it to convey to Georgians of all backgrounds information which would inspire them towards patriotic love for their native land and a sense of spiritual unity to match the country's advancing economic unity. A document belonging to the Society for the Spread of Literacy among Georgians, founded in 1879,⁸³ makes the same point:

Although our society calls itself a society for literacy, it would be a great mistake to think that all its founders had in mind was the teaching of reading and writing. The sincere wish of the founders was primarily the creation of a school which would act as the hearth of our culture. Culture represents the country's broad spiritual and material development; it is, in other words, the union of all forces which create the possibility of the people's independence.⁸⁴

Writing about the 1860s Ilia Tchavtchavadze noted that one of the greatest achievements of the radical intelligentsia had been to bring the concept of the nation to the forefront of political discussion and reinvest the word mamuli, which had come to be used in the limited sense of an "estate", with its original meaning of "homeland". This, he maintained, was symbolic of the gradual restoration of

Georgian unity after centuries of division into petty princedoms. As a result of this resurgence of interest in the nation, it was scarcely surprising, he felt, that Georgia's past, present and future should be becoming major subjects of research. The Georgian intelligentsia became increasingly concerned to familiarise itself with the country's historical sources. Their pedagogical and literary use of history was predominantly didactic; they saw history as a means to teach coming generations how to learn from the failures and successes of the past and prepare for the future, and a means also to teach them the supreme virtue of loyalty to the nation. Previous Georgian historiography did not, in their opinion fulfil any of these functions.

Our cursed history [wrote Ilia Tchavtchavadze to Davit' Erist'avi] ...it's just the history of kings and wars; the nation is nowhere to be seen... the people as the active element in history languish in the shadows.⁸⁵

Davit' Bak'radze, the outstanding Georgian historian of the 19th century, made a conscious effort to shift history from its previous emphasis on the dynastic interests of the Bagratids and the t'avadaznauroba towards what he argued should be its true concern, the nation.

History [he wrote] ...should be real and complete, an epoch by epoch picture of the nation. History has a duty to define where and how the nation was established, what places it has passed through, what culture it has brought to the country of its settlement, what influence the country's location and characteristics have had on its type, character and orientation, what relationships it has had with other peoples and what traces they have left in its way of life...⁸⁶

A marked and scarcely surprising feature of the expanded interest in Georgia's history was the growing prevalence of historical themes in literature. As with most of the scholarly works on the nation's past written over the same period, the tendency of the writers concerned was not to present a dry depiction of the events in chronological order, but to interpret moments from the country's past and use them to draw lessons for the present and the future. In this way, many writers were able to use history and historical events or personalities to inculcate national sentiment and patriotism among their readers, without incurring the disapproval of the censors. Through the use of heroic figures drawn both from Georgia's real and mythical past or, as in the case of Akaki Dseret'eli's Sizmari (The Dream),⁸⁷ from the pages of Shot'a Rust'aveli's epic poem Vep'khvistsqaosani (The Knight in the Panther's Skin), these writers endeavoured to set the moral and patriotic standards for the nation. Thus Elguja, the hero of Alexandre Qazbegi's book of the same name, stands out as a model of modesty, courage, selflessness and resolution, a free spirit prepared to sacrifice his life in the struggle against oppression of any kind, be it from Russian chinovniki or the morally corrupt slave dealer and clan elder, Gogi Chop'ikashvili.⁸⁸ Iakob Gogebashvili, too, besides his activities as a publicist, inspector of schools and author of school text books,⁸⁹ was, in his capacity as editor of the children's journal Nobat'i (The Gift), the author of several historical stories in which above all else, he emphasised the themes of unification and national revival.⁹⁰

Despite complaints about the complacency of Georgian youth towards the nation and its survival, the t'ergdaleulni

had already begun to make an impression on educated society by the 1870s. Droeba, for instance, commented in 1871 on the growing number of teachers and writers researching into folklore and described the annual mass spring exodus of the urban intelligentsia to the villages to tap the rich oral tradition of the Georgian peasantry.⁹¹ However, whilst encouraged by this burgeoning desire to ensure the survival of poetry and legend passed from generation to generation for centuries, many t'ergdaleulni, Ilia Tchavtchavadze among them, were concerned that despite its undoubted contribution to the language, folklore alone could do little to help understand the origin, history and development of the nation and that more emphasis should be placed on disciplines like linguistics, archeology and ethnography which, they argued, merited equal if not greater stress. The latter was regarded as being of particular importance. No history of the country could be complete without a thorough study of the people's economic and juridical life, of its customs and its traditions.⁹² In this respect, it is perhaps worth noting that although there were Georgians who specialised in particular fields, many of the radical intelligentsia led very wide-ranging intellectual lives, making forays into various and often largely unrelated areas of research. If there was a common theme, it was simply that one way or another, they were all linked towards furthering the interests of the Georgian nation.

Undoubtedly, the tsarist regime was right to see nationalist motives in the t'ergdaleulni's efforts to sharpen the consciousness of the Georgian people of their own corporate existence. The young radicals of this period

believed themselves involved in a struggle for survival against the administration's blatant attempts to obliterate all traces of a separate Georgian identity and, as such, intended their scholarly pursuits as a counter to Russian policy and propaganda which, in accordance with its avowed desire to assimilate all the peoples of the Transcaucasus, sought to emphasise the differences within Georgian society and refused to recognise the common ethnic origins of Georgians from different parts of the country. Thus, not only was Georgia split into two administrative units, but the Russian word for a Georgian, Gruzin, was applied only to people from K'art'l-Kakhet'i. Mountain Georgians like the P'shavs, T'ushs, Khevsurs and Svans were treated as different peoples, as were West Georgians, who were referred to as Imerians despite the fact that they spoke the same language and shared numerous customs and traditions. Consequently, much of the t'ergdaleulni's activity was directed towards refuting government assertions and underscoring the cultural, linguistic, historical and territorial unity of Georgia. They did, however, face a major problem in that although the T'ushs, P'shavs, Imerians and others did share a common language and customs they, nevertheless, referred to themselves as T'ushebi, P'shavelebi and Imerelebi, whilst the Georgian self-appellation, K'art'veli, also had the more restrictive meaning of someone from K'art'li. The cause, as Sergi Meskhi pointed out in an article for Droeba, emphasising the vital role played by the paper's journalists in familiarising Georgians with the various parts of their country,⁹³ was the fragmentation of the Georgian state since the Middle Ages. Thus, whereas Georgians spoke of Sak'art'velo by the 12th century, meaning all of present day

Georgia and more, by the 19th century much of that sense of unity had evaporated.⁹⁴ This constituted a considerable difficulty for the t'ergdaleulni and one too which was exacerbated by tsarist policies. If, therefore, the country was to avoid assimilation, it was essential that Georgians, and particularly those with an education, take an active interest in their own country. Meskhi underlined this in a separate article for Droeba, in which he referred to his shame on meeting a Frenchman who had traversed the length and breadth of Georgia on foot and knew more about the country than he did. Borrowing this foreigner's advice, he lectured his readers that if they wished to be of service to the people and society, they should first become acquainted with the situation and needs of their country.⁹⁵

The freedom and ability of the t'ergdaleulni to influence social thought was inevitably handicapped by strict censorship on the one hand and the low level of literacy on the other. It was, for instance, impossible openly to challenge tsarist rule in the Caucasus, let alone call for its overthrow. Nevertheless, through judicious accounts of the development of national liberation movements in Europe and aided by an upsurge of national sentiment in connection with the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, the t'ergdaleulni had by the 1880s gone a long way towards kindling national sentiment and making an issue of the national question.

Although, as has been stated above, the intellectual roots of the radical intelligentsia are to be found chiefly in the qazarmelevi of the 1830s and 1840s and the Russian Populists, it is clearly the case that they also drew

inspiration from the nationalist movements spreading across Europe.

Garibaldi, Mazzini and Kossuth have become the ideal for every conscious patriot,⁹⁶

wrote Akaki Dseret'eli in the 1860s and indeed, throughout that and the following decade the Georgian radical press paid close attention to the struggles of the repressed nationalities of Europe.⁹⁷ The Risorgimento became, in effect, a surrogate for a nationalist movement at home, whilst Garibaldi was portrayed as the ideal patriotic hero⁹⁸ and parallels were drawn between Italy's fate and Georgia's. In 1875 Meskhi wrote:

Relatively speaking, the Italian peninsula presented the same sort of picture once given by Georgia: formerly a powerful, flourishing ruler of entire countries, the Roman empire was now reduced to little Italy and this little country was, moreover, split into still smaller kingdoms, principalities, republics and dependencies.⁹⁹

As rapturous report followed rapturous report describing the selfless struggle of the Italian people for national unification and independence, the inference for Georgians must have been clear.

Everyone understands [wrote Droeba in 1866] that the time is coming for all Italians to unite and for Italy's existence to be confirmed once and for all. None of them fears the sacrifice that has to be made for their native land and all are ready to give everything for their country.¹⁰⁰

But whilst reports of unification in Italy and Germany and of struggle in Greece, Bulgaria and Ireland were written with sympathy and received enthusiastically in Georgian intellectual circles, there can have been few who expected to see Garibaldi's feats emulated in the Transcaucasus.

They did, however, offer a glimmer of hope for the future and did suggest that the tide of European development was perhaps moving in favour of the establishment of national states, that history, in effect, was on their side.

Moreover, whilst opportunities to arouse and activate national self-consciousness were for the most part hindered by the tsarist regime, the latter, nevertheless, provided the Georgian intelligentsia with a classical means for encouraging the spread and deepening of national sentiment. As relations between the Ottoman and Russian empires grew sourer through the 1860s and 1870s and the prospect of war loomed closer, Georgians sensed an opportunity was arising to take revenge against the Turks. Motivated by its immediate territorial ambitions, the authorities encouraged the native population to work up its spleen against its traditional enemy¹⁰¹ and thus unwittingly provided the t'ergdaleulni with a means to stir up latent national emotions, for by conducting an irredentist campaign in the press and elsewhere for the reincorporation of parts of Georgia then under Turkish occupation, the intelligentsia was able to remind Georgians of their essential unity in a way that would otherwise have been unthinkable. With almost 200,000 Georgians still living in Turkish Georgia,¹⁰² it suddenly became permissible to stress the primacy of national unity, to emphasise the injustice of the Turkish presence on Georgian soil and to recall the former territorial, political, linguistic and even religious unity of all Georgians. Whilst this no doubt served the short-term plans of the government to extend its borders, the t'ergdaleulni understood very well that it also offered them a rare chance to

focus the minds of the indigenous population on their national identity.

Irredentism, so often a feature of nationalist movements, played on the old antagonisms between Georgian and Turk and gave the former a sense of national purpose that had previously been lacking. Unable to offer meaningful resistance to the Russian administration and, in any case, reluctant to abandon the defensive shield afforded by its presence, however obnoxious its policies, Georgians could at last both identify their enemy and feel free to fight him. Historic memories were revived and a campaign initiated to acquaint readers of the Georgian press with the fate of their long-forgotten brothers in Turkey. Correspondents, including the editor of Tsiskari, travelled in Turkish Georgia to return with harrowing tales of national oppression and stirring accounts of Georgians' readiness to fight for national unity.¹⁰³ Christian Georgians were shamed by the determination of their Muslim brothers to cling to their language, customs and identity, whatever the circumstances.

They remember that they are our brothers [wrote Droeba], that for a long time we shared the same identity, defended our native land together and defended Georgia's faith and independence against fierce enemies. They remember Vakhtang-Gorgaslan and the immortal Queen T'amar...¹⁰⁴

Irredentism did, however, raise the uncomfortable question of religion, for in their early attempts to define the essence of Georgian nationality, the t'ergdaleulni played noticeably upon the influence of Christianity. The Christian and Orthodox Church, claimed Ilia Tchavtchavadze, was and remained "the source of the people's morality and ethics",¹⁰⁵ a statement which can hardly have endeared him

to his Muslim compatriots. Increasingly, though, factors like shared territory, culture and language superseded religion as the t'ergdaleulni prepared to reconstitute the national boundaries of the medieval Georgian state.

When war finally began in 1877, thousands of Georgians volunteered to fight,¹⁰⁶ although there may have been some confusion as to the exact circumstances of the Georgians in Turkey, as the following extract from a patriotic statement by the K'ut'aisi town duma suggests:

At the time when our co-religionists in Turkey are worn down by the hated Muslim yoke which bore heavily on our ancestors from generation to generation, can we possibly remain indifferent?... Can we forget our fellow believers?...¹⁰⁷

Whatever the confusion, Georgians of varying backgrounds were caught up in a war, which they considered a war of national liberation. Many of the t'ergdaleulni, when not actually engaged in the fighting, contributed to the patriotic mood with reports from the front for Droeba, Iveria and Kavkaz, describing the triumphant recapture of the old Georgian provinces of Atchara-kobulet'i, Childiri and Shavshet'i.

When in 1878 the war ended, the mood was of triumph and optimism. The national frontiers had been extended almost to encompass the territory of the medieval state and some 200,000 compatriots had been reunited with their motherland. In an atmosphere of national exultation, a Muslim Georgian delegation arrived in T'bilisi in August 1878, to an ecstatic reception. Addressing the delegates, Akaki Dseret'eli reminded all Georgians of their common inheritance:

Our forefathers bequeathed their descendants two things: the mother tongue and nationality (eroba). Both have been preserved equally by Christian and Muslim Georgians alike.¹⁰⁸

4.5 The Defence of National Culture Against Russification

The successful conclusion of the war also brought a change in the attitude of the Russian government. Whereas in the period up to and during the war Georgians' irredentist ambitions had been encouraged, they now constituted an obstacle to Russia's own plans to establish a deep sea port in Bat'umi and secure the border zone by settling it with citizens loyal to the tsar. In the view of the administration, the religious convictions of the indigenous population of South-West Georgia made them unreliable allies in any future conflict with the Turks. Consequently, the government attempted to sow dissension between Christian and Muslim Georgians¹⁰⁹ and to encourage the latter by force or persuasion to return to Turkey. Simultaneously, in a rare instance of cooperation between the Russian and Ottoman governments, the Turks attempted to lure them back to Turkey with promises of land, while in 1879 the appearance of the muhajiri movement, emphasising the religious beliefs of the local population, led to a considerable exodus.¹¹⁰ Feeling betrayed by the Russians, the Georgian intelligentsia immediately began to counter official propaganda. Special efforts were made to establish national schools and to send teachers and text-books to help spread literacy in the Georgian language. Mindful, too, of Russian agitation, warnings were issued against religious intolerance.

Difference of faith does not impede and does not interfere with our fraternity and unity...¹¹¹

wrote Sergi Meskhi, whilst Ilia Tchavtchavadze, who had previously identified the Christian faith as a key constituent of the national character wrote:

The Georgian, who has been tormented for his own faith, respects the beliefs of others. Consequently, there is no case in our history of Georgians wishing to oppress or persecute the faiths of other peoples. Armenians, Jews as well as Muslims, live among us and are unable to fault us on this account. People persecuted and oppressed for their beliefs in other countries found freedom of conscience and a peaceful haven in ours.¹¹²

In many respects, the tsarist post-war decision to pick up the threads of the assimilationist policy temporarily abandoned for the war, succeeded only in consolidating national feeling among Georgians and uniting the intelligentsia. It did contrive to send many Muslims back to Turkey, of course, but by the end of the decade Georgian counter-propaganda had arrested the exodus and tempted others to return. The tsarist officials at first countered this development by refusing to issue entry visas, but then, concerned by the effect this policy was having on Georgian public opinion, gave way. One of the first successful mobilisations of popular feeling against the regime since it annexed the country in 1801, this was an indication that the avowed aim of the t'ergdaleulni to imbue the Georgian people with a sense of their own identity was achieving its purpose. But though a victory of sorts for the Georgian intelligentsia, it did not presage a new phase of enlightened tolerance from St. Petersburg, but was rather an isolated gesture of conciliation before the mood of messianic Russian chauvinism already making itself felt in the 1870s climaxed in the 1880s in an aggressive drive to

Russify the national minorities of the empire.

The assassination of Alexander II on 1st March 1881 was all the pretext required by his successor, Alexander III, to strengthen and extend the police powers of the Ministry of the Interior and curtail the influence achieved by the zemstva, city governments and courts during his father's reign. Greatly influenced by his advisor and former tutor, Pobedonostsev, the tsar directed Russia back towards the slogan "autocracy, orthodoxy and nationalism" and effectively crushed hopes for the establishment of constitutional rights. Policy towards non-Russians, particularly the Jews, became marked at best by intolerance and at worst brutality.

In January 1882, the limited autonomy conferred on the Transcaucasus through the vice-regency was terminated and the gubernii of the region subordinated directly to St. Petersburg. In place of the former vice-regent, Dondukov-Korsakov was appointed governor-general and in preparation for the onslaught against the national existence of the Georgian people, a number of changes were made in key positions controlling the areas of religion, culture, education and the press. Yanovskii and Archbishop Pavle, men from the same mould as their masters in St. Petersburg, were appointed to control education and religion respectively.¹¹³ Even the public use of the word Sak'art'velo, in a development anticipating Poland's fate two years later, was banned,¹¹⁴ whilst the Russian press was encouraged to revive racist views to the effect that Georgians were lawless brigands and Asiatics.¹¹⁵

The downgrading of the Georgian language and its gradual exclusion from the educational system witnessed over the preceding 15 years was now pursued with renewed vigour.

In 1883 Delyanov, the Minister of Education, instructed Yanovskii to ensure that no Georgian or Armenian suspected of separatist sympathies be allowed to retain a position in state service, education or the church.¹¹⁶ Although already prejudiced against in many ways, this was the most wide-sweeping measure yet employed against the indigenous peoples of the Transcaucasus, particularly as the charge of separatism could be and was levelled against those who sought to protect the use of Georgian on pedagogical grounds or to defend the national culture. Ilia Tchavtchavadze noted in an article for Droeba in 1882 that amongst the bizarre evidence quoted by the conservative newspaper Moskovskie Vedomosti¹¹⁷ of supposed separatist sentiment, was the fact that Georgians and Armenians not only staged their own plays, but attended them in sufficiently large numbers to cover the costs of heating and lighting, whilst Russian theatre was poorly attended and unable to cover such costs.¹¹⁸

This attempt to exclude all but the most Russified of Georgians from state service was followed in 1885 by a circular issued by Yanovsky banning the use of Georgian in schools. Henceforth, those who wanted their children to study the native language would have to provide for tuition at home.¹¹⁹ Attacks were also directed against the Georgian educational press and censorship tightened. In a confidential report which clearly indicated the intentions of government policy Yanovsky wrote:

I have to say that it would be more useful to Russian state interests if such subjects as biography, articles and stories from the history of Georgia, and geography were banned from the journals published in the languages of the indigenous

peoples of the Caucasus, because such subjects can, in different ways, very easily become nationalist weapons.¹²⁰

Having concentrated his efforts on weakening Georgians' resistance to linguistic and cultural assimilation, Yanovsky then turned his attentions towards undermining the efforts of the t'ergdaleulni to reconstruct national unity. Attempting to drive a wedge between the regions comprising the Georgian nation, the official view gave credence to the opinion that the Khevsurs, Imerians, Svans, T'ushs and Megrelians all constituted different nationalities. Some of the evidence used to support these arguments bordered on the ludicrous as Georgians were quick to point out.¹²¹ Indeed, definitions of nationality based on the shape and size of one's skull or on clothing could scarcely claim to be scientific. If as arbitrary a criterion as costume was employed, it could, as Ilia Tchavtchavadze indicated, make one nation of the peasantry of Tula Gubernia and another of the peasantry of Moscow Gubernia simply on the basis of the style of head-dress prevalent in their respective areas.¹²²

More threatening to national unity, however, was the government's attempt to replace Georgian with Megrelian as the medium for teaching Russian in Samegrelo's schools. Claiming that Georgian was not understood by the native population, the government was able to appear as if it was defending the right of Megrelians to a good education. At a time, moreover, when it was repressing national minorities (Georgians included) elsewhere in the empire, the government conferred "nation" status on Samegrelo and began to devise a new alphabet for the language, despite the fact that Megrelian and Georgian clearly belong to the same language

group, are pronounced similarly and have similar grammatical structures.¹²³ This and similar projects undertaken in Svanet'i and Ap'khazet'i from 1889-1890 failed to attract the support of the local populations and thus achieved little, but nevertheless indicated the seriousness of the threat posed to Georgia's national existence.¹²⁴

The Russian policy of divide and rule was also employed to exploit the mounting class and national tensions between Georgians and Armenians. By encouraging antagonism of this sort, the regime was able to divert the energies of the two nations into fruitless squabbles about ethnogenesis and their relative contributions to history and to stymie the progress achieved at meetings held in the 1870s towards a united campaign against autocracy and ultimately for a federal Transcaucasian state.¹²⁵ The regime manipulated the desire of the Armenian intelligentsia for an extensive territorial base under Russian patronage and certainly did nothing to discourage nationalist Armenian academics, of whom Professor Patkanian was the most notorious example, from laying claims to virtually all of Georgia south of T'bilisi, from denigrating Georgian culture and history and lauding their own.¹²⁶ It is probably no coincidence either, that writing of this nature was at its peak during the 1880s, the worst years of reaction. To many Georgians who recalled that Georgia had for centuries provided a haven for Armenian refugees fleeing from persecution in Turkey, such ingratitude confirmed their growing prejudices about the alleged national characteristics of the Armenian people. The more prescient among the intelligentsia, however, understood the dangers of this line of thought and sought to prevent their critiques of Patkanian and his associates from

degenerating into an argument with the Armenian nation as a whole, from which neither side could hope to gain. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, in a long refutation of Patkanian's and other's claims, in which he presented a case supported by a barrage of Georgian, Armenian, Greek, Roman and Assyrian sources, went to great pains to stress that he had no quarrel with the Armenian people, whose contribution to culture and history he did not doubt, but with a few individuals who did not, he argued, represent the mass of the population.

Every nation [he wrote] has its own individual character, its own inner hopes, desires, aspirations and its own innate worth.¹²⁷

But Russification did not always pursue such an insidious path. During the last quarter of the century the government pursued a blatant policy of reserving some of the best state land in Georgia for colonisation by Russian peasants. A survey conducted in 1874, for instance, revealed that there were 49 new Russian settlements in T'bilisi and Borchalo districts alone, consisting of 850 households, and following the expatriation of Ap'khaz Muslims to Turkey in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war, the initial migration of landless peasants from Samegrelo to Ap'khazet'i was quickly reduced to a trickle to allow the area to be colonised by Russians.¹²⁹ Whilst reservation of land in this way encountered opposition during the years immediately after the peasant reforms of 1864-71, by the 1890s land shortage had become so acute that Georgian peasants found themselves in increasing conflict with the government. In a typical case, the government refused

numerous requests from East Georgian highlanders to settle in the valley of Shirak. Making a pretence of protecting the interests of nomadic shepherds, the authorities actually planned to settle the valley with Russians. In 1903, the head of Signaghi district wrote to the governor of T'bilisi:

For the purpose of Russifying the area assigned to me I consider it essential to put aside land for resettlement in Shirak. 112,000 desyatin will be used for the Russian settlements, half of which will be good arable land and the rest pasture.¹³⁰

Such naked disregard for the interests of the native peasantry ultimately proved counter-productive as it stimulated anti-Russian sentiment and, in this case, drove the highlanders to pre-empt matters by settling in the valley without government permission.¹³¹

In fact, throughout the worst years of national and political repression the insensitivity of the government towards the needs, hopes, aspirations and desires of the Georgian people and the crudity of its attempts to assimilate them into the Great Russian culture not only failed to achieve its purpose, but so outraged the patriotism of the t'avadaznauroba that all but its most conservative elements united behind the t'ergdaleulni's defence of the nation. Oliver Wardrop witnessed the changing political climate:

The can be little doubt of the fact that the excessive precautions taken by the police, with a view to put down political agitation of any kind, have produced the very thing they are intended to prevent. A country squire in talking to me, one day, about a little market-town near his home, said, 'They have posted a gendarme there. Until he came nobody ever bothered about politics. Now there is nothing else talked of'.¹³²

There was, however, rather more to the t'avadaznauroba's behaviour in the post-regency period than injured national pride. Since their reluctant acceptance of the peasant reforms and the subsequent failure of many of their number to adjust to the changing socio-economic environment, the t'avadaznaurebi had looked to the tsar to defend their status in return for loyal service. Much of the optimism too of leading liberal-minded nobles like Dimitri Qipiani had rested on the assumption that the zemstva and judicial reforms introduced in European Russia would be extended to Georgia. However, the likelihood, weak even in Alexander II's reign, that these reforms would reach the Transcaucasus, collapsed with the coronation of his son. Distrustful of anything that appeared to mediate between the autocracy and the people, the tsar regarded the zemstva with hostility. In itself a considerable blow to the hopes and morale of the liberal t'avadaznauroba, the effect of this was compounded by Delyanov's instruction to Yanovskii in 1883 that no Georgian suspected of separatist sympathies be retained in state service. Since virtually any expression of concern for the survival of the national culture was now interpreted as indicative of nationalism this directive attacked many of those who considered themselves loyal servants of the tsar. Thus, in a few years, the new regime in the Caucasus alienated the support accrued over the previous 40 years. Dimitri Qipiani, who had played such a prominent role in the defence of batonqmoba in the early 1860s, now found himself supporting the t'ergdaleulni's opposition to discrimination against Georgian culture. Addressing himself directly to Yanovskii, he asked:

Chingis Khan, Lang T'emur, Shahabaz and Nadirshah were unable to shatter our national existence - can it now be that you want to shatter it, at a time when we have willingly, lovingly and hopefully placed our faith in Russia...? ¹³³

The t'avadaznaurebi went to great pains to reaffirm both their faith in and loyalty to the throne and to absolve the tsar of any blame for the situation in Georgia, clearly implying that Dondukov-Korsakov was pursuing a deliberate and unjustified campaign of national repression without Alexander III's knowledge. In a letter to the governor-general, in his capacity as leader of the nobility, Qipiani expressed his concern at the obstacles put in the way of Georgians seeking state service, the exclusion of Georgian from the school syllabus and at the administration's efforts to oppose the unification of Georgia's regions:

Can all this possibly serve the interests of the government [he asked], which has taken under its protection tormented Orthodox Georgia, for which it deserves our boundless gratitude? I consider it my sacred duty to hold by these feelings of gratitude and loyalty and precisely for this reason fail to understand people's anger at me. ¹³⁴

Although Qipiani may genuinely have believed in the benevolence of the tsar, the Georgian press employed the same distinction between the tsar and his executives as a tactic to enable it to sustain the unequal struggle against the regime. While an unconvincing distinction, especially since the abolition of the vice-regency and the direct subordination of the Caucasian gubernii to St. Petersburg, it nevertheless remains an indication of the curious nature of censorship in late tsarist Russia that it enabled Droeba and other papers, while they survived, to criticise government policy and challenge the underlying philosophy of the

regime towards the national minorities.

In January 1882, in another demonstration of the apparently haphazard nature of tsarist censorship, the Georgian theatre in T'bilisi staged a play entitled Samshoblo (The Motherland), which recalled Georgia's struggle for national freedom against Shah Abbas. That the allegorical content of the play quickly communicated itself to the audience is clear from the observations of a spectator following a scene in which the Georgian soldiers swore by the flag their readiness to die for their country:

It was an astonishing moment and had a genuinely miraculous effect on the spectators. The whole audience, from the front rows of the stalls to the back of the gallery, rose to its feet, ready to kneel in respect before the national flag.¹³⁵

It was, in fact, sufficiently astonishing to draw comment from Katkov's paper Moskovskie Vedomosti to the effect that Georgians should cover the costs of the production by selling their flag to the circus. Such a crude and intemperate response was grist to the nationalist mill and, indeed, elicited a sharp reply from Ilia Tchavtchavadze in Droebea, in which he fiercely criticised Katkov's views, despite his known influence on the tsar. But Droebea's apparent good fortune was drawing to an end and in 1885 the Ministry of Internal Affairs closed it down, "because of its anti-government tendencies".¹³⁷

Despite the importance of the press, the greatest positive achievement of the intelligentsia was the establishment of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians, an organisation whose activities, as stated above, extended beyond the limits suggested by its title. Funded by subscription fees, private contributions and

donations from the nobility banks, the society undoubtedly did play an important role in spreading literacy. Aside from its assistance to the nobility school in T'bilisi, it had by 1888, despite frequent government opposition, set up schools in Bat'umi (considered especially important because of its location in Atchara), Dzveli Senaki, K'ut'aisi, Gomaret'i, Dsinarekhi, Khelt'ubani and T'ianet'i¹³⁸ and was assisting a further 81 in K'ut'aisi gubernia alone.¹³⁹ It also supported libraries and reading rooms, ran evening courses, trained teachers, collected ancient artifacts, treasures and ethnographical material, recorded folklore, restored monuments, performed agricultural relief work and encouraged research into Georgia's culture. Almost a symbol of crystallising national unity, the society recruited members throughout Georgia and maintained agents wherever possible to help set up schools, propagandise its ideas and raise funds.

Among its most significant achievements, the society became an important publisher and played a vital role in encouraging the development of Georgian literature during the worst years of national repression, giving particular support to patriotic writers like Nikoloz Barat'ashvili, Akaki Dseret'eli, Vazha Pshavela, Alexandre Qazbegi and Ilia Tchavtchavadze. A catalogue of books on sale at the society's shop in 1904 gives some indication of its success and of the taste of Georgian readers. Of the 874 entries, 782 were published in Georgian, with the greatest concentration of titles being either historical or literary and the bulk of the former tending towards the Middle Ages and reflecting the rising interest in Georgia's "golden age".¹⁴⁰

Whilst most of the resistance to the administration's assimilationist policies in the 1880s took a legal form, some of the new generation of Georgians, victims of the humiliating educational system, adopted the organisational methods of the populists, formed underground cells and conducted extra-legal activities against the regime. The centre of this new opposition was the T'bilisi seminary, where the atmosphere of repression fuelled an increasingly violent nationalist reaction among the students and culminated on 24th May 1886, in the assassination of the rector Chudetskii. In the subsequent investigation Laghiashvili, a student at the seminary, was arrested and his diary, giving details of the underground organisation at the seminary and other educational institutions in the city, fell into the hands of the police.¹⁴¹

Although the government tried to play down the political significance of Laghiashvili's act, there can be no doubt that the assassination was also used as an opportunity to intensify attacks against the Georgian community. Chudetskii's funeral was transformed into a demonstration of Russian nationalism and Exarch Pavle is attributed with proclaiming at the graveside:

Cursed be the people who produced your murderer.¹⁴²

Such comment from the supposed "shepherd" of the Georgian flock caused an outcry among the population, already angered at the steady Russification of the Georgian Church. Qipiani wrote to the exarch pointing out that, if true, Pavle's statement was incompatible with his status and he should resign. The exarch, however, denied the

accusation and Qipiani, in one of the ironies of the history of Georgian nationalist movement, was found guilty of insulting him, dismissed from his job and exiled to Stavropol, where in 1887 he is believed to have been murdered by tsarist agents.¹⁴³

4.6 The Search for National Unity

While Russian chauvinism and official policy towards the national minorities helped foster unity on cultural matters among the Georgian intelligentsia and nobility, the most fundamental social division, between the t'avadaznauroba and peasantry, continued to deteriorate as land shortage, increased rents, debts, poverty and migration fuelled class antagonism.

In the first optimistic years after the peasant reforms most of the leading figures in the Georgian intelligentsia tended to ignore socio-economic issues to concentrate on the need to develop a sense of national self-awareness. Increasingly, however, they became aware that the reforms had accelerated the pace of social change and that class relations, instead of improving, as some had hoped they would, had taken a serious turn for the worse. Thus, just as Georgia appeared to have achieved the territorial, economic and to some extent the political unity that the t'ergdaleulni had been striving for, the strain on the social structure that had been the mainstay of Georgian society for over 600 years intensified.

Moreover, as these changes in the nation's social fabric forced the intelligentsia to reassess its approach to the national question, so the latent divisions within its ranks began to surface. Thus, while there were those who

maintained that national unity was of paramount importance and that present differences be put aside to counter the threat to Georgia's existence, others argued that the national question was inextricably bound up with social issues and that until the domination of the nobility was ended, until democratic rights were extended to all, national unity would remain out of reach.¹⁴⁴

Ilia Tchavtchavadze, who belonged to the former category, was particularly disturbed by the threat of social division to national unity, fearing that internal strife would cause Georgians to lose sight of their national identity and weaken their common struggle against tsarist policies in the Transcaucasus. Writing in the 1870s, by which time the impact of the peasant reforms had been felt, Tchavtchavadze demanded:

Where can one find a Georgian, or Georgian society? I want to ask you one question: Do we exist somewhere?... And if these are not Georgians, then what are they? They are t'avadni, aznaurni, merchants, peasants, the ranked and the unranked - they are all these things, but Georgians are nowhere. The t'avadi loathes the aznaurni, the aznaurni hates the t'avadi and the peasant hates them both. Can they really be Georgians, the children of the one Georgia?¹⁴⁵

Given his active support for the emancipation of the serfs and his uncompromising criticism of the sloth and ignorance of the nobility, Tchavtchavadze's emphasis on class reconciliation may, at first, seem to negate his earlier position. But if one bears in mind that his objection to 19th century batonqmoba was that it grossly distorted a previously organic and mutually beneficial relationship, it becomes easier to discern the threads of consistency in his thought. Batonqmoba needed changing

precisely because it no longer fulfilled this function, but had become, instead, a means for one class to exploit another and an obstacle to the economic and cultural progress of the nation.

Nevertheless, the abolition of batongmoba did not in Ilia Tchavtchavadze's mind signal the demise of the t'avadaznauroba. In fact, he had no objection to the nobility owning estates, provided they employed rational farming techniques and contributed to the wealth of the nation, but more importantly, he sought to revive the old, allegedly mutually beneficial relationship between the nobility and the peasantry. Thus, while the narodniki might argue that the key to Russia's future lay in agricultural and communal ownership, Tchavtchavadze maintained that the form of ownership most suited to Georgian society was one based on a functional relationship between the t'avadaznauroba and peasantry.

What has preserved us, [he asked] we a handful of people? The sword and the plough! The reason we have a home today, that we are firmly established where we are, that we have not been scattered as others have and blown from one place to another, that we have overcome so many tireless enemies and survived, that our nation has maintained the soil, and the soil our nation is because from the beginning to the present we have held the sword in one hand and the plough in the other. We will, moreover, continue to survive so long as we retain these two invincible forces of durability.¹⁴⁶

Clearly contained in this statement is Tchavtchavadze's conviction that Georgia was and should continue to be an agrarian society, but equally clear is the importance he attached to the role of the t'avadaznauroba and his belief that it still had a vital part to play in the country's future. His desire to maintain continuity with Georgia's

past aside, much of the reason for this can be found in his determination that Georgia emulate the achievements of Europe without suffering the miseries of enclosures, industrialisation and proletarianisation of the population. Thus when Tchavtchavadze spoke of the nobility as the "sword" of the nation, he did not intend that it revert to its martial traditions, but rather that it act as the fount of the nation's knowledge and wisdom, adopting the progressive role of the European bourgeoisie without exploiting the mass of the people. The peasantry, meanwhile, should organise into commercial and productive associations and acquaint itself with advances in agricultural techniques.

Ilia Tchavtchavadze's approach to the problem of national and social unity, which he himself termed "mending the broken bridge" (chatekhili khidis gamt'eleba) was posited first upon the belief that such an ideal class relationship had, in fact, once existed and second, that the fissures manifest in contemporary Georgian society were not only unnecessary, but also reversible.¹⁴⁷ A major difficulty, however, was that in stressing the absolute importance of national unity, he underestimated the depth of the social divisions within the country and, in so doing, failed to attract the unqualified support of any one section of the society. Right up until his assassination in 1907, he continued to believe in the possibility of reconciliation, despite the progressive decline in peasant-noble relations during the last quarter of the 19th century. In part his problem was shared by all the nationalist intelligentsia: in the virtual absence of an indigenous bourgeoisie, the traditional standard bearer of the national idea in Europe, who was to lead the national revival in Georgia?

Tchavtchavadze attempted to resolve this problem by appealing to the t'avadaznauroba's sense of patriotism and responsibility. By leading by example, it could win the trust and support of the peasantry. In reality, however, his hopes were doomed to failure.

Having conceded reluctantly to the abolition of batonq-moba, few t'avadaznaurebi were in a mood for further concessions, and far from adjusting to the times by seeking to rationalise the management of their estates, strove to sustain their expansive way of life by exploiting acute land shortage to raise rents to unprecedented levels. That they had little interest in class reconciliation can be seen from a series of articles by Giorgi Dseret'eli for Kvali in 1899 on the history of the K'ut'aisi land Bank. From its foundation in 1876, the t'avadaznaurebi attempted to monopolise control of the bank, excluding not just wealthy peasants and merchants, from whom they made no effort to conceal their contempt, but also aznaurni who, because of the small size of their estates engaged in commerce to supplement their incomes. The patriarchal nature of the t'avadi families enabled them to exert a powerful influence on the course of the bank's affairs throughout the 1880s and into the 1890s. Describing this power, Dseret'eli wrote:

Many still remember what a powerful unifying force this patriarchal custom was. It often happened at meetings that some respected, elderly t'avadi-shvili would raise an eyebrow to indicate his displeasure or stroke his moustache threateningly and instantaneously 60 to 80 men, all bearing his name, would reach for their khandzhals. Who does not recall the honourable Bakhva Paghava and the importance of a wave of his hand at bank meetings.¹⁴⁸

Faced by intimidation and contempt, and given the steady increase of land disputes in the post-reform period, whatever residue of trust the peasantry might once have felt for the nobility was quickly eroded. But even if Tchavtchavadze's ideas had received popular support it is difficult to imagine how they would have succeeded in practice, particularly if one bears in mind his equal commitment to democratic reform and identical educational opportunities for all. Tchavtchavadze, who was normally quick to acknowledge the force of change in society seems, in this instance, to have ruled out the possibility that presented with equal opportunities and rights, peasants might very well have wanted to abandon agriculture altogether.

However, whilst Tchavtchavadze preached class reconciliation, a growing number of his associates, Giorgi Dseret'eli, Niko Nikoladze, Sergi Meskhi, Kirile Lort'kip'anidze and P. Umikashvili among them, reacted to the socio-economic problems of the 1870s quite differently. Though they shared Tchavtchavadze's desire that Georgia's national revival avoid the pain and dislocation of Europe's industrialisation, they were, nevertheless, convinced that industrialisation, the emergence of an indigenous industrial bourgeoisie and accumulation of national capital, represented the country's only way forward. Directly contradicting Tchavtchavadze, they argued that the nobility was a spent force with no useful purpose left to perform.

The t'avadaznauroba has lived out its time [wrote G. Dseret'eli], ...it is unable to work, has no learning and is consequently becoming poorer, losing its power and gradually even its status.¹⁴⁹

With the growth of European and Russian capital in the 1870s, stimulated in large part by the completion of the railway, they became concerned that Georgia was becoming a colonial adjunct of the major powers. Their response was to encourage Georgians to take a more active role in the commercial life of their own country. Till then, it was argued, Georgians had used the respite brought by Russian rule to rebuild their agriculture, ceding control of commerce to Armenian and Greek refugees fleeing Turkey. Now, however, it was time for Georgians to compete, for not only was the wealth of the country falling into the hands of foreign investors, but trade, especially in East Georgia, had become a virtual Armenian monopoly. As a result, Georgians had become a minority within their own capital city. Many t'ergdaleulni saw this as a serious threat to the future of the nation and, arguing against Ilia Tchavtchavadze, actively encouraged Georgian peasants to migrate to the urban centres to combat this monopoly.

It should be a source of great shame for real Georgians (if 'real Georgians' exist in our country today) [wrote Sergi Meskhi], ... that what was once the Georgians' capital city, Tp'ilisi, is now the property of Armenians. Half the inhabitants of contemporary Tp'ilisi are Armenian; commerce and barter are controlled by them; the city's land is theirs; the buildings constructed on the land are nearly all theirs... In short, Armenians hold the city in their powerful claws and for the moment dominate and organise all its affairs.¹⁵⁰

G. Dseret'eli and Nikoladze called upon rich and educated Georgians to combat the situation by investing their money and skills in the establishment of factories, believing that not only did the profusion of raw materials in the Transcaucasus provide the right conditions for such

enterprise, but that the nation's future prosperity depended upon it.¹⁵¹ Unless Georgians were more active in the economic development of the country, not only would its resources and urban centres be lost to foreign control, but Georgians would be condemned to an existence of rural poverty and ignorance. By encouraging the emergence of an indigenous bourgeoisie they did not, however, accept the inevitability of unemployment, low wages and poor working conditions, but envisaged a form of social contract in which factory owners protected the living standards and interests of their workers. More broadly, they advocated a class alliance called "the common ground" (saert'o niadagi), which was to incorporate the intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. It was recommended that the latter, who were to be given land free of charge, form productive and trade cooperatives, aided by village banks, with the aim of squeezing out the money-lenders and middle men whose activities had had such a pernicious effect on peasant agriculture since the emancipation reforms of 1864-71. They distinguished sharply between the role of the industrial bourgeoisie, which they considered progressive, and that of the petit commercial bourgeoisie which, they maintained, contributed nothing to national prosperity and retarded peasant farming. From a nationalist perspective this particular argument had the added attraction that the vast majority of the commercial bourgeoisie was Armenian. Thus Giorgi Dseret'eli wrote:

Now, when the order of our lives has been turned inside out, when labour has acquired great value and money become a necessity for all, these merchants have become the maggots of the country, exploiting our times and sucking at the nation's brain... Whereas before the peasant was a lord's

serf and paid him begara ... he is now the serf of Armenians and Jews and is forced to pay them with his last shirt.¹⁵²

The "common ground" idea owed much to the intelligentsia's awareness of the importance of similar class alliances to successful nationalist movements in Europe and its concern too that the movement for national liberation and social reform in Georgia had no strong class to identify with its programme, or to press for the realisation of its aim. Other considerations aside, the t'ergdaleulni appreciated that there was little prospect of Georgians taking independent action to secure their freedom and concluded that, in the immediate term, the country's interests lay in the education of the population, stimulation of the rural economy, defence of the peasantry against middle men and money-lenders and encouragement of rich Georgians, whatever their social background, to challenge the Armenian hold on the urban centres and invest in the industrial development of the nation. Having accepted that there was little Georgians could do in the immediate term to determine their own destiny and convinced anyway that the main stimulus for change within the empire would come from the Russian gubernii, the t'ergdaleulni considered their most important task lay in preparing the population for that moment in the future when Georgians would assume control of their own affairs. It is for this reason, rather than any intrinsic merit they might have had, that the t'ergdaleulni were so enthusiastic in their support for the reforms introduced into Russia during the 1860s and 1870s. Thus, despite criticising its considerable limitations, they campaigned vigorously for the introduction of the zemstvo system, or eroba

as it was known in Georgia, to the Transcaucasus, believing that not only would it provide Georgians with valuable experience of managing their own affairs, but that it contained the seeds of liberalisation and might become the nucleus for future national self-government.¹⁵³ Unfortunately, however, their campaign for the extension of the eroba system, trial by jury and the right to hold court proceedings in the native language fell victim to official procrastination and ultimately died a complete death with the advent of Alexander III's more intolerant attitude to domestic reform.

With or without reform from above, however, one of the greatest obstacles to the national aspirations of the Georgian intelligentsia continued to be the weakness of the native bourgeoisie on the one hand and the relative strength of the Armenian bourgeoisie on the other. The latter, having no particular sympathy for the national or social aspirations of the Georgian population, was concerned to defend its monopoly over the country's trade and, in particular, that of T'bilisi. This it endeavoured to do through its domination of the city guilds, the municipal authorities and the city's credit organisations. As Sergi Meskhi complained:

In T'bilisi everyone knows that the Mutual Trust Society and the Commercial Bank have a race character, that if a merchant isn't Armenian, he need not expect to find it easy to derive any benefit from the bank.¹⁵⁴

There was a danger, the t'ergdaleulni realised, that Armenians would interpret the call for Georgians to fight for a share in their country's wealth and criticism of the role of merchants and money-lenders as a threat to their

existence. Consequently they sought to assure the Armenian community of its good intentions.

We are the enemy of no people, least of all the Armenians [wrote Meskhi], because we well understand that a people is always innocent of the often appalling acts committed by a few of its representatives; we know full well that in the Caucasus, in good times and in bad, we share a common fate, that living together, we must pull together. But we are the enemy of anyone who spares nothing to fill his own stomach and line his pockets; who seeks to make a poor man in difficulties pay interest of a t'uman or more on every t'uman lent; who forces the peasant to sell his last piece of land, his property and his household goods to meet a debt; who squeezes the people and demeans man's human dignity.¹⁵⁵

However, since the vast majority of the money-lenders and merchants was, in fact, Armenian, the distinction was not as clear as Meskhi would have liked. There were, of course, many Armenians who suffered equally badly from the hands of their compatriots as the Georgians did, but, nevertheless, a substantial part of the Armenian community and, importantly, its most vociferous and influential part, felt itself threatened by the t'ergdaleulni. Consequently a campaign was initiated through the Armenian press accusing the Georgian intelligentsia of seeking the ruin of the entire Armenian population of Georgia.

Although elements of anti-Armenian prejudice did occasionally surface in the writings of the t'ergdaleulni, there can be little doubt that they genuinely wanted to avoid nationalist clashes with their closest neighbours. Aside from the tolerant nature of their brand of nationalist theory, which acknowledged the right of all nations to exist and the unique contribution of each to world culture and history, the t'ergdaleulni tried to avoid conflict on the

practical grounds that in the unequal struggle against tsarism it merely served the interests of the government if the nationalities of the Caucasus dissipated their limited strengths in futile tirades against each other. The support of the t'ergdaleulni for a Transcaucasian federation expressed in Drosha* and at the Caucasian Conference held, appropriately, in Switzerland in 1874, underlined their desire to protect the national rights of all the minorities living in the Caucasus.

But even the federal idea was a source of concern to the Armenian bourgeoisie, in as much as T'bilisi, the centre of its activities, would have become subject to a Georgian administration.¹⁵⁶ It should be added too that the Armenian attitude to federation, as to the idea of independence of any kind, was influenced by fear of losing Russian protection against the Turks. Although this was also a concern among Georgians, it does not appear to have influenced their thinking on the national question to quite the same degree.

The problem of preventing the struggle for control of the domestic market degenerating into nationalist strife was made more difficult by the fact that T'bilisi was not just the commercial centre of the Armenian bourgeoisie, but also the intellectual centre of Armenia's national revival. Moreover, perhaps because of the Armenians' long experience of persecution from others and perhaps also because of their resentment of the t'avadznauroba's arrogance towards them, their nationalism took a more assertive and less tolerant form. Thus, as part of a typically nationalist desire to secure a territorial base, representatives of the

*See footnote 125.

intelligentsia laid claims to all of the land south of the River Mtkvari, including T'bilisi, ignoring that their residence in the area was relatively recent.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, in pursuit of the argument that numerical superiority within an area gives one claim to its ownership, they set about asserting the predominance of Armenians and Armenian culture in the borderlands.¹⁵⁸ The clergy contributed strongly to the new mood of national assertion by calling on Armenians who had lived in Georgia for centuries and spoke only Georgian to abandon it in favour of Armenian and to hate Georgian.¹⁵⁹ To the indignation of the Georgian intelligentsia attempts were also made to convince Georgian Catholics living in Akhaltsikhe that they were really Armenian and should therefore cease their attachment to Georgian culture.¹⁶⁰ Behaviour of this nature inevitably fuelled the kind of national strife the t'ergdaleulni had assiduously been avoiding. Thus, G. Dseret'eli, having complimented the strength of Armenian culture went on to write:

But as we know, for everything good something bad is sure to follow. The Armenian clerical movement has erected a barrier around Armenian society and closed the door to the Armenian nation having contacts with us. It has alienated Armenian society from Georgian society.¹⁶¹

To the despair of the t'ergdaleulni the relationship was exacerbated by the emerging challenge of the Georgian petit-bourgeoisie to Armenian domination of T'bilisi as land shortage and the need for money forced the peasantry to migrate to the towns. In T'bilisi, this revealed itself most clearly in the struggle for control of the municipal council which, since its inception in 1875, had accrued sufficient power to give it a dominating influence over the

city's economic life.¹⁶² The extremely limited franchise, based on property ownership, had returned a succession of administrations run by the wealthiest section of the Armenian bourgeoisie until, in 1890, the increased representation of Georgians in the third category of voters, the most numerous but also the least influential, enabled the so-called "Georgian Party" to secure nearly half the seats.¹⁶³ Although subsequent restriction of the franchise till in 1897 it covered only 1.7 per cent of the population reestablished the Armenian position, the politicisation of national divisions by the 1890 election continued to split the two communities, with the representatives of both sides now claiming to speak on behalf of their respective nations.¹⁶⁴

Whilst this sharpened national self-awareness among the Georgian population, it is clear that the resultant inter-ethnic conflict was not what Giorgi Dseret'eli and his associates had envisaged when they urged Georgians to regain control of their towns. It is, however, hard to imagine any other consequence given the strength of the Armenian position and the importance of the bourgeoisie in Armenia's national revival. Furthermore, despite the growth of the Georgian bourgeoisie, it still remained in its embryonic stages and signally failed to fulfil the progressive role expected of it by the t'ergdaleulni. Most were either artisans, small-scale manufacturers, or the sort of merchants the Georgian intelligentsia had denigrated so vigorously in the 1870s. Moreover, poorly educated and often illiterate, they were hardly suited to taking up the lead in Georgia's national revival.

Thus, although the t'ergdaleulni successfully brought the national question into the political arena in Georgia

and although they galvanised a broad spectrum of the population into supporting its defence of national culture, the class barriers dividing Georgian society proved an intractable obstacle to national unity. The idea of a "third estate" popular among some sections of the intelligentsia, in which the latter would join forces with the bourgeoisie and peasantry might have worked had the bourgeoisie been stronger or, at least, Georgian rather than Armenian. But in Georgia it was weak and uneducated, while the peasantry, still largely illiterate,¹⁶⁵ had its attention focused on the land issue.

1. G.A. Galoyan, Rossiya i narody Zakavkaz'ya (Moscow, 1976) p. 265. According to Galoyan, the monarchist Georgian aristocrats sought the help not just of Persia and Turkey, but also of Britain and France.
2. Maksime Berdznishvili, Masalebi XIX saukunis pirveli nakhevis k'art'uli sazogadoebriobis istoriisat'vis (Materials on the History of Georgian Society in the First Half of the 19th c), (T'bilisi, 1980), p. 7.
3. G.A. Galoyan, op.cit., p. 279.
4. Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopedia, (Moscow, 1975), p. 449.
5. Grigol Orbeliani (ed. M. Zandukeli), Grigol Orbeliani - Lek'sebi (Grigol Orbeliani - Poems) (Tp'ilisi, 1935), pp. xiii-xiv.
6. Maksime Berdznishvili, op.cit., p. 6. The participants in the conspiracy came to be called the qazarmelevi because the military administration detained them in the army barracks, or qazarmelevi, rather than in the city prison.
7. Grigol Orbeliani, op.cit., pp. 88-89.
8. Maksime Berdznishvili, op.cit., p. 64.
9. Nikoloz Barat'ashvili, T'khzulebani (Collected Works) (T'bilisi, 1972), p. 69.
10. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
11. Ibid., p. 79.
12. Ibid., p. 54.
13. Maksime Berdznishvili, op.cit., p. 47.
14. G.A. Galoyan, op.cit., p. 265.
15. M. Gap'rindashvili, "Erovnul - ganmat'avisup'lebeli modzraoba" (The national liberation movement), Sak'-art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., p. 461.
16. Maksime Berdznishvili, op.cit., p. 65.
17. Ibid., pp. 75-85. In 1844 a group of Georgians based in T'bilisi attempted to start a new journal to be called Sinat'le (The Light). Although official permission was obtained to publish the journal, for reasons as yet unknown, it did not appear. What is clear, however, from the declaration of Sinat'le's purpose, a document signed by 27 people, is that had it come out, the journal would have been very much more ambitious than Tsiskari (The Dawn), which came out in 1852 as the first Georgian language journal since the 1832

conspiracy. The signatories indicated their resentment of national discrimination against Georgians and called, in particular, for teaching in Georgian and the publication of Georgian textbooks.

18. Ibid., p. 86.
19. P. Rat'iani, "Natsional'no-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie i peredovaya kul'tura Gruzii", Matsne, no. 6, 1964, p. 82.
20. Ibid., p. 82.
21. M. Zandukeli, T'khzulebani, Tomi 2 (Collected Works, Vol. 11), (T'bilisi, 1976), p. 236.
22. Ibid., p. 238.
23. T'emur Jagodnishvili, Rap'iel Erist'avi da khalkhuri shemok'medeba (Rap'iel Erist'avi and Folk Art), (T'bilisi, 1979), p. 76. Erist'avi acted as interpreter between Governor General Kolubiakin and Ut'u Mik'ava, leader of the peasant uprising in Samegrelo in 1857. This formed the inspiration for the poem, pp. 75-76.
24. Daniel Tchonk'adze, Suramis tsikhe' (The Fortress of Surami) in XIX saukunis mdserloba (19th Century Literature), (T'bilisi, 1979), p. 118.
25. I. Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebani (Collected Works), (T'bilisi, 1957), p. 11.
26. Akaki Dseret'eli, Asi lek'si (One Hundred Poems), (T'bilisi, 1960), p. 50.
27. Ibid., p. 63.
28. E. Ioseliani, "k'art'uli literatura" (Georgian literature), Iveria 1883, no. 4, p. 85.
29. Although a number of Georgians had been educated at Russian universities during the first half of the century, the students of the late 1850s and the 1860s were the first to be numerous enough to be described as "a generation", and in contemporary and later literature, they are, in fact, often referred to as "the first generation" of Georgian students. Akaki Dseret'eli noted in Chemi tavgadasavali (My Adventures), Akaki Dseret'eli, Rcheuli, Dsigni II (Akaki Dseret'eli, Selected Works, Bk. II), (T'bilisi, 1977), p. 101, that there were over 30 Georgian students at St. Petersburg university when he was there.
30. M. Zandukeli, op.cit., p. 194.
31. This sense of nostalgia found frequent expression in the poetry of Akaki Dseret'eli, whether in poems like K'art'lis Salami (Greetings to K'art'li) (Asi lek'sebi pp. 46-47), in which the obvious pain of his separation from Georgia is compounded by his concern for his country's future, or in Salamuri (Asi lek'sebi pp. 48-49)

and Shik'asta (Asi lek'sebi pp. 53-54), in which he evokes the plaintive sound of the Georgian wind instrument, the salamuri, in the former, and the Georgian bagpipe in the latter, to express both his own and his country's grief.

32. G. P'urtseladze, "T'ergdaleult'a msop'lmkhedvelobis sakit'khisat'vis" (On the question of the world outlook of the t'ergdaleulni), Matsne 1975, no. 1, p. 171.
33. A. Dseret'eli, T'khzulebat'a sruli Krebuli T.XI (Complete Works, Vol. XI), (T'bilisi, 1960), pp. 15-16. Dseret'eli explained that when he used the word samshoblo (homeland), he envisaged not the t'avadaznauroba but the peasantry.
34. A. Ioseliani, Sak'art'velos istoriis problemebi da t'ergdaleulebi, op.cit., p. 11.
35. G.A. Galoyan, op.cit., p. 294.
36. The question of educating the masses did not involve the t'ergdaleulebi in the sort of soul-searching and moral dilemmas experienced by the Russian intelligentsia in the 1860s and 1870s. Whilst mindful of the contribution of the peasantry to Georgian culture, they felt that the prospects of the peasantry breaking free from the existing torpor and poverty of rural life were dependent on their ability to learn and benefit from scientific advance. Except for the relatively short-lived Georgian populist movement there was nothing comparable to the Russian khozhdenie v narod or "movement to the people".
37. G.A. Galoyan, op.cit., pp. 292-3.
38. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 297.
39. M. Gap'rindashvili, K'art'uli ganmanat'lebloba, op.cit., p. 36.
40. I. Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebani, op.cit., pp. 174-75.
41. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 84.
42. I. Tchavtchavadze, Tkhzulebani or tomad (Works in Two Volumes), (T'bilisi, 1977), Vol. 2, p. 20.
43. K'art'uli sabtchot'a entsiklopedia, T.I, (T'bilisi, 1975), pp. 497-98. This literary style owed itself to the 18th century katalikos, Anton I, who elaborated the theory of "three literary styles": high style for spiritual writings, middle style for history and low style for everyday affairs.
44. M. Zandukeli, op.cit., p. 230.
45. G. Jibladze, Romantiki i realisty v gruzinskoi literature XX veka (T'bilisi, 1963), p. 247.
46. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 180.

47. M. Zandukeli, op.cit., p. 235.
48. G. Jibladze, op.cit., p. 261.
49. G.A. Galoyan, op.cit., p. 281.
50. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 61.
51. M. Zandukeli, op.cit., p. 235.
52. Ibid., pp. 232-3.
53. Pr. Kekelidze and S. Khutsishvili (eds.), Akhali k'art'uli literatura (XIXs) nadsili I (Modern Georgian Literature (XIXc, Part 1), (T'bilisi, 1979), p. 42.
54. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, "Baton-qmobis gauk'mebis gamo samegreloshi" (On account of the abolition of serfdom in Samegrelo). Droeba, no. 8, 21.2.1867.
55. Giorgi Dseret'eli, "Mat'usalas aghsareba" (The confession of Methusala) Droeba, no. 1, 5.1.1868.
56. P. Ratiani, Ilia Tchavtchavadze. Politikur-ekonomiuri shekhedulebani. T.2. (Ilia Tchavtchavadze. Political-Economic views, Vol. 2), (T'bilisi, 1957), p. 31.
57. Ibid., p. 32.
58. Droeba first appeared in 1866 as a weekly journal. From 1875-76 it appeared three times a week and from 1877 until it was closed by the government in 1885, it appeared daily. A. Abramashvili - Gruzinskaya periodika, (T'bilisi, 1968), p. 39.
59. B. P-shvili, "Ratom chven mdgomareobaze arasa vp'ik'robt'?" (Why do we never think about our situation?) Droeba, no. 10, 10.3.1867.
60. Gr. T'arkhan-Mouravi, "Satchiroa chvent'vis urt'iert'is shemdseoba, t'u ara?" (Do we require mutual assistance or not?). Droeba, no. 20, 15.5.69. The article continued in nos. 21,22,23,24.
61. N. Papava, Sakhalkho ganat'leba sak'art'veloshi me-19 saukunis meore nakhevarshi (1864-1900 dsds.) (Public Education in Georgia in the Second Half of the 19th Century, 1864-1900), (T'bilisi, 1963), p. 59.
62. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
63. Sergi Meskhi, "Chveni ganat'leba" (Our education), Droeba, no. 22, 9.6.1872. S. Meskhi notes that Georgian children entering the T'bilisi gymnasium were so disadvantaged by their lack of Russian that they had to stay in the first class for up to 5 years. Apart from those who gave up because of the humiliation this entailed and those who were simply not sent to school because of it, many were expelled to make room for the new intake.

64. Sh. Chkhetiya (ed.), Raport smotritelya Telavskogo uездного uchilishcha v Tbilisskii statisticheskii komitet o deyatel'nosti uchilishcha, 1863g. Fev. 8. Dokumenty po istorii Gruzii Tom 1, pp. 579-80.
65. N. Papava, op.cit., p. 55.
66. Ibid., p. 90.
67. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
68. Ibid., p. 65. The quality of the teachers employed by the schools was often very poor. Thus Droeba (1878, no. 249) commented of the teacher of Georgian at the Technical Gymnasium that: "He knows as much about Georgian literature as you or I know about Chinese".
69. Sergi Meskhi, "K'art'uli enis devna" (The persecution of the Georgian language). Nadserebi Sergi Meskhisa (The Writings of Sergi Meskhi), (Tp'ilisi, 1903) pp. 316-18, and "k'art'uli enis devnaze" (On the persecution of the Georgian language), ibid., pp. 318-20. In another article published in 1872 entitled "Rusuli gazet'ebis azri dsvril kalkhebsa da samshoblo enazed" (The view of Russian newspapers on minority peoples and the native language) (Droeba no. 45, 17.11.1872), Sergi Meskhi took to task the Russian journal Golos' for its assertions that the only people opposed to the abolition of teaching native languages in schools were those associated with the Armenian paper Mshak (The Cultivator) and the Young Armenians' Party, and that if the peoples of Transcaucasia wanted progress and to achieve equality with Russia, they would have to learn Russian and adopt its civilisation. Golos' further maintained that it was inadmissible to have two or more nations within the organism of one state. Aside from rejecting Golos' assertions, Meskhi pointed out that such was the nature of the debate on education that Georgians and Armenians who defended the right of children to an education in their own language were immediately branded as nationalists.
70. A. K'ut'elia, Filosofskie i obshchestvenno - politicheskie vzglyady Akakiya Tsereteli (T'bilisi, 1972), p. 117.
71. Ibid., p. 125.
72. G. Petriashvili, "Am droebis k'art'velebi" (Contemporary Georgians), Droeba, 29.7.1866, no. 22. As was noted above, the Georgian intelligentsia did not replicate the pilgrimage of the Russian narodniki to rural Russia in the early 1870s. Perhaps the reason for this was that most retained close contacts with the countryside, and being fully aware of the backwardness and inertia of village life, avoided romanticising the peasantry.
73. S. Meskhi, "Chveni mamebi da shvilebi" (Our fathers and sons), Droeba, 18.2.1872, no. 7.

74. A. K'ut'elia, op.cit., p. 129.
75. S. Meskhi, 'Akhali movaleoba' (The new duty) 1878. Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 486-92.
76. Unlike other leading members of the t'ergdaleulni, Niko Nikoladze did not return to Georgia after completing his degree in St. Petersburg. Nikoladze remained in Russia, where he developed close personal ties with the Chernyshvsky family. Before leaving for Paris in 1864 he had already written for the journals Iskra, Narodnoe Bogatsvo and Sovremennik. In 1864 he wrote an article for Kolokol on the effects of peasant emancipation in Georgia in which he recommended that Georgians acquaint themselves with the principles of the Russian commune. On his return to Georgia in 1870 Nikoladze worked with Giorgi Dseret'eli and Sergi Meskhi for Droebea, but this unity was short-lived and in 1874 he began to write for Tiflikskii Vestnik. In 1878 he established his own radical-democratic journal, Obzor, from which he advocated social and economic justice. Although a supporter of the idea of a Transcaucasian federation, his views on the nature of Georgia's future relationship with Russia and the native language led his erstwhile colleagues to label him a "slavophile".
77. S. Meskhi, Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 406-22.
78. Ibid., p. 417.
79. N. Papava, op.cit., p. 97.
80. Ibid., pp. 98-9.
81. Ibid., p. 101. For all the improvements, however, there remained a serious shortage of schools. Oliver Wardrop (The Kingdom of Georgia, op.cit., pp. 16-17) describing the situation in the 1880s noted that in T'bilisi Gubernia "there are only about 280 children at school for every 10,000 of the population, in the government of kutais only 250".
82. Ibid., p. 102.
83. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 85.
84. Ibid., p. 86.
85. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 106.
86. Ibid., p. 81.
87. Akaki Dseret'eli, Asi leb'sebi, op.cit., p. 198.
88. Alexandre Qazbegi, Elguja in k'art'uli literatura; krest'omat'ia XIXs (Georgian Literature. An Anthology. 19th Century) (T'bilisi, 1955).
89. As part of the drive by the t'ergdaleulni to prepare text books for Georgian children, Iakob Gogebashvali

wrote k'art'uli anbani (The Georgian Alphabet) and Pirveli sakit'khavi dsigni (A Primary Reader) in 1865, Bunebis Kari (Nature's Doorway) in 1868 and Deda ena (The Mother Language) in 1876. The latter is still in use in schools in Georgia to this day and has become a symbol of Georgian national culture. Gogebashvili also wrote Russkoe slovo a grammar of the Russian language for Georgian children.

90. M. Zandukeli, T'khzulebani, op.cit., pp. 459-60. Gogebashvili sought to inspire his readers with his own dedication to the nation. There could be nothing worse than someone who betrayed his own people. In the story Sashineli sasjeli moghalatisa (The Terrible Punishment of the Traitor) for instance, a certain Qorghanishvili betrays the Georgian army to the Persians. Despite the protection of the latter, however, Qorghanishvili is hunted down and thrown into an abyss. In the abyss, starving wolves scent the body, but turn away in disgust on seeing whose it is.
91. T'emur Jagodnishvili, op.cit., p. 43.
92. Valerian It'onishvili, Ilia Tchavtchavadze da sak'art'velos et'nograp'ia (Ilia Tchavtchavadze and the Ethnography of Georgia), (T'bilisi, 1963), p. 83. Tchavtchavadze emphasised the importance of ethnography to the study of the Georgian nation in an article for Iveria published in 1887 entitled, "khalkhis chveulebat'a shesdsavlis shesakheb" (On the study of the people's customs).
93. To this end, Droeba sent journalists all over Georgia to cover local issues and report on local customs and attitudes. Reports from the various regions and districts of the country became a regular feature in the paper as it sought to help towards building national self consciousness.
94. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 173.
95. S. Meskhi, Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 280-2.
96. G.A. Galoyan, op.cit., p. 292.
97. N. Namoradze, "Evropis khalkhebis erovnul-ganmat'avisup'lebeli modzraoba da k'art'uli sazogadoebrivi azri gazet Droebis mikhedvit". (The national liberation movement of the European peoples and Georgian social thought according to the newspaper Droeba. Matsne, no. 4, 1979, pp. 21-24. Apart from articles on Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Poland Ilia Tchavtchavadze, Iakob Gogebashvili, Giorgi Dseret'eli, Sergi Meskhi and others wrote frequently on the Irish question. Articles began to appear from 1866 expressing sympathy for the Fenians and in 1867 the text of the "Proclamation of the Irish People" was published in Droeba.
98. Paata P'iranishvili, "'Risorgimento' da XIX saukunis II nakhevis K'art'uli sazogadoebrivi azri" (The 'Risorgimento' and Georgian social thought in the second half

of the 19th century). T'bilisi universitetis shromebi. Istoria, khelovnebat'mtsodneoba, et'nograp'ia. T205. (The Works of T'bilisi University v. 205. History, History of Art, Ethnography), (T'bilisi, 1979), p. 151.

99. Ibid., p. 145.
100. N. Namoradze, op.cit., p. 16.
101. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 140. In his address to the Georgian soldiers in 1877 the Vice-Regent of the Transcaucasus proclaimed: "Behind you stands the famous military past of the Caucasus: before you, the fields and fortresses where your fathers and brothers spilled their blood".
102. S. Meskhi, "Osmalos Sak'art'velo" (Turkish Georgia), Nadserebi, op.cit., p. 282.
103. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 168. It is worth noting that while Georgian territorial irredentism concentrated on Turkey, publicity was also given to the plight of Georgians living in Persia. "Sparseli k'art'velebi" (Persian Georgians), Droeba, no. 187, 6.10.1877. For an English account of the history of Georgians in Persia see P. Oberling "Georgians and Circassians in Iran", Studia Caucasica, The Hague, 1963, pp. 127-144.
104. P. Mtchedlishvili, "K'art'velebi osmalet'shi" (Georgians in Turkey), Droeba, no. 39, 10.4.1877.
105. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 181.
106. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 140.
107. Sh. Megrelidze, Zakavkaz'e v russko turetskoi voine 1877 gg (T'bilisi, 1972), p. 91.
108. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 169.
109. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 141.
110. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 171.
111. S. Meskhi, "Akhlats' shedzenili sak'art'velo" (Newly acquired Georgia), Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 459-64. "Akhal movaleoba" (The new task), Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 486-92 and "Akhlats' shemoert'ebuli k'art'velebi" (Newly united Georgians), Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 493-96.
112. S. Meskhi, ibid., "Akhal movaleoba" pp. 486-92.
113. A. Ioseliani, "80-iani dslebis reaktsia da sak'art'velos sazogadoebrivi dzalebi" (Georgia's social forces and the reaction of the 1880s), Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.5, op.cit., p. 643.
114. M. Gap'rindashvili, "Erovnul-ganmat'avisup'lebeli modzraoba", op.cit., p. 460.

115. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 167.
116. Ibid., p. 138.
117. Moskovskie Vedomosti was edited by M.N. Katkov, a Russian Nationalist and Pan-Slav propogandist, who played an important part in shaping government policy in the 1880s.
118. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli, Tomi 8, (Collected Works V.8), (T'bilisi, 1957), pp. 10-12.
119. A. Ioseliani, "80-iani dslebis reaktsia", op.cit., p. 644.
120. A. Ioseliani, Sak'art'velos istoriis problemebi, op.-cit., p. 247.
121. Ibid., p. 179.
122. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, "Gazet'i kavkazi da k'art'veli khalkhi" (The Georgian people and the newspaper kavkaz, T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli T.8, op.cit., p. 19.
123. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 139.
124. Ibid., p. 139-140. Tsarist agents agitated among the people of Atchara to the effect that they had closer affinities with the Turks than the Georgians. The government also retained Turkish as the medium of instruction in the schools.
125. A. Bendianishvili, Eronvnuli sakit'khi sak'art'veloshi, 1801-1921 (The National Question in Georgia, 1801-1921) (T'bilisi, 1980), p 140. A Georgian language newspaper Drosha (The Flag), published in Paris in 1873 advocated a free Caucasian federation and in 1874 a congress of Caucasian peoples was held in Geneva at which all but the populists favoured the idea of a Transcaucasian federal republic.
126. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, "k'vat'a ghaghadi" (The voice of the stones), T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli, T.8, op.cit., p. 106. The title of this long critique refers to the inscription found on many of the ancient stone monuments found in Georgia and Armenia and also perhaps to the practice of some Armenians of erasing Georgian inscriptions or replacing stones bearing Georgian inscriptions with Armenian ones. (p. 108).
127. Ibid., p. 97.
128. A. Bendianishvili, Agraruli urt'iert'obani sak'art'veloshi 1890-1917 dslebshi (Agrarian Relations in Georgia 1890-1917), (T'bilisi, 1965), p. 55.
129. Ibid., p. 53.
130. Ibid., p. 58.
131. Ibid., pp. 60-61.

132. O. Wardrop, op.cit., pp. 161-62.
133. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 147.
134. Ibid., p. 153.
135. Ibid., p. 159.
136. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, "Katkovis pasukhad" (In reply to Katkov), T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli T.8, op.cit., pp. 10-12.
137. A. Ioseliani, op.cit., p. 665. The closure of Droeba temporarily left Georgia without a journal in the national language since Shroma (Labour) and Imedi (Hope), populist journals, had been closed in 1883. Iveria however, reappeared at the end of 1885.
138. Ibid., p. 658.
139. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 157.
140. Georgian literary society, Dsignebis katalogi (A Catalogue of Books), (Tp'ilisi, 1904). Akaki Dseret'eli, who was at his most prolific and patriotic in the 1880s, and 1890s, was joined in this period by another of the great modern Georgian poets, Vazha P'shavela, whose verse is most remarkable for its depiction of the harshness and nobility of life in the Georgian mountains. However, despite his overriding passion for the mountain regions of which he was himself a product, much of his poetry evinces the same concern for patriotic themes as Dseret'eli's. Thus his Ardsivi (The Eagle) (1887) which allegorises the fate of Georgia:

I saw a wounded eagle
fighting against carrion crows;
the poor creature was trying to rise,
but could no longer stand;
it trailed one wing along the ground,
and blood oozed down its chest.
Curse your mothers, carrion!
I have fallen into your clutches at a bad time,
Otherwise I would see you down,
strewn, scattered across the valley.

(Vazha P'shavela; T'khzulebani or tomad, T.1 (Collected Works in Two Volumes, Vol 1), (T'bilisi, 1979, p. 55) resembles Akaki Dseret'eli's Amirani (1884) in which the one powerful Amirani (the progenitor of the Prometheus of Greek legend), chained to the Caucasus and assaulted by crows, is used to symbolise the fate of Georgia.

141. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 161.
142. Ibid., p. 166.
143. Ibid., p. 167.

144. The difference of opinion among the t'ergdaleulni on social and economic issues is often cited as evidence of two distinct groups among the intelligentsia. This belief originated with Giorgi Dseret'eli, who maintained that Pirveli Dasi (The First Group) emerged around Sak'art'velos Moambe in the early 1860s, led by I. Tchavtchavadze. Dseret'eli claimed it represented liberal aristocratic opinion. Meore Dasi (The Second Group) allegedly formed around Droeba in the late 1860s and was considerably more progressive. The evidence for such a clear division is, however, limited as the lines separating the two groups are very hazy and, in any case, did not appear until the 1870s. Sergi Meskhi, for example, who, in most respects, would belong to Meore Dasi, did not rule out co-operation with the nobility to achieve independence. N. Nikoladze, too, made several efforts to persuade I. Tchavtchavadze to lead the Georgian intelligentsia in the early 1870s. At best the Sami dasis t'eoria (The three groups theory) helps identify the broad differences among the intelligentsia, but at worst it can give an impression of hard, political divisions which did not really exist.
145. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 67.
146. Ilia Tchavtchavadze, T'khzulebat'a sruli krebuli, T.5. (T'bilisi, 1955), pp. 122-23.
147. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 68.
148. Giorgi Dseret'eli, "k'ut'aisis saadgilmamulo banki da intelligentt'a partiebi (The K'ut'aisi land bank and the intelligentsia parties), Kvali, no. 12, 1899.
149. Abel Kikvidze, op.cit., pp. 74-75.
150. Sergi Meskhi, "K'alak'is akhali gamgeoba" (The city's new management), Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 222-23.
151. M. Gap'rindashvili, op.cit., pp. 29-30.
152. Ibid., p. 71.
153. G. Zakariadze, Niko Nikoladzis sotsialur-politikuri shekhedulebani (The Socio-Political Views of Niko Nikoladze), (T'bilisi, 1955), p. 180.
154. Sergi Meskhi, "Tp'ilisis sazogadoeba urt'iert'is ndobisa" (A Tp'ilisi society of mutual trust), Nadserebi, op.cit., p. 133.
155. Ibid., pp. 232-3.
156. Louise Nalbandian, The Armenian Revolutionary Movement (Berkely and Los Angeles, 1963), pp. 144-45. As the author notes, none of the Armenian groups took up the federal idea. It is worth noting too that the social origin of the Armenian intelligentsia was predominantly bourgeois, whilst that of the Georgian intelligentsia continued to be aristocratic.

157. Ivane Javakhishvili, Sak'art'velos sazghvrebi (Georgia's Frontiers), (Tp'ilisi, 1919), p. 45.
158. Ibid., pp. 40-42.
159. Giorgi Dseret'eli, "K'art'velt'a da somekht'a urt'-iert'oba" (Relations between Georgians and Armenians), Kvali, no. 17, 1893, p. 3.
160. Sergi Meskhi, "Akhaltsikhis k'art'velebi" (Akhaltsikhe's Georgians), Nadserebi, op.cit., pp. 339-40.
161. Giorgi Dseret'eli, "K'art'velt'a da somekht'a urt'-iert'oba", Kvali, no. 15, 1893.
162. Al. Bendianishvili, T'bilisis sak'alak'o t'vit'mmart'-veloba 1875-1917 dsds (T'bilisi's City Administration 1875-1917), (T'bilisi, 1960), p. 21.
163. Ibid., p. 24.
164. Ibid., p. 31. In 1897 32 per cent of the population of T'bilisi was Armenian and 43.7 per cent of the enfranchised population. The respective figures for Russians were 26.8 per cent and 24.9 per cent and for Georgians 27.7 per cent and 18.4 per cent.
165. According to the All Russian Census of 1897 15.4 per cent of Georgian men living in T'bilisi Gubernia were literate and 12.4 per cent of the women. Literacy was markedly higher in urban areas and in the 10-40 age group. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiiskoi imperii 1897g. Vol. LXIX, op.cit., p. XII. The same figures were not available for K'ut'aisi Gubernia, but the fact that 16.4 per cent of Georgian peasants living in villages were literate suggests that the overall level of literacy was higher. Again literacy was higher in urban areas and in the 10-40 age group. Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiiskoi imperii 1897g Vol. LXVI, .op.cit., pp. 54-57.

The National Question and Political Parties

The struggle to develop a Georgian national consciousness had come a long way since the 1860s, when the t'ergdaleulni first began their campaign to galvanise the population into the defence of its native language and culture. By the 1890s, 30 years after Ilia Tchavtchavadze, Akaki Dseret'eli, K'irile Lort'k'ip'anidze and others first returned from their studies in St. Petersburg, socio-economic developments and the efforts of the radical intelligentsia to inject the population with a sense of national pride, had combined to ensure that few Georgians were unaware of their collective identity and that among the intelligentsia there now existed a determined commitment to protect the national heritage against Russification. Niko Nikoladze, perhaps the most committed advocate of close ties with Russia among the t'ergdaleulni, was, nevertheless, quick to perceive the movement of popular opinion when, as early as 1865, he wrote in Kolokol:

The Georgian people grows daily more imbued with the idea of national independence. We would not be in the least bit mistaken to say that at present the Russian government in Georgia has no well-wishers, beyond a handful of court notables... leading officials and a few major property owners... all the rest live and think imbued with the spirit of nationalism.¹

It seems likely, however, that Niko Nikoladze's own fear of nationalism and particularly of separatism, led him to exaggerate the nature of this new mood of self-assertion. Certainly, in 1865 the idea of national independence had few adherents, even among the intelligentsia, whilst among the mass of the population the question scarcely even arose.

There was, however, coupled with an attachment to the symbols of Georgian culture, a growing resentment towards the practices of the government, which was giving rise to the emergence of a cautious nationalism, constrained by the memory of the country's recent past and a realistic assessment of Georgia's ability to sustain its independence against likely Turkish aggression. In this respect, West Georgia was particularly vulnerable as Noe Zhordania, leader of the Social-Democratic Party in Georgia and President of the independent Georgian republic till its fall in 1921, later recalled in his memoirs. Describing the attitude of the peasantry in his native Guria² in the late 19th century towards the questions of separatism and the Russian presence in the area, he noted the absence of the "national direction" in the province, and ascribed this principally to the fact that:

Guria was situated on the Turkish border and in constant fear of attack and destruction and was, therefore, greatly satisfied with Russia, which was stationed on the border and defended them.

The intelligentsia was, moreover, well aware of the futility of Georgia struggling in isolation against the tsarist empire, and for those among it who had needed reminding of the coercive power of the state of which they were a part, the crushing defeat of the Polish nationalist movement in the 1860s was a salutary lesson, not least because the reluctance of the Polish peasantry to support a cause led by the aristocracy was a reminder of the social divisions that fissured Georgian society.

On the positive side, as was emphasised in the preceding chapter, the t'ergdaleulni were closely attached to the

Russian democratic movement and identified the continuation of Georgia's burgeoning national revival with the overthrow of the autocracy, and the establishment of a federal state in which Georgia, either as an autonomous national unit, or as part of a federal Caucasian republic, would be devolved considerable powers to determine the course of her future development.⁴

By the 1890s, however, the t'ergdaleulni were no longer the aggressive, iconoclastic, young radicals who had set out to shatter the traditional mould of Georgian society in the 1860s, but the elder statesmen of the intelligentsia, the figure-heads of the movement for national renaissance, and firmly committed to the goal of class reconciliation and unity, believing that only by mending the bridge fractured by social antagonism could Georgia ensure its national revival. This and other accepted wisdoms, however, came under increasing scrutiny towards the end of the century as a new generation of Georgian youth began to question the relevance of ideas developed in the context of the 1860s and 1870s to the problems confronting the country in the 1890s.

5.1 The T'ergdaleulni under Challenge

The decade of the 1880s in Georgia, as elsewhere in the Russian empire, was a period in which the radical intelligentsia was forced on the defensive as the autocracy attacked the revolutionary movement and endeavoured to undermine the liberal reforms conceded over the previous 20 years. In the Transcaucasus, as was noted above, these years witnessed a marked intensification of official chauvinism and a protracted campaign to Russify the indigenous cultures of the region. In this new climate, papers like

Droeba, Shroma (Labour) and Imedi (Hope) found themselves under increasing pressure from the censors, until one by one they were closed down, reaching the point in 1885 when Iveria was the sole surviving political and literary journal still being printed in Georgian. In these circumstances, the journal's editor, Ilia Tchavtchavadze, was faced with the dilemma of whether to allow Iveria to follow the fate of its contemporaries, or to comply with the censors' requirements and contrive, by whatever means possible, to defend the gains of the past two decades. Tchavtchavadze opted for the latter course, believing that however restricted the content of the journal, it was nevertheless important that the movement for national-cultural revival in Georgia retain a central point of focus for its literary activities. In pursuit of this end, he transformed Iveria from a monthly journal into a daily and called on all Georgians, regardless of political persuasion, to unite around the paper in its defence of the nation against current tsarist policies.⁵

Iveria remained the sole Georgian political paper in print until the appearance of Kvali in 1893, and despite the emerging opposition to its approach to the problems of contemporary Georgian life, continued to assert considerable influence on the views of the intelligentsia into the early years of the 20th century. Although the views most commonly expressed in the paper were those of Ilia Tchavtchavadze and others of the 1860s' generation of Georgian radicals, most notably to the effect that in the existing conditions the intelligentsia should be directing its efforts to overcoming class antagonism and uniting all Georgians in a patriotic struggle for national renaissance and, by implication,

liberation, Iveria was by no means the mouthpiece of one group alone. Before the publication of Kvali commenced, the paper provided an outlet, in the absence of any alternative, for all opponents of the tsarist government. Thus, the small Georgian populist movement, which since the closure of its own journal Imedi in 1883, had been without a publishing organ of its own, willingly cooperated with Tchavtchavadze despite their contrary views.⁶

But while Iveria was for so long the solitary legal voice of Georgian resistance, the dilution of the content of the legal press led to the appearance of a plethora of handwritten, underground news-sheets and journals in the educational institutes and schools of Georgia.⁷ Although these uniformly adopted the views and approach of the t'ergdaleulni, emphasising patriotism, education in the national language, the defence of national culture and greater social equality, it was, nevertheless, of significance that the absence of a forthright, legal Georgian paper should have encouraged Georgian youth to take their own, albeit rather restricted, literary initiatives. The seeds were being sown, in effect, for the development of a serious challenge to the t'ergdaleulni's intellectual domination of Georgian society in a decade's time. For the time being, however, the students and pupils of the 1880s were almost wholly indebted to the writings and poetry of Ilia Tchavtchavadze, Akaki Dseret'eli, Iakob Gogebashvili, and other figureheads of the same generation. X

Much the same could be said of the outlook of Georgian students being educated in the universities of the Russian empire, but here, the most important stage in the development of the new generation of the radical

intelligentsia came towards the end of the decade, when moves were undertaken to set up a united organisation of Georgian students. According to police records, the idea was first mooted in 1889 among students at the University of St. Petersburg, who then wrote to their counterparts in Moscow suggesting closer contacts and unification of their respective circles.⁹ 59

The enthusiastic reception of the plan in Moscow led, in turn, to the inclusion of Georgian student groups at the Universities of Odessa, Kharkov, Kiev and Warsaw, and a number of other Russian educational establishments, and in July 1882, to the holding of a secret conference in K'ut'aisi, attended by 20 appointed delegates. The issues raised centred on the national question, Georgian-Armenian relations, the loss of Georgian land to foreigners and the idea of a federation of Caucasian peoples, and, in the main, repeated the preoccupations of the older generation of the radical intelligentsia. But whilst the influence of the t'ergdaleulni predominated in the discussions, the question of organisation, almost ignored in the past, now emerged as a matter of crucial importance. Till the present, it was maintained, the opposition to the government in Georgia had, for all its merits, been too diffuse. What was needed, therefore, was a centralised and clandestine organisation with its own programme and set of aims to coordinate the activity of all its members.⁹ 82

At this time, many Georgian students, sharing the reverence of education and knowledge inculcated in large part by the radical intelligentsia over the last 30 years, regarded themselves as the torch-bearers of a new society, 600

destined to lead the Georgian people out of their ignorance and into a more just, equitable and rational world. This sense of mission and responsibility was recalled by the prominent Georgian Social-Democrat Grigol Uratadze in his reminiscences of his first childhood encounter with a student in his native village of Azana. Describing his new neighbour, who was on vacation from Russia, he observed:

The student and the student body as a whole were a genuine cult for my student neighbour. And this was not because he himself was a student. No, he was sincerely convinced that only the students, through their struggle, could change the existing order and that the students were the sole force which could lead the people out of darkness and give it happiness. He believed in this so deeply that when he spoke about it he became consumed with passion and it seemed that before you stood a man who at any moment would take off and plunge himself into battle.¹⁰

Thus, the new organisation, despite its ultimate desire to involve the mass of the population in the struggle for national liberation, gave no thought to the establishment of workers' or peasants' cells, but concentrated all its efforts on those institutes of higher education at which there were known circles of Georgian students. The aim of the organisation was the liberation of Georgia from tsarist domination, and the means to that end, selfless service to the nation. Interestingly, the delegates voted against organisational links with Russian revolutionaries on the grounds that active involvement in the all-Russian movement would sap the strength of their limited resources.¹¹

Following the K'ut'aisi conference, the Warsaw university group assumed a particularly active role in the drawing up of a programme and statutes and was responsible for naming the organisation Sak'art'velos t'avisup'lebis liga

(The Georgian League of Liberty). The preamble to the programme and statutes again cast the student body in the role of enlightener of the people:

Georgia is an oppressed state [it declared]. The Georgian people is threatened with the danger of losing its native language, its customs and its land. The Georgian community lacks the material wealth and the means for its intellectual development. In its centuries-long history the Georgian people has often experienced similar plight and found a way out. Nor will it lose hope now. To prevent the dispersal of our strengths from the beginning and to conduct a clear-sighted struggle, we are creating Sak'art'velos t'avisup'lebis Liga. T'avisup'lebis liga plans to bring Georgia out on to the broad path of socio-economic and political development. It is trying to explain to the Georgian people the causes of its backwardness, to make it aware of its own sorry state and to organise it to fight for freedom from oppression.¹²

The programme went on to underline the importance of education to the future of the people and the nation, declared the League's unity with the struggle of the Russian people and the oppressed national minorities of the empire against the tsar, and called on all Georgians to unite in the struggle for a federated Caucasus in which neither national nor religious bigotry would be tolerated.

Despite its desire for unity, however, the League found itself divided on a number of issues; in particular, what sort of relationship should it have with the Russian revolutionary movement, and should or should not the proposed Caucasian federation declare its independence of the Russian state? These and other issues were reviewed at the League's second conference held in T'bilisi in July 1893. But by then, such were the differences of opinion within the organisation, that no policy decisions could be reached.¹³

It would appear that although most of the delegates and, in all probability, most of the Georgian student body,

still stood on the same broad, democratic position occupied by the t'ergdaleulni that there had, nevertheless, been a demonstrative shift in the balance of forces in the year intervening between the two conferences, and that new currents of thought were beginning to make their presence felt. The Warsaw circle, in particular, showed signs of being influenced by Marxist ideas, and in Noe Zhordania and P'ilipe Makharadze, already possessed two future leaders of Georgian Social-Democracy, one of the Menshevik wing, the other of the Bolsheviks.¹⁴

However, in 1894, before it could put any of its plans into operation, the police brought the League to an abrupt end, uncovering the entire network and arresting the main participants. Nevertheless, despite its failure to achieve its purpose, the League had for a while provided a forum for the emerging generation of radical students to share and develop its views and, as such, marks an early step in the evolution of a new political force in Georgian society.

A rather more significant step was taken in December 1892, when a group of 13 of the most radically minded representatives of the young Georgian intelligentsia, certain of whom had been members of T'avisup'alis Liga, met in Qvirila (now Zestap'oni) with the aim of establishing sufficient common ground to produce a joint programme stating their views and ends.¹⁵ By the admission of the participants, there was considerable confusion among them about what the correct course of action should be, but there is no doubt that a number of those assembled in the small West Georgian village regarded themselves as Social-Democrats and the representatives of a new current of thought in the

country. Up till now, the terms of the debate in Georgia about the country's future had been determined by the t'ergdaleulni, with no other group possessing either the moral or intellectual standing to challenge them. Thus, despite the indubitable changes taking place within the country - the spread of commodity relations, the diversification of the economy, the growth of the market, the decline of the t'avadaznauroba, the social differentiation of the peasantry, the emergence of an increasingly influential bourgeoisie, the exacerbation of rural poverty and accelerating urbanisation - the debate on Georgia's future continued, in the main, to hinge on the question of whether or not capitalism was desirable in Georgia, and on the need to unite all sections of Georgian society around the nation, regardless of their economic interests. The dominant view of those gathered at Qvirila, however, was that those who continued to reason along these lines had their heads buried in sand, and were no longer in tune with the society around them. Capitalism, they maintained, was not something one picked off a shelf to be retained or rejected according to one's tastes, but developed regardless of one's desires through the interplay of social and economic forces.

The Qvirila meeting, it is true, did not produce the unity of purpose or the programme hoped of it, but by the time of its second meeting in February 1893, the group, soon to be labelled Mesame Dasi or the "Third Group" by Giorgi Dseret'eti, the editor of Kvali, was able to unite around a programme written by Noe Zhordania entitled Ekonomiuri dsarmateba da erovneba (Economic Progress and Nationality), in which the author produced the first attempted Marxist analysis of Georgian society and sought to indicate the fallacies

in the arguments of the 1860s and 1870s generation of radicals.¹⁷

In the last 20-25 years [he wrote] our way of life has changed perceptibly. Following the abolition of batonqmob, the construction of the railways and the postal and telegraph system, industry and commerce came into their own... The merchant, not satisfied with operating in one defined area, wants his goods to dominate everywhere, to compete with foreign goods and conquer new markets... Thus, different areas are linked together materially. The village, the town and the district emerge from their particular existences and in one area the prominent crop becomes corn, in another wheat and in a third wine, and so on... Economic centres are being established to which needed goods are being taken and from which they are being delivered; this is drawing the people together: merchants, artisans and workers. Here too, different administrative and public institutions are forming, schools opening, the educated and scholarly are coming together, exchange of ideas is emerging and literature is rising to its feet... In short, new conditions have arisen... the new life has given birth to new demands, has complicated and multiplied formerly simple relations, divided labour economically between the nation's parts and plunged the country into the course of world commerce.¹⁸

Whereas Georgian society had previously consisted of three mutually exclusive classes, the t'avadaznauroba, the clergy and peasantry, between which there was very limited social mobility, economic change, he continued, particularly since the emancipation of the peasantry, had introduced unprecedented social fluidity. The former pre-eminence of the t'avadaznauroba was fading as its property was mortgaged or sold to the increasingly acquisitive bourgeoisie, whilst the former social homogeneity of the peasantry was giving way to the emergence of a prosperous minority on the one hand, and a majority trapped in a vicious circle of debt on the other. In these conditions, wrote Zhordania, the social divide was ceasing to be between the t'avadaznauroba and the

peasantry, but to be between the rich and the poor, the haves and have nots. Silbistro Jibladze, another of those present at the Qvirila meeting in December 1892, and destined to play a prominent role in the establishment of the social-democratic movement in Georgia, underlined Zhordania's message by emphasising the new social relations dominating the country:

...our contemporary life presents two new antagonistic estates or classes. On the one hand, the representatives of physical and mental labour and on the other, the parasitical bourgeois-capitalists; the lot of the former is unbearable labour and drudgery, while that of the latter is to expropriate the fruit of this labour. This is where the bridge has collapsed in our country and where it has been destroyed in some places for a long time already.¹⁹

By his use of the "collapsed bridge" metaphor (chatekhili khidi), Jibladze explicitly directed his attack against the group gathered around Iveria and, in particular, those representatives of the t'ergdaleulni whose views on class relations remained encapsulated in the phrase "chatekhili khidis gamt'eleba" (the repair of the broken bridge). Quite clearly, moreover, this amounted to more than just a critique of Iveria's analysis of social relations in Georgia, but was also, because it focused directly on the central pillar of its approach to the national question, class unity, an attack on the content of its national programme.

To many in Iveria this challenge was tantamount to heresy, a denial, in effect, of what they had fought for, of 30 years of selfless struggle for the national cause and, as such, goes a long way to explaining the indignation of the response from some of the paper's most noted correspondents.

It was not until 1894, however, that the lines of battle became sharply delineated; in the meantime it was not at all unusual for Iveria to publish work by the representatives of the new intellectual current. Thus, in accordance with Iveria's policy of accepting a broad range of views and encouraging young writers, the short-stories and novels of Egnate Ninoshvili, generally regarded as the leader of the Qvirila group, depicting the social forces at work in the Georgian countryside, were frequently published in Tchavtchavadze's paper without drawing a particularly hostile response.²⁰ In this Iveria was joined by Kvali, which in the first year since its inception in January 1893, did little to distinguish itself politically from its senior companion. That is, it advocated the democratisation of life, raising the level of national self-awareness, and the development of national culture and national unity. In certain respects, it even appeared more conservative than Iveria, criticising the strict policy of the saadgilmamulo bank on issuing loans to the t'avadaznauroba and recommending, among other things, that the gospel should occupy pride of place in all Georgians' reading.²¹ But Giorgi Dseret'eli, who had rarely seen eye to eye with his more illustrious rival, Ilia Tchavtchavadze, was, it seems, still seeking a new direction for his paper and while not actually espousing the views of Zhordania, Ninoshvili and their colleagues himself, Kvali began to give them increasing coverage. Thus an article by Ninoshvili appeared in 1893 criticising Iakob Gogebashvili's argument that technical schools were of greater benefit to Georgia than classical gymnasia, since the former allowed landowners to increase both their own and the national income by exploiting the skills of school leavers. It pointed

out that although Britain was the most technologically advanced and the wealthiest country in the world, its workers were still impoverished. The issue, therefore, was not so much national wealth, as how it was distributed, and education had an important role to play in shaping the population's attitude to this and related problems.

Capitalism [wrote Ninoshvili] requires neither our permission nor our praise and glorification; it will arrive unrequested. The task of the intelligentsia and of writers is to prepare the ground for wealth so that the worker will reap the benefit of his labour, and no one will die of hunger in the streets.²²

At the end of his first year as joint editor with his wife Anastasia T'umanishvili-Dseret'eli, Giorgi Dseret'eli was able to observe:

Kvali has already gathered around it the new young, future generation, which is prepared to sacrifice itself for the sake of the country and considers itself fortunate.²³

But the real turning point for Kvali, the point at which its differences with Iveria and to a lesser extent Moambe (The Herald),²⁴ became unbridgeable came in May 1894, following the death through tuberculosis of Egnate Ninoshvili at the age of 35. Reporting in person on the funeral in Kontchkat'i, West Georgia, Giorgi Dseret'eli launched a vituperative and largely gratuitous attack against Iveria's editors, accusing them of having no greater interest than lining their own pockets whilst the nation stood in danger, the tone of which undoubtedly further widened the chasm now yawning open between the two papers.²⁵ But of greater importance was Dseret'eli's commentary on Silbistro Jibladze's funeral oration, describing Georgia as

a land riven by class struggle, through which the seeds of capitalism's downfall were ripening. The duty "of the best representatives of the new generation", he declared, was to prepare the people for that moment, and to hasten its arrival.²⁶ It was this speech that inspired Dseret'eli to declare the coalescence of a new ideological force in Georgian political life, a force to which he gave the name Mesame Dasi (The Third Group), and which has subsequently come to be seen as the precursor of the Social-Democratic Party in Georgia. Rather curiously, however, Dseret'eli claimed that "not one article of their programme contradicted" his own ideas, and indeed went on to summarise it in terms which would suggest he was correct: the need to bring literacy to the people, to introduce scientifically founded ideas, to keep the people abreast of world developments and to use everything worthwhile in world development to help the people.²⁷ If this had been all the programme had amounted to, it would not, of course, have contradicted either his views or, for that matter, the views of many of those associated with Iveria and Moambe. But since it, in fact, amounted to rather more than that, it may be that Dseret'eli had not fully grasped what the programme implied. Nevertheless, his articles in Nos. 21 and 22 of Kvali covering Jibladze's funeral, do mark a turning point in the development of political thought in Georgia, for although under Dseret'eli Kvali continued to be guided by the same broad democratic outlines as in the past, there is no doubt that from this moment Mesame Dasi came to acquire an increasingly prominent place within the paper and a guaranteed means of airing its beliefs publicly.

From this moment, too, the rift between Iveria and Kvali and to a lesser extent between Moambe and Kvali began to become more pronounced. Giorgi Dseret'eli attempted to explain their differences in an editorial at the beginning of 1895.

When new demands grow stronger in society and a new party comes to the fore, it is inevitable that sooner or later, this will be followed by the appearance of a journal expressing its point of view. We must regard the founding of Kvali as just such a circumstance. On its appearance our thinking generation divided into two camps. Georgian thought tore away the enveloping fog and soon fierce collisions occurred between the different schools of thought.²⁸

Whilst there was some truth in this assessment, particularly as regards the differences between the Mesame Daselebi and Iveria, it is not an entirely satisfactory explanation. Most importantly, it sweeps aside the manifest differences between Giorgi Dseret'eli's position and the Marxist viewpoints of Noe Zhordania, Jibladze, Makharadze and others of the new generation writing for Kvali. Thus, for all his opposition to Iveria, G. Dseret'eli's personal opinions were frequently compatible with those of his rivals. In the first edition of the paper in January 1893, for example, he declared himself in favour of class unity:

There is one estate which unites everyone - consciousness of one's national identity and dedication to the people.²⁹

This was, of course, in 1893, but precisely two years later, several months after his recognition of Mesame Dasi, and only four days after his article purporting to see Kvali as the standard-bearer of the new progressive camp of a polarised society, he criticised the alleged bias of Iveria

and stated:

Fortunately for us, the main part of our nation is not involved in these rival parties (dasebi), but listens to all ideas and controversial discussions impartially...³⁰

Mesame Dasi, he went on to explain, was a group

that has rejected class particularism. It has declared its interest to be the entire Georgian nation, regardless of class, origin or estate. The Georgian nation is not just the peasantry or the t'avadaznauroba but a collective body which is peasant and t'avadaznauri, priest and merchant, official and rent collector. This collective entity is the Georgian nation, formed by a historical culture and consolidated by its own language, its own national faith and its own national existence. We should try to support all circumstances, all measures, which can strengthen the whole Georgian nation, invigorate it in its totality, politically and economically. We should also oppose any activity which could lead to the domination of the collective by any one part and to its advance over the other parts.³¹

In fact, it was not Iveria that supported the division of Georgian society into parties, but Mesame Dasi, which regarded them as the natural consequences of the division of society into antagonistic classes. Iveria's espousal of the "common ground" theory was directed at preventing precisely such a division.

The bitterly polemical tone of the debate between Giorgi Dseret'eli and Iveria cannot, therefore, be attributed solely, or even mainly, to ideological rivalry. There were, of course, differences between them. Dseret'eli, like Niko Nikoladze and Sergi Meskhi, till his death in 1883, supported the industrial development of Georgia, encouraged Georgians to compete on level terms with the Armenian bourgeoisie, and saw no special role for the t'avadaznauroba in the future development of the nation. This did not lead

effect that the advocates of the "common ground" between the t'avadaznauroba and the peasantry were using the idea as a cover for reestablishing the domination of the t'avadaznauroba. There was ample evidence in the writings of the t'ergdaleulni that those of them who did support the common ground concept also envisaged a future in which the nobility would be shorn of its patriarchal privileges. It may be, therefore, that the tone of the debate owed as much to the poor personal relations between Giorgi Dseret'eli and certain of those gathered around Iveria, most notably, I. Tchavtchavadze, as to genuine policy disputes. The insinuation too in Dseret'eli's report on Ninoshvili's funeral that Iveria's niggardly and tardy payment for the author's reports and stories may have hastened his death, certainly appears to have soured relations further without adding to the quality of the debate.³²

The equally rancorous conflict between Iveria and Mesame Dasi was to some extent a spill-over of the clash with G. Dseret'eli, insofar as the group attacked Iveria from the pages of Dseret'eli's paper. But in this case it also reflected a deeper ideological and generational rift.

Youth looks on the habits, ways and theories of its predecessors with a critical eye...

wrote Ninoshvili in a manner reminiscent of a similar division in the 1860s,

...in short, at everything which in one way or another has importance to human life. Whatever, in its opinion, seems unnecessary baggage for the progress of life, ...it throws out. The old generation sees that the principles acknowledged as supreme moral principles in its time are rejected

by the new generation as immoral and inappropriate to progress..., the old generation sees the changes in life and the newly introduced elements, but doesn't understand them and, therefore, sees everything as mistaken and lacking in truth, because it has not experienced, discussed or studied these novel developments.³³

Thus on the one side, the Iveria intellectuals, mostly in their mid-50s now and jealous of their authority and status, mockingly dismissed G. Dseret'eli's claim that the young writers on Kvali represented a new political grouping in Georgian society, while the latter, stung by Iveria's condescension and anxious to assert themselves, responded by denigrating the achievements of the t'ergdaleulni and questioning the relevance of their ideas. Jibladze, for example, describing Iveria and Moambe in 1895, wrote:

Both in general share the same direction, both have the same slogan enscribed on their banner: patriarchal isolationism and the revival and consolidation of batonqmoba in a new guise. They see social progress and social interests through the eyes of a long-formed principle. Of course there are differences between them. But these differences relate more to the external side of things than the internal. Their direction in our literature should be acknowledged as 'reaction'.³⁴

Interestingly, Zhordania and Jibladze subsequently conceded that their attacks had at times been intemperate and unjust, but explained them in terms of the need to challenge the intellectual domination of the old generation.

...such excesses are characteristic of any new party [wrote Zhordania], which, seized by enthusiasm for new ideas emerges for the first time onto the field of action.³⁵

But the generation divide was also founded on clear ideological and policy differences. Iveria scoffed at the suggestion that Georgia was dividing into two antagonistic

classes, maintaining that the reverse was in fact the case, that the previous, rigid distinctions between the t'avadaz-nauroba and the peasantry had been blurred and that the only remaining division was not between classes, but between rich and poor. It was society's task to ameliorate those differences.

If we have any enemies [wrote V. Dseret'eli in Iveria], they are foreigners. We are all poor. Furthermore, there are no classes in our country.³⁶

At least until 1898, much of the debate between Iveria and Mesame Dasi centred not on the merits or otherwise of Marxism, but on whether or not capitalism existed in Georgia. Certain, though by no means all, of the Iveria group, maintained that it did not exist and, furthermore, that it was not desirable that it should do so, whilst Mesame Dasi pointed to the growing division of labour, the development of markets and commodity relations and of industries as incontestible proof that Georgia was no exception to the changes taking place in Russia and elsewhere in Europe. The Iveria writers feared that the emphasis on class differences would divide the nation against itself and thus prevent the realisation of national freedom. Political and economic differences should be submerged until this primary goal was achieved. Thus in 1897, Iveria announced:

A great task has arisen: the development of national self-consciousness through national self-defence and the development of the nation through European education and science. Today, due to the circumstance of our times, we all comprise one party, are imbued with the same idea. Our means and our method for realising this idea are identical. But if someone indicates some new means, we will accept it, so long as it does not contradict our idea and destroy the necessary unity of our nation.³⁷

But Mesame Dasi argued that this unity was, in any case, a myth and that Iveria was simply fooling itself when it purported to see the nation's parts drawing closer together. Zhordania likened the paper to a spoilt child who asks for the moon and begins to cry when told he can't have it. But no amount of crying could bring about the impossible.³⁸

Certain of the most prominent t'ergdaleulni were prepared to accept the existence, inevitability and even desirability of capitalism, and some, like Niko Nikoladze, had long called on Georgians to compete on equal terms with the Armenian bourgeoisie. But even among those who argued that not only was capitalism unavoidable in Georgia, but that it was already well ensconced, there were misgivings about the attitude of the mesame daselebi towards the national question, a belief that they cared little for either national sentiment or consciousness. Iakob Gogebashvili, for example, welcomed their defence of the working people, but added:

Social change alone is not enough for our country to flourish; we also consider it vital that we gain national freedom.³⁹

while Akaki Dseret'eli complimented their directness and honesty, but accused them of being over-negative to the past, of rolling all that was good and bad indiscriminately over the cliff.⁴⁰

But the claim that the mesame daselebi had no interest in national issues was not entirely justified. They too defended national culture and the right of Georgians to an education in their own language, but where they differed was

on the point of emphasis. They argued that the national question should not and could not be divorced from the social question, and that the t'ergdaleulni's preoccupation with national unity had caused them to lose sight of the socio-economic changes that had affected Georgia since the peasant reforms of the 1860s and 1870s. The fact of the matter, they declared, was that the same forces which had overcome the economic isolation of Georgia's regions in the 19th century and forged them into an increasingly inter-dependent social, economic and political bond, had also produced a society in which the minority depended for its well-being upon the exploitation of the labour of the majority. Their economic and political interests were diametrically opposed and to argue, therefore, in terms of national unity was to ignore this fundamental reality. In other words, Zhordania and his colleagues emphasised the paramountcy of socio-economic bonds over the national. Furthermore, they argued that Georgia's national interests were tied to its economic progress, to the development of its productive forces and its active participation in the world division of labour. If Georgia were to thrive as a nation, it would have to follow the road,

...along which Europe itself set out a long time ago and whose central pillar is secured on a base of trade, or commerce and industry. Production [wrote Zhordania], capitalist production - that's the key to Europe's strength. The great national division of labour first occurred in England in the 14th-16th centuries; the town grew apart from the village and urban life was stimulated. The modern capitalist structure was inculcated here... It was followed by France, Germany, and remaining European states and America... The ceaseless advance of capitalism was accompanied by fundamental changes in life. It variegated the manners and customs of the peoples, destroyed the old legal and political structure, shattered the idyllic, patriarchal relations, unified each

nation separately and joined others together, caused art, literature and science to flourish; in short, gave rise to such energy, such triumphant progress in mankind as had previously never been dreamed of. On the other hand, that same capitalism divided the nation into two parts: the rich and poor, the landowner and the landless peasants, the bourgeoisie and the worker. It also caused social division, gave birth to class struggle and brought the working people on to the political stage, thus digging its own grave.⁴¹

But although Zhordania placed the formation of the Georgian nation in the 19th century and regarded it as a product of capitalism, he also believed that the raw material of nationality - language, common ancestry and a common history - had long given the Georgian people a shared interest in the defence of their national identity. A psychological bond, in other words, united all Georgians and had been strengthened by the consolidation of the nation in the last century.⁴² In contradiction, moreover, of the accusations of excessive materialism levelled at him, Zhordania maintained that "the essential characteristic" of nationhood was whether or not a people felt itself to be a nation.⁴³ By this criterion, as he freely acknowledged, citing France as a case in point, people of all persuasions, classes and backgrounds could share certain interests which concerned "the entire nation's political-economic life". However, while such national interests might prove sufficient to unite the nation against a common external enemy, they could not prevent the emergence of political and economic dissidence in conditions of peace. National economic development perforce brought the component classes of the nation into conflict.⁴⁴

What Zhordania was saying, therefore, was not that national struggle should be entirely subsumed within the

economic and political struggle of the working people, but that Georgia had reached a point in its development where the shared interests of society were outweighed by the differences dividing it and that the future of the nation could best be served by indentifying its interests with those of its working people.

5.2 The Emergence of Political Parties

The Social-Democratic Party

The social tensions released by the peasant reforms mounted steadily in both the towns and villages of Georgia throughout the 1890s. The rural conditions described in Chapter 3 gave rise to sporadic, uncoordinated and angry outbursts of violence on the one hand and migration to the towns, particularly T'bilisi and Bat'umi, on the other, where despite the expansion of commerce and industry, the number of workers seeking employment vastly exceeded the number of jobs available. Such was the competition for work, moreover, that employers were able to dictate severe terms, to enforce piece-work and hire and fire on a daily basis. In T'bilisi the average working day exceeded 14 hours and reached 16-17 hours if one includes compulsory overtime, whilst workers were paid, on average, 60 kopecks to one ruble a day.⁴⁵ A poor wage in the best of circumstances, it becomes almost derisory when one recalls that many of those working in T'bilisi had gone there to earn enough to provide for families left behind in the villages. In addition to the insecurity, long hours and poor pay, the municipal council's policy of looking after the development of the inner city to the virtual neglect of the workers' suburbs ensured that they lived in conditions of the utmost

squalor.⁴⁶ An official investigation into the causes of the plague which struck Bat'umi in 1901 described the town's housing conditions:

The workers' lodgings are all built in the same long fashion, from thin planks, with low ceilings and are set out in lines or parallel rows; they are divided into small cage-like rooms. The floors ... are mostly laid directly on the ground, leaving no room for ventilation. The small, narrow porches alongside the rows of rooms and the dark, little windows besides each door are the sole features resembling human dwellings and distinguish them externally from stables. The floors were mostly rotten and full of holes ... there were signs of damp and the decay caused by it all over the walls and ceilings ... the little windows, usually one to a room, were covered in grime and grease; in place of the broken panes, the windows were boarded up with thin strips of wood, tin and cardboard, or stuffed full of old rags... The entire town is covered in a network of such houses, or to be more accurate, hovels... They ... are crowded with the poor who pay an exceptionally high price not just in money, but with their health ... these toiling people who live wherever they can rest their tormented bodies. They live in attics, in pitch-black, evil-smelling cellars where there are stacks of human beings instead of stacks of firewood; they live in damp, surrounded by the most awful stench and without light; in winter they keep warm through the combined heat of their own bodies and they live in terribly crowded conditions - five, seven or nine people in places where two to three men can barely fit... It hardly needs saying that such lodgings in Bat'umi - this kingdom of constant rain, damp and fever - have a ruinous, destructive effect on the tenants and especially on the growing bodies of children and do not just shake the roots of a person's health and sap his ability to work, but also reduce his life expectancy.⁴⁷

Nor does it need much saying that such conditions proved fertile breeding ground for unrest among the workers and were a direct cause of the strike movement which now began to deepen its roots in Georgia. The years 1894-96 witnessed large-scale strikes in the capital's biggest factories and its railway yards and workshops demanding higher

pay, shorter hours, an end to fines at work and improved medical services,⁴⁸ while in December 1898, a mass strike by railway workers, which began in T'bilisi and spread to Mikhailovo and Samtredia, provided clear evidence that they were learning the benefits of discipline and organisation. For the first time the strikers held firm against government pressure, arrests and the use of troops, and on 21st December, a week after the strike had begun, the government conceded to the railwaymen's demands.⁴⁹

The same conditions also ensured a sympathetic response to the increasingly numerous and active social-democratic cells emerging in the railway workshops and in the T'bilisi workers' districts of Nadzaladevi and Navt'lughi. The first of these appeared in 1891, some two years prior to the first meeting of Mesame Dasi, and consisted predominantly of a group of Marxist-oriented Russians led by a mechanic at the Singer factory named Fedor Afanas'ev.⁵⁰ In fact, one of the outstanding features of the development of social-democratic cells in Georgia throughout the 1890s was the prominent role played by Russian workers who had either come voluntarily to Georgia for jobs, or who had been sent south as punishment for their part in disturbances in Russia. Thus in 1892, the so-called "Afanas'ev circle" was joined by another Russian organisation, led by T. Mayorov.⁵¹ Georgians were, however, increasingly drawn to the circles, but as the mesame dalelebi were to discover in 1894, when they attempted to organise their own reading groups, language presented a considerable obstacle to their progress. Thus, although they soon established contact with the existing cells and had access to their collections of socialist literature, there was nothing in Georgian. Consequently, translation from Russian, German

and French became one of the first major tasks undertaken by the new group.⁵²

Many of these circles, and certainly those run by the mesame daselebi were of a predominantly educative nature at this stage, seeking to familiarise the workers with Marxist thought rather than organise them. But parallel to the reading circles organised by young intellectuals like Silbistro Jibladze, were a growing number of cells which originated among the workers themselves and placed as much, if not more, emphasis on agitation and propaganda work among fellow workers. Leaving aside the question of the impact of this work, the organisational principles on which these workers' cells were founded were to have a significant influence on the future development of the social-democratic movement in Georgia, insofar as it was in this period that the tradition was established of funding their own organisations and of electing leaders from below.⁵³ In later years, the attempts of the Bolshevik wing of the social-democratic movement to base the Transcaucasian party organisations on small, clandestine cells of appointed, professional cadres was to founder against this tradition.

By 1896, there were some 25 illegal workers' circles operating in T'bilisi alone and similar groups had now begun to appear in Bat'umi and K'ut'aisi.⁵⁴ That year, the first efforts at coordination of their work concluded in the creation of the T'bilisi Propaganda Collective and a proclamation issued to the railway workers calling on them to waken from their hibernation and prepare themselves for the approaching hour of victory,⁵⁵ whilst in 1897, in response to the constantly expanding number of active cells,

representatives of the various social-democratic groups in T'bilisi agreed to the establishment of the T'bilisi Social-Democratic Committee, whose task was to be the coordination of activities in the city, the maintenance of contacts with other Transcaucasian centres and the strengthening of ties with the Russian organisation.⁵⁶ Thus in 1898, the committee which at this stage consisted entirely of T'bilisi workers, voted to send Vaso Tsabadze to attend the first RSDLP Congress in Minsk, only to be thwarted by his arrest soon before his planned departure.⁵⁷

Although neither Mesame Dasi nor the social-democratic circles in Georgia appear to have been troubled by factional strife during the 1890s, it is clear that as their ranks grew larger and the scale and extent of their activities broadened, that differences began to emerge over tactics.⁵⁸ Thus, although the formation of the T'bilisi Committee in 1897 can be seen to mark the beginning of a unified Social-Democratic Party in Georgia, it can also be seen as a development which highlighted existing differences of opinion among the leading Social-Democrats about the best courses of action. Essentially, these boiled down to whether the party should abandon the use of legal means of struggle and go completely underground, or whether it should employ every means at its disposal, including the legal press. The mesame daselebi, who from the very beginning had made use not just of Kvali, but also of Iveria and Moambe to propound their ideas, were the chief proponents of the argument that continued use of the press was an invaluable means of raising the level of political sophistication of the population, a view clearly shared by G. Uratadze who, in his reminiscences of the period, maintained that Kvali was the

means by which his generation became acquainted with Marxism. By this time, moreover, the daselebi already had plans to take over the paper and to transform it into a paper of Marxist thought and a potential centre for training party cadres. However, the underground movement, which was concentrated mostly among the workers' circles, set greater emphasis on organisation and preparation of the workers for the coming political challenge to the autocracy. Noe Zhordania quickly became aware of the difference of opinion over tactics when he returned from Europe after four years' absence and, not surprisingly for a man who had written regularly for the Georgian press even whilst abroad, took a negative view of those who sought to abandon its use.

... a narrow, sectarian tendency appeared [he wrote], which rejected any kind of legal work and was satisfied only with non-legal propaganda. Therefore, these strata regarded the participation of Marxists in Kvali negatively.⁵⁹

Soviet historians frequently cite this development approvingly, but it is not at all clear, as seems to be their implication, that the division between those in favour of abandoning the use of legal methods and those who defended them coincided with the later division of the Social-Democratic Party into Menshevik and Bolshevik factions. In fact, after Giorgi Dseret'eli had handed over Kvali to the mesame daselebi at the beginning of 1898, a number of future Bolsheviks, including prominent figures like P'ilipe Makharadze, wrote articles for the paper,⁶⁰ while in late 1897, at a large meeting of Georgia's leading Social-Democrats, which would almost certainly have included I. Jugashvili (Stalin), L. Ketskhoveli, A. Dsulukidze, M.

Tskhakaia and Makharadze, the future nucleus of the Leninist orientation in the Transcaucasian party organisation, not only was the continued use of the paper endorsed by a majority of those present, but the bete noire of Soviet Georgian historians, Noe Zhordania, was elected unopposed to the editorship.⁶¹

Although the meeting was remarkable more for the solidarity of those present than for the appearance of an "opportunist" and a "revolutionary" split within the party, it is important to note that one of the main reasons it had been called was to iron out a common policy on the national question, following a disagreement that had emerged on this issue at an earlier meeting in 1897 in Zhordania's home town of Lanchkhut'i.⁶² Whilst it is not entirely clear what the latter had been proposing, it is at least apparent that he had favoured giving the national question greater prominence in the party's propaganda work and that, in doing so, he had found himself in isolation. What is most interesting about the subsequent debate in T'bilisi, however, is that far from there being an acute division of opinion on the question, there was virtual unanimity that for the time being, at least, the national question should be shelved. The sole discordant note at the proceedings was struck by Zhordania.⁶³

The argument of the majority was twofold: first, that the emphasis on the national question would raise the problem of national unity and temporary class alliances at a time when for tactical reasons they should be concentrating on shifting the workers' circles from the economic struggle to the political, and putting forward issues which distanced the working masses from the ruling classes; secondly, that

nationalist demands were unpopular with the Georgian people because of their anxiety about the continued threat from Persia and particularly Turkey, and that as a consequence, the people might turn its back on the party. At a time too, when social divisions, especially in rural Georgia, were more acute than ever, it scarcely made sense to call on the peasantry to make common cause with the t'avadzanauroba, nor for the working people as a whole to unite with the national bourgeoisie, since the latter was as yet small and virtually powerless. At the same meeting, a more extreme view put forward by the Bat'umi delegates and most of the Russians present, that socialists had no business at all with national matters was, however, rejected.⁶⁴

Of still further interest, particularly in view of the accusation sometimes levelled at him that he was a nationalist, is that shortly after this meeting Zhordania accepted the correctness of the majority view. In his memoirs he attributes this change of heart to a discussion he held with the peasantry of his home village in January 1898 during which it became clear that they associated the idea of national freedom with a return to the insecurity of the past:

I saw that for them the freedom of the nation meant a return to old times... I turned to walk away and said to myself: the comrades are right. This fruit is premature, the people must first be wakened on different ground. With this decision I returned to Tp'ilisi.⁶⁵

Although Zhordania is guilty here of over-generalisation from the particular experiences of one village situated close to the Turkish border, and with a recent memory of invasion and an illicit cross-border slave trade, it was,

nevertheless, undoubtedly the case that although Georgians were now conscious of their national identity and prepared to demand the defence of their national culture and native language, this consciousness did not take the form of political nationalism. Outside of the intelligentsia, there appear to have been few demands for independence or even autonomy, whilst among the peasantry, as Zhordania narrates, there was a marked absence even of the anti-Russian sentiment one might have expected, given the official chauvinism of the government.⁶⁶

With the establishment of the T'bilisi Committee, the size and influence of the Social-Democratic Party in Georgia continued to expand throughout the remaining years of the 19th century and into the 20th century. Party workers were, for instance, believed by the government to have played a prominent part in the successful rail strike of 1898, and in 1899, 75-100 workers responded to leaflets from the Kvali printing press with a small demonstration outside the city to mark the first celebration of May Day in Georgia.⁶⁷ The following May, 500-600 people gathered under banners bearing portraits of Marx, Engels and Lassalle and slogans calling for the downfall of autocracy, while in August 1900, party members played an influential part in organising T'bilisi's first general strike,⁶⁸ which although it failed in the immediate term to force concessions from the government and most of the private employers, nevertheless, provided the party with an unprecedented opportunity to extend its influence and exploit the prevailing mood of discontent. In this respect, it is worth noting that the relatively open organisational principles upon which the party cells were

based enabled them to expand in response to the popular mood in a way that a more secretive and hierarchical organisation could not. A significant feature of the administration's response was its decision to send 50 per cent of the 900 workers arrested during the two-week strike back to their villages,⁶⁹ a decision which was to be repeated again elsewhere in the country, and which had an important part in spreading the influence of the social-democratic movement from the urban centres to the rural areas, and establishing it as a mass-party by the time of the first Russian revolution in 1905.

In 1901, the social-democratic movement celebrated May Day in the centre of T'bilisi for the first time, demonstrating both its growing confidence and the swelling numbers at its command. In an atmosphere further charged by the industrial crisis deepening throughout Russia, and the threat of redundancies and reduced pay, a crowd of over 2,000 workers and seminary students gathered in the soldiers' bazaar, carrying banners explicitly calling for the overthrow of autocracy and the establishment of a democratic republic. In response to what it saw as a blatant political challenge to the authority of the regime, the T'bilisi administration resolved to settle the issue by force and despatched a detachment of Cossack cavalry to assist the police in breaking up the demonstration. In the ensuing clash, 14 workers were wounded and 30 arrested.⁷⁰ More importantly, however, it marked a watershed in the attitude of the government towards the social-democratic movement in the Caucasus, for although official concern at the movement's activities had already been mounting, there had still been a tendency to regard it as rather less of a

threat to stability than the nationalists. Noe Zhordania comments on this in his memoirs:

Kvali came out with the censor's permission, but despite that, apart from direct appeals, (i.e. to the people), we freely printed all our ideas. This can be explained by two circumstances: the censorship committee had received a circular from Petersburg instructing it to pay special attention to propaganda of a nationalist character. Poems became the main victims of this order. Our propaganda, however, was mainly of a socio-economic-historical character, and the censor was a young man, C. Zhuruli, of a decent nature and a liberal frame of mind. He didn't know Marxism and kept within the bounds of the circular. Once, however, he complained to me - 'Thanks to you, I have now been given additional work, I have been ordered to study Marxism'.⁷¹

Zhordania would have been well to have taken this as a warning of things to come for, in the aftermath of the May Day demonstration, the police issued warrants for the arrest of all the leading members of the movement, including Zhordania, who now found himself forced to go into hiding.⁷² From this moment social-democracy in Georgia came to be regarded as an equal threat as nationalism, while the future of Kvali as an effective voice of social-democratic opposition was placed in serious doubt.

There can be little doubt, however, that the initial complacency of the government towards the movement had made it considerably easier for it to establish its roots among the population, not just in T'bilisi, but in the other towns of the Transcaucasus and to no small extent in the countryside as well. Bat'umi, the fastest growing town in Georgia and the centre of the petroleum industry, is a case in point. It had had its own social-democratic organisation since the turn of the century, led by Karlo Chkheidze, future leader of the 1917 Petrograd Soviet and Isidore

Ramishvili, and in February 1902, when Rothschilds laid off 389 workers from their petroleum-container building factory, it was able to play a prominent part in organising the workers' demonstrations for their reinstatement.⁷³ On 8th March, the government responded to the first of these by arresting 348 of the participants, but the following day when 6,000 people surrounded the barracks holding the prisoners to demand their release, the troops opened fire, killing 15 and wounding 50 in an incident that was to assume a significant role in the further development of the social-democratic movement in West Georgia, and more particularly, the province of Guria.⁷⁴ Hundreds of workers, many of them members of the social-democratic circles, were expelled back to their villages in the surrounding countryside where, according to Grigol Uratadze, who was a native of the area, the words "Bat'umi worker" became legend among the peasantry and a symbol of resistance against the tsar.⁷⁵

Despite retrospective attempts to discover or create intractable divisions within the Caucasian social-democratic organisations during this period, it is apparent that at least until 1903, and in many respects long after that, they were remarkable for their unity on most major issues. Even P'ilipe Makharadze claimed of the Caucasian organisation that at this time,

... there was less evidence of opportunist and revisionist tendencies; in fact, it is possible to say that they did not exist.⁷⁶

While, according to B. Souvarine in his biography of Stalin, Makharadze maintained that Georgian Social-Democracy "maintained its unity" as late as 1904 and "had neither

The Menshevik Uratadze, moreover, notes that the Transcaucasian organisations were free even from the disputes over "economism" that preoccupied the Russian organisations about this time:

It also needs to be noted that, generally speaking, the struggle conducted so bitterly among Social-Democrats over so-called 'economism' in Russia had no place in the Caucasus. 'Economism' did not show itself in our country.⁷⁸

This same unity of purpose is equally evident in the approach adopted towards the national question in the aftermath of the meeting to discuss the issue in late 1897. Central to this approach lay the belief that not only was Georgia's future linked with that of Russia, a view long held by the radical intelligentsia, but that the only way to achieve the overthrow of the autocracy was through the establishment of close ties with the proletariat of Russia (Rossiia).

... The united strength of the workers, whatever their nationality [wrote the Georgian Social-Democrat Lado Ketskhoveri in 1901], that is the mission of the proletariat... Russians, Georgians and Armenians... workers seized by one aim, inspired by one purpose, imbued with one interest. Their strength lies precisely in this unity of spirit...⁷⁹

In conjunction with this commitment to unity with the Russian proletariat, the Social-Democrats also sought to counter the saert'o niadagi (common ground) theory popular among what they labelled the "nationalists" or "patriots", with the idea of class struggle. Thus, whereas the t'ergdaleulni had tried and, in fact, still continued to try to relieve the tensions building up between the t'avadaznauroba

and the peasantry, the Social-Democrats underscored their differences and stressed the absolute incompatibility of their interests. Moreover, in a number of pamphlets and articles written in association with the 100th anniversary of Russian annexation in September 1901, they endeavoured to further undermine the t'avadaznauroba's claim to lead Georgian society. The aristocracy, pointed out the new underground social-democratic journal Brdzola (The Struggle)⁸⁰ in its first edition, had through its fawning subservience towards the Russian monarch and its obsequious celebration of the anniversary, demonstrated both its lack of moral scruples and the unbridgeable gulf dividing itself from the rest of Georgian society.⁸¹ A proclamation issued by the T'bilisi Committee on September 26, 1901, in the form of a dialogue between the t'avadaznauroba and the tsar, in which the former confirmed its devotion to the Russian crown and disassociated itself from events like the May Day demonstration earlier in the year, was posted all over the city and intended to illustrate as graphically as possible that common nationality was no guarantee of shared interests and that there could be no reconciliation with either the autocracy or the aristocracy.⁸²

But among the most immediate tasks confronting the Social-Democrats in an area remarkable for its confusion of nationalities, was to prevent the social and economic tensions that marked the last decade of the 19th century and the early 20th century from expressing themselves in outbreaks of inter-ethnic violence. In this respect, at least, they were on common ground with the t'ergdaleulni who, as has been shown above, devoted considerable energy to this problem in the 1870s and 1880s. By the 1890s, however, the

situation in the Transcaucasus had been exacerbated by the rapid migration of the rural population to the towns and a sudden influx of Armenian refugees following the Turkish massacres of 1894-96 and 1902-04.⁸³ Disqualified from settling in the rural border areas by a government decree in 1901 requiring the relocation of refugees in urban areas, 7,000 of them had moved to T'bilisi by 1903, while during 1905 alone, a further 20,000 settled in the city in the wake of violent clashes between Armenians and Azeris elsewhere in the Transcaucasus.⁸⁴ Thus, despite a substantial increase of 33 per cent in the capital's Georgian population between 1897 and 1905 to 55,000, the influx of refugees ensured that the Armenians remained the largest ethnic group within the city, with a dramatic rise from their 1897 total of 47,133 to 84,000 in 1905.⁸⁵

Whereas in the past ethnic rivalry had in part been contained by the fact that the Georgian population was predominantly rural, developments in the period since the peasant reforms of 1864-71 had brought the communities into greater proximity. Now, most starkly in T'bilisi, not only was the Georgian aristocracy in conflict with the Armenian bourgeoisie, but a nascent Georgian bourgeoisie had begun to assert itself and workers of all nationalities were in increasingly desperate competition for jobs at a time when the growth in the city's population far exceeded the pace of its industrial expansion. Moreover, far from mixing with other nationalities, the migrants, whether they were refugees from Turkey or peasants from rural Georgia, uprooted from the predictability and familiarity of their traditional communities, sought as far as it was possible, to recreate

one lives they had left behind in the company of their fellow nationals. Thus T'bilisi, which on the surface appeared to be a mixed city, drawn from a multitude of different ethnic backgrounds, was, in reality, a city sharply divided into separate national districts, like the Georgian Didude and Navt'lughi, the Armenian Avlabar and Sololaki and the Azeri Kharpukhi.

The problem was further complicated by the coincidence of ethnicity and class division in T'bilisi society, a circumstance which had led to the domination of the municipal council, elected by the wealthiest and most propertied section of the population, the Armenian bourgeoisie. With the Georgian community virtually excluded from meaningful participation in the city's affairs, the accusation arose that the Armenians were defending their interests above those of the population as a whole, leading one prominent Georgian journalist, N. Khizanishvili, to refer sarcastically to the council as the "Sololaki parliament", after the district in which T'bilisi's richest Armenians were concentrated.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the efforts of the Georgian intelligentsia, orchestrated by Niko Nikoladze from his journal Moambe, to extend the franchise so as to fairly represent the city's various national interests, excited Armenian fears and caused a further polarisation of the communities.⁸⁷

For the Russian government, which had a long established policy of preventing the formation of broad fronts of opposition to its policies by provoking inter-ethnic rivalries of this sort, the situation was a cause for some satisfaction. Interestingly, however, with the appointment of Prince G.S. Golitsyn as governor-general to the Caucasus in

1896, and a noted Russophile, Velichko, as editor of the journal Kavkaz in 1897, there was a shift in the official attitude towards the Armenians. While on the one hand it continued to block all Georgian efforts to broaden the electorate, on the other it reversed its past policy of befriending the Armenian bourgeoisie, which it had rightly seen as a conservative force in the Caucasus, and began to incite the Georgians against it. Velichko wrote a series of articles pointing to the dangers likely to threaten a nation which lacked a strong bourgeoisie of its own:

The absence of one's own bourgeoisie to any people during our times is quite dangerous, when economic questions have a predominating significance; it is very necessary to have a class, a people with industrial energy who would be replenished not only from below, but from above; i.e. with representatives of the nobility who have adjusted to the new conditions. Otherwise the nobility will fall and the people will become the slaves of alien exploiters.⁸⁸

And if anyone had failed to catch his meaning, there could be little room for ambiguity when he added that the Russian government was alarmed by the economic deterioration of the Georgian people since they

...in the Transcaucasus appear the closest to us in spirit and culture.⁸⁹

By the turn of the century, the Caucasian administration had helped sow the seeds of discord, not just between Georgians and Armenians, and Armenians and Azeris, but had also done much to fuel the growing distrust between the local population and the Russian workers, whose contribution to the social-democratic movement in the 1890s had since dwindled and been replaced by a tendency towards Russian

chauvinism. But the growing attraction of the right-wing organisations like Russkoe Sobranie and the "Group of Patriots", particularly among Russian railwaymen, reflected more upon the government's new awareness of the folly of sending political exiles to work in places like the T'bilisi railway yards, than any sudden change of heart among the old personnel.⁹⁰ Many of the latter had been arrested and moved on in the aftermath of the 1898 and 1900 rail strikes, to be replaced by more reliable skilled labour from inner Russia, which was not only paid more than the Georgian workforce, but was also a reliable source of opposition to the strike movement.

Concerned that the government's propaganda was dividing the working people, and that the population would be swayed by the arguments of the nationalists that their problems were the fault of one or another ethnic group, rather than a product of the autocratic regime and the class struggle, the Social-Democrats declared in Brdzola that nationalism was now the main enemy of progress and that the struggle against it was their main task.⁹¹ In a separate article tracing the advances of the movement since 1899, Lado Ketskhoveli gave much the same message:

The workers' movement in our country is growing ceaselessly, gigantically, in spite of the difficulties and obstacles the movement is meeting. One of these obstacles, and an exceptionally strong one, is that our working peoples consist of many different nationalities (Georgians, Armenians, Russian, Tatars (sic), Oset'ians, etc.), who frequently do not fully understand one another, as a consequence of which greater efforts are needed to instil in them an awareness of the common nature of their interests; and this becomes still more difficult when the government, exploiting national antagonism among the workers, sharpens these differences still more, luring Russian workers to its side with lies and deceptions; they constantly tell these workers that the 'natives'

(tuzemtsy) are hostile to all Russians and would even drink their blood, if they could only establish their own kingdom...⁹²

But it was also clearly important for the Social-Democrats that they should not allow their opponents among the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Georgian intelligentsia a monopoly over the national question, for although they might have calculated, probably correctly, that there was little support for national autonomy amongst either the Georgian or the Armenian population, it was, nevertheless, abundantly clear that strong feeling existed among all sections of society on issues like the use of the native language in education, in the courts and government. Conscious of this, Brdzola, which had developed close links with Iskra (see footnote 80), declared its support for national cultural rights and the struggle against Russification in an unsigned article entitled "Nationalism and Socialism".⁹³ But the article drew a sharp distinction between this and advocating either national autonomy or complete independence and declared its opposition to the argument that the struggle for general democratic freedom be postponed until after national freedom had been secured. In the author's opinion, the repression of the rights of national minorities ranked with the repression of individual and civic rights and could only be prevented by the victory of the democratic movement, meaning socialism:

National freedom appears as a part of general democratic freedom and consequently one cannot subordinate all democratic freedom to it. Therefore, whenever national and general democratic interests are joined, national interests should give way to the general. This is the point of view on which the conscious proletariat stands and with which the bourgeoisie can never agree.⁹⁴

Thus, while the article declared itself in support of the right to the use of one's own language in education and government and legal affairs, and opposed, like Lenin in Iskra, any discrimination on the basis of nationality, it also warned the proletariat against the bourgeoisie's attempts to appropriate the national idea and manipulate it to conceal the existence of antagonistic class interests within the nation. The true interests of the working class could only be served by an international alliance with the proletariat of the peoples of Rossiia. However, in the immediate term, while the revolutionary movement had yet to achieve even bourgeois democratic reforms, it was perfectly legitimate to form a temporary alliance with the national bourgeoisies insofar as their demands represented an advance on the present.

But a major difficulty still facing the Social-Democrats in Georgia was that while individual members from different parts of the country might get together from time to time, as in the 1897 meeting in T'bilisi, they continued to be divided into quite separate and autonomous committees and groups. Thus, although the existence of journals like Brdzola and Iskra provided some policy guidance, there was, as yet, no central organ to coordinate the activities of the various organisations. According to Zhordania, plans had been made in 1901 for a joint conference at the end of the year to correct the situation,⁹⁵ but had been thwarted by the mass arrests following the May Day demonstration that year, and it was not until December 1902, by which time many of those arrested had been released, that the representatives of the T'bilisi, Bat'umi and Baku committees and a

number of other bodies met at the Tiliputchuri restaurant in T'bilisi to draw up a project for a unity congress.⁹⁶

In the meantime, however, some significant changes had already occurred in the T'bilisi party organisation. The arrest of much of the leadership in the early summer of 1901 had created a vacuum in the T'bilisi Committee which had been filled in November by the election of a new generation of party activists, most of whom had been associated more with the party's underground operations than its legal concerns like Kvali.⁹⁷ The change in the administration's attitude to the latter had, moreover, as evidenced by Zhordania's arrest, strengthened the hand of those who had always opposed the journal on the grounds that it was too limited for the current stage of the revolutionary struggle, and that of the underground journal Brdzola. At the beginning of 1902, word reached members of the previous leadership, incarcerated in T'bilisi's Metekhi prison, that the committee had jointed with the RSDLP. In his memoirs, Zhordania claims that he and his colleagues were astonished by the news,⁹⁸ but it may be that he is guilty of attributing views to himself which he did not actually hold, or, at least, express until some time later. He claims to recall his concern that the RSDLP positions on the national organisational and agrarian questions were substantially different from Georgian perceptions, but the agrarian question aside, it is difficult to see what he means. The problem of the most suitable organisational structure had not yet been fully resolved within the various Caucasian committees and nor, for that matter, was it clear where the Russians stood. Lenin had still to write "What is to be done?" and it was not until the second RSDLP Congress in 1903 that the

majority accepted his ideas, and then only by a slender margin and after a number of delegates had already left the congress. As for the national question, it is true that the RSDLP did not have a fixed policy on the issue, but nothing concrete had been advanced by any of the Transcaucasian organisations yet either, while Brdzola's pronouncements on the national question were indistinguishable from Iskra's.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Zhordania claims that it convinced him still further of the need for a central organ which, among other things, would be strong enough to maintain policies suited to the needs of the area⁹⁹ and, certainly, after his release to Ganja in October 1902, he became actively involved with the T'bilisi Committee in the organisation of the conference which in December 1902 united the Transcaucasian organisations in a new body called the Caucasian Union.¹⁰⁰ In view of the assertion too that the Transcaucasian organisations were already split into factions, it is worth noting that, despite the new composition of the T'bilisi Committee, Noe Zhordania was not only invited to chair the conference, but was also given the task of drawing up a project for the party's programme. Furthermore, far from making any concessions to nationalism, Zhordania proposed the establishment not of a federation, but of regional self-government for the Transcaucasus within the wider setting of a democratic Russia.¹⁰¹

The first congress of the Caucasian Union was held in March 1903, shortly after the news had been received of the forthcoming RSDLP congress¹⁰² in Brussels. The deliberations, therefore, of the Transcaucasian organisations revolved around the election of delegates to Brussels as well

as upon the election of the Caucasian Union Committee and discussion of the party programme. By an unfortunate twist of fate, Zhordania had departed for Europe to avoid re-arrest shortly before news of the RSDLP congress arrived, and was consequently neither able to defend his project nor be elected as a delegate to Brussels.¹⁰³

In a demonstration of its commitment to internationalism, the Caucasian Union voted to join the RSDLP as a regional organisation and stressed that it was itself the representative not of any one national group, but of all the peoples of the Caucasus. As one member of the committee put it in a letter to Iskra:

...the Caucasian comrades are opposed to racial (national) organisations. From the very beginning each of these committees [comprising the Caucasian Union] worked in every language and represented the workers of the whole city regardless of nationality and independent of the composition of the committee. The Union's committee has been elected from the representatives of the local committees and from comrades working in the Caucasus regardless of whether a comrade had the fortune or misfortune to be a member of this or that race.¹⁰⁴

What is more interesting, however, is that the Caucasian Union rejected Zhordania's recommendations on the national question and opted instead for a formula which called for the creation of a federal democratic state divided not on national, but on territorial lines.¹⁰⁵ Despite Iskra's influence in the Caucasus, moreover, no mention was made of the right of nations to self-determination.¹⁰⁶ It may be that the Union's decision was influenced by the views of the Union of Armenian Social-Democrats which, before its merger with the T'bilisi Social-Democratic Committee at the end of 1902¹⁰⁷ had published its own manifesto in which it declared the establishment of a federal

Russian republic essential for the protection of the interests of the different national elements comprising the state. But if this is the case, the Union's programme ignored other important aspects of the Armenian manifesto such as recognition of the right of nations to self-determination and provision for national cultural autonomy.¹⁰⁸

As by this time Lenin had pronounced that federation did not accord with the objective progress of the economic and political development of society and did not correspond to the interest of the class struggle of the proletariat, it is not surprising that when the Second Congress got underway during the summer of 1903 that the three Caucasian delegates, D. T'op'uridze from T'bilisi, S. Zurabov from Bat'umi and B. Knuniants from Baku, should find themselves embarrassingly isolated on the issue. Noe Zhordania, who was invited to the congress as an observer after learning of it from Madame Plekhanova whilst in Geneva, commented on their unease:

Such was the atmosphere that developed that the T'bilisi group did not dare reveal its programme, let alone present it. The great majority of the delegates was of an extremely centralist frame of mind and would not hear of federation; they did not even believe in the existence of the national question.¹⁰⁹

Although it may be true that a centralist mood did prevail at the congress and certainly ideas like federation and national cultural autonomy received short shrift from most of the delegates, it is, nevertheless, the case that they passed resolutions guaranteeing all nationalities the right to an education in their own languages at state expense, the right to the use of native languages in all local

public and state institutions on a par with the state language, and the right of nations to self-determination. It may be, of course, as Zhordania suggests, that the latter meant different things to different people and most did not understand it, but it hardly substantiates his claim that for the majority the national question did not exist.¹¹⁰ Ironically, moreover, in view of the federalist stance of the Caucasian Union delegates, Zhordania's argument in favour of regional self-government (oblastnoe samoupravlenie) for Transcaucasia coincided with Lenin's proposal in favour of regional self-government for areas like the Caucasus, Finland and Poland, distinguished by specific economic conditions or ethnic composition and was passed by a comfortable majority. Uratadze, too, who was a close supporter of Zhordania, maintains that these rights, contained in articles three, eight and nine of the party programme, formed the basis of the Georgian Social-Democratic organisations' approach to the national question up till 1917.¹¹¹

The national question was not yet, therefore, a subject of any great dispute in Transcaucasian social-democracy, although the congress did present the somewhat unusual spectacle of the future leader of Georgian Menshevism in agreement with Lenin on regional self-government, whilst the Caucasian Union delegates, two of whom were future Bolsheviks, came to Brussels and London with a mandate to support federation. That the Union's commitment to federation was not particularly strong, however, is apparent from the decision of its second congress in October 1903 to abandon it in favour of the proposals accepted in London.¹¹² Interestingly, moreover, in view of later disputes over the issue within the party, none of the Caucasians, Zhordania

included, appears to have demonstrated any sympathy for the Bund's demands on national cultural autonomy.

The national question aside, two main policy decisions taken by the RSDLP congress were conveniently shelved by the Caucasian Union and kept from the local organisations until Zhordania's return from abroad at the beginning of 1905 made it impossible to conceal them any further. Thus the split over the party's organisational principles, a source of confusion to most even in Russia, was quite unheard of in Georgia outside of a select few, while the congress's rather negative estimation of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry was an embarrassment, particularly in West Georgia, where since mid-1902 the party had made rapid strides among the disaffected villages of Guria, Imeret'i and Samegrelo. In fact a separate Social-Democratic committee had already been established in Guria in 1903, and, in response to its urgent demands for information on the congress' decisions on the agrarian question, the Union Committee claimed it was still waiting for the protocols. As a consequence the separate Caucasian committees adopted their own policies on the peasant question until the RSDLP 'Unity' Congress in 1906.¹¹³

- The Socialist-Federalists

By 1904 a number of factors had combined to create the rather paradoxical position of a mass-based Social-Democratic Party in a predominantly rural society. Party committees existed not only in T'bilisi, K'ut'aisi and Bat'umi, but also in the provinces of Guria, Samegrelo and Imeret'i.¹¹⁴ In fact, such was the strength of the movement in Guria, that every village now had its own party

organisation, and the Gurian Social-Democratic Committee was able to mount an effective boycott of all government institutions,¹¹⁵ while by the end of 1904 600 social-democratic groups were operating under the guidance of the Imeret'i-Samegrelo Committee.¹¹⁶ By the end of 1905, moreover, one third of the 15,000 Mensheviks in the Russian empire came from the Transcaucasus and the vast majority of them from Georgia.¹¹⁷

Among the factors which had combined to make possible this state of affairs was the socio-economic development alluded to in Chapter Three. Thus the proximity of town and country and the expansion of the rail network in the late 19th century had facilitated the growing mobility of the population in the aftermath of the peasant reforms. As industry had developed, so the towns had expanded, drawing on the swelling flood of migrant peasants driven from their villages by the seemingly endless cycle of land shortage, poor harvests, redemption dues, high taxation and debt. In the squalid conditions of the country's main urban centres, the uprooted peasantry provided a fertile breeding ground for the social-democratic movement, not least because in the concept of proletarian internationalism the Social-Democrats were able to provide the migrant population with a new source of identity which did not, like its potential rival, nationalism, awaken fears of isolation, separation from Russia and invasion by Turkey or Iran.

The party was, moreover, considerably aided by the coincidence of national and class divisions in Georgia and the relative social homogeneity of the population. Thus the vast bulk of ethnic Georgians belonged either to the

peasantry or the nobility, while the bourgeoisie was predominantly Armenian. Since, too, so many of the t'avadaz-naurebi had been dispossessed by Armenians one can easily understand why so many of them embraced an ideology that identified the bourgeoisie as the class enemy.

Furthermore, the proximity of town and country did not merely facilitate the migration of the peasantry to the industrial centres, but also made it possible for the peasants to move back and forth to the towns with considerable frequency. V. Chubinidze, a Social-Democrat who worked in the Tchiat'ura mines in 1905 recalled the itinerant lifestyle of the workforce in his memoirs:

The mine workers had a high turnover - some worked only during the summer, some only in winter for two to three months or more, while some worked for even less time and then returned to their villages and their families and once more took up agricultural work. A little later they would load up their saddle-bags with corn bread and dry cheese, onions and perch, sling their working-tool, the pick-axe, over their arm and once more set out for work in one or another of Tchiat'ura's mines. In this way they circulated between Tchiat'ura and their villages.¹¹⁸

And in this way they also provided the social-democratic movement with a means for disseminating its ideas in the countryside and politicising the peasantry. It is at least questionable, however, whether the party would have enjoyed quite the success it did in the rural areas had it not been for the government's policy of expelling recalcitrant workers back to their native villages. The sudden influx of workers who had been active in the Bat'umi social-democratic movement into Guria in May 1902 and 1903, for instance, simply added fuel to the local population's anger about land shortage, the continuing payment of redemption dues, duties

to landlords, and state and church taxation during a period of acute famine. The workers' resistance to the government in Bat'umi won them the immediate respect of the peasantry and by the end of 1902 anti-government slogans which had been current in Bat'umi were becoming commonplace in the villages. The government's use of coercion in support of the local t'avadaznauroba, moreover, seems only to have added to the peasantry's resolve and convinced it still further that any confrontation with the nobility would necessarily involve a confrontation with the government too.

These factors aside, another important key to the success of the Social-Democrats in the years between 1898 and 1904, and one identified by Grigol Uratadze with reference to Guria, was the virtual absence of any opposition from parties or groups of rival political persuasions.

When we began work among the Gurian peasants we had no opponents in the form of parties or groups with a set programme and corresponding organisation. They sympathised only with our social-democratic organisations and we and only we appeared at all the meetings and gatherings, thanks to which all the ideological and organisational work was concentrated in our hands. This, of course, considerably assisted our links and close relations with both the Gurian peasants and the peasants of other districts. The peasantry saw and knew only our social-democratic organisations.¹¹⁹

From April 1904, however, following the formal creation of the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Party at a congress of emigre Georgian intellectuals in Geneva, the Social-Democrats were for the first time faced with an organised challenge to their endeavours to win the support of the Georgian people. The new party, which stood on a platform which embraced demands for national autonomy within a Russian federation, defence of the national language, regeneration of the

Georgian economy principally through the strengthening and encouragement of an indigenous bourgeoisie, socialisation of the land, rejection of class struggle in favour of national unity and the creation of a democratic republic with a Constituent Assembly, was the realisation of a plan that had existed among certain members of the Georgian intelligentsia from the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, the initial idea for a party which would take up the cause of the Georgian bourgeoisie and tie national renaissance to the emergence of a Georgian-led economic revival emanated from Moambe in the 1890s,¹²⁰ while the idea of autonomy within a federal Russian state picked up the idea first raised by the t'ergdaleulni in Drosha in 1873 and thereafter frequently proposed by Ilia Tchavtchavadze in the pages of Iveria.

But although the new proponents of federation and the idea of saert'o niadagi had much in common with the t'ergdaleulni there is no doubt that they stood far closer to individuals like Giorgi Dseret'eli and Niko Nikoladze than to Ilia Tchavtchavadze. Thus they saw no specific role for the t'avadaznauroba in their plans for the future, but placed instead an emphasis on economic recovery led by the national bourgeoisie and supported by the entire nation. They recognised the existence of class divisions, but maintained that a moment had arrived, or was close to arriving, when the shared interest of all Georgians in the defence of their national identity would override these differences. Archil Jorjadze, the leading ideologue of the future Social-Federalist Party expressed his belief in this trend in an article written in 1901:

Our society is divided into groups, ... the land-owner and the worker of the land, the

industrialist, the merchant and the daily worker live in economic opposition to one another. We cannot deny this. Only in spite of this do there exist such phenomena in our society which not only weaken this opposition, but give birth to the basis for common practical action between the rival groups. These phenomena teach us that Georgia has entered into that historical time when we no longer need the division and parcelisation of society and the people, but rather its unity and recovery.¹²¹

The influence of this orientation began to make itself felt among the Georgian intelligentsia with the appointment of G. Laskhishvili, later to become a leading member of the Socialist-Federalists, to the editorial board of Moambe in 1898, but became more explicit when the owner of Moambe, A. Jabadari, bought the paper Tsnobis P'urtseli (The Newssheet) in late 1900.¹²² Tsnobis P'urtseli, which had till then adopted a broad patriotic stance and sought to provide more information about world and domestic affairs to an information-starved public, now became the organ which, in effect, gave rise to the Socialist-Federalist Party in 1904. Its editorial board, with figures like A. Jorjadze, G. Laskhishvili and G. Rtskhiladze among others, already contained the nucleus of the future party.

Despite the restrictions imposed by censorship, the paper quickly gave indication of its concern at the lagging economic development of Georgia, the loss of native land to foreigners, the impoverishment of the peasantry and the status of the Georgian language.¹²³ Like Sergi Meskhi and others in the 1870s and 1880s, the new group maintained that the development of capitalism in Georgia should take a national direction, should, in other words, be accomplished through local initiative and the protection of the national markets. Like their predecessors, they also believed that

once this had been achieved, the common interest of the population in the development of the economy and the defence of Georgian culture would contain class antagonism.

We should not match the Georgian capitalist, i.e. the merchant and the industrialist against the Georgian worker [wrote Jorjadze] but against that foreign element which has a monopoly over our commerce...

While the Georgian working people, he asserted,

...is compelled to put its private class interests beneath our common interests and so affirm the maturity of its national self-awareness.¹²⁴

The initial efforts of the group to form a party organisation which could rally popular support to its ideals foundered, however, on a conflict of interests within the group itself and its absence of any real contact with either the peasantry or the working class. Only in May 1903 with the first appearance of the illegal paper, Sak'art'velo (Georgia), in Paris did they begin to move closer towards establishing a joint programme and a party organisational framework.¹²⁵

In the first edition of the paper, the editorial board addressed an open letter to Russia's liberals and socialists in which it laid down the main elements of its national programme, the most noteworthy feature of which was its emphatic statement that Georgia should remain part of a democratic, federal Russian state:

It is not our wish to establish an independent state [claimed the letter]. We clearly and unambiguously proclaim that we are not supporters of political separatism. It is our desire and ambition to achieve a constitution suited to the particular conditions of Georgia. We wish to remain within the framework of Russia's political organs and seek complete independence only in our

With the exception that Sak'art'velo called for national autonomy for Georgia rather than for a federal Transcaucasus, a fact which inevitably drew opposition from the T'bilisi Armenian bourgeoisie, which saw its domination of the national economy threatened,¹²⁷ it amounted to little more than what the t'ergdaleulni had been demanding 30 years before and gave ample demonstration both of the continuing influence of the latter and of the caution which governed the attitudes even of the intelligentsia towards separatism. It may be, of course, that much of the intelligentsia harboured a desire for an independent state in which they would hold sole responsibility for Georgia's destiny, but if this was the case, most were equally concerned that independence might sever their ties with Europe, the source of nearly all their aspirations for Georgia, and expose the country once more to Turkish invasion. Pragmatism, too, informed them that independence was not a cause likely to win much sympathy from the bulk of the population.

In an attempt perhaps to stir national sentiment, the paper further demanded that relations between the federal centre of the envisaged state and Georgia be based on the 1783 Treaty of Georgievsk abrogated by Russia in 1801. Under this agreement K'art'l-Kakhet'i had ceded control of its foreign policy to Russia in return for the latter's guarantee of Georgia's sovereignty in domestic affairs. However, where the 1783 treaty recognised the authority of the Bagratid dynasty, Sak'art'velo called for a constitutional-parliamentary structure and Georgian representation in a central Russian assembly.¹²⁸

The paper's influence was, however, peripheral at best; limited by its distance from Georgia and the continuing failure of its ideas to find a sympathetic echo from the Georgian people. Its main achievement, in fact, before its closure in May 1905 was the all-party congress of Georgian emigres in Geneva in 1904 which announced the formation of the Socialist-Federalist Party. Sak'art'velo had also intended that the congress issue a joint policy statement by the Socialist-Federalists, Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), Anarchists and Social-Democrats, but the latter refused to become involved in anything more than a general discussion and abandoned the proceedings. The remaining parties, however, found sufficient common ground to issue a statement which, although not amounting to a programme, provided sufficient basis for joint action. In particular, they affirmed the Socialist-Federalists' demand for national autonomy, condemned the Bolshevik emphasis on centralism and strict party discipline and adhered to the SRs' position on the acceptability of the use of violence and the transfer of land from private owners to the collective ownership of communes of peasant cooperatives.¹²⁹ Through the socialisation of the land in this way, but the retention of private ownership of the means of production, the Socialist-Federalists hoped to win support among the country's small-scale land owners, the nucleus, in fact, of what they hoped would be transformed into the national bourgeoisie. However, whilst the policy might have had some attraction in a society where communal land-holding still predominated, it failed to take into account the extent to which private ownership, particularly in the west part of the country, was

already the norm in Georgia.

Partly in consequence of this, but also because of the success of the Social-Democrats in organising and propagandising ahead of them, the Socialist-Federalists' (SFs') successes continued, in the main, to be restricted to the intelligentsia. G. Laskhishvili himself noted:

Among the intelligentsia, of course, we rapidly distributed the paper (Sak'art'velo), but among the workers, who were of greater interest to us, it became very difficult to distribute the paper. Our propagandists and those few workers who were then in our party returned copies of the paper stating that the workers did not want to read it.¹³⁰

But despite its organisational weakness, the simple existence of the party, its strength among the intelligentsia and its readiness to contest the issues with the Social-Democrats in the legal and underground press, and in public meetings appreciably altered the situation in Georgia. Most notably, the national question, till now reduced to secondary status by the Social-Democrats, was forced to the forefront of political debate and the struggle to influence the Georgian people. As Uratadze put it:

With the appearance of this party the practical resolution of the national question entered the order of the day. From then on this question never left the order of the day either in the press or at general meetings. Polemics on this issue, sometimes very fierce, continued between us up to the announcement of Georgian independence on May 26, 1918.¹³¹

5.3 The Question of Autonomy

During the period 1904-05, the revolutionary movement sank deep roots throughout the length and breadth of Georgia, enveloping both the towns and countryside and engaging the t'avadaznauroba, the bourgeoisie, the peasantry

and the proletariat in its demand for the overthrow of the autocracy. But whilst to a greater or lesser degree the entire country was affected by the mood, nowhere did the revolutionary upsurge quite match the intensity revealed in the province of Guria. Here, as contemporary observers, including the French consul, Alexandre Chayet, and Western travellers noted, government authority simply broke down and ceased to function.¹³² The consequent power vacuum was filled by what quickly came to be known as the "Gurian republic". Luigi Villari, an Italian witness of the events in Guria in 1905, wrote,

For the past two years they [the peasants] have been putting the theories of Social-Democracy into practice, defying the Russian government and refusing to recognise any authority but their own,¹³³

whilst Lenin's new paper, Vpered, not noted for its unstinted praise of the revolutionary consciousness of the peasantry, was stirred to comment:

The Gurian peasant movement is a rare phenomenon in a world history: this is not a typical peasant jacquerie, but a totally conscious political movement which is in complete accord with the conscious movement of the proletariat of all Russia.¹³⁴

From 1903, moreover, and throughout 1904 when elsewhere in the Transcaucasus the revolutionary movement had still to achieve the penetration of 1905, the province offered a haven of free speech and assembly and became a forum for political debate between the groups opposed to the government. Most importantly, however, with the attendance at such meetings frequently exceeding 500, the debate offered an unprecedented opportunity for influencing the views of

the public.¹³⁵ It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the party newly formed in Geneva, the Socialist-Federalists, should attempt to challenge the Social-Democrats in what had become the stronghold of their power.

Putting aside for the moment their numerous internal differences, the SFs focused attention on the national question and land redistribution, accusing the Social-Democrats of indifference to the fate of the nation and attacking the premise that argument over the national question should be postponed until after the victory of the democratic revolution and that once the social or the class struggle had been settled, the national question would resolve itself.¹³⁶ The SFs no doubt felt themselves on strong ground with the national question, as from 1904 onwards there was scarcely a demonstration or a strike in Georgia which did not include respect for national rights among the list of its demands.¹³⁷ The peasants of Martqopi in East Georgia, for example, demanded in March 1905 that all court business be conducted in Georgian and called for the closure of their village school until Georgian was made compulsory and the teaching of Russian limited to senior pupils, whilst in the same month all the villages of K'iziqi province sent delegates to a meeting in Bodbiskhevi which, echoing calls heard all over the country, demanded that

...independent self-administration be introduced into the villages and class-based law-courts be abolished. That a single district court be established before which all classes would be equal ... that all court and business matters be conducted in Georgian, that the judge be elected by popular mandate. Georgian should be used in all institutions... and education should be in Georgian and compulsory up to the age of 16.¹³⁸

And in Guria, where due to the exhaustive debates between the rival parties on the national question the issue had had a more thorough public exposure than in any other part of Georgia, the demands for more local self-government, recognition of the equality of all nations and provision for national liberty in state legislation figured alongside the more common calls for an education in one's own language, use of Georgian in the courts and the protection of national culture, and frequently accompanied other demands for the expropriation of landlord property and its redistribution among the peasantry, the overthrow of the autocracy and the establishment of broad democratic rights.¹³⁹ Quite evidently, the efforts of the t'ergdaleulni since the 1870s to instil a sense of national consciousness into the Georgian people were coming to fruition. For the SFs, however, the desire to defend one's national cultural heritage, whilst laudable, was not in itself enough to ensure its survival. Nor was the overthrow of autocracy and the establishment of democracy. What was required, they argued, was a form of political organisation which would both understand and be responsive to the aspirations of the local population; and since, in their view, this function could not be fulfilled by a central government in a state the size of Russia's, they advocated the creation of a federal republic with national autonomy for the most sizeable and nationally conscious of the former empire's national minorities.

The tsarist government aside, of course, the greatest obstacle to the new party came from the social-democratic movement which already enjoyed the confidence of the peasantry and had the considerable advantage of a well-established organisational structure. Since too the

peasantry comprised the vast majority of the population and particularly the ethnic Georgian population, it was crucial for the SFs that they undermine the authority of the Social-Democrats in the villages and pose a realistic and popular alternative programme. This they attempted to achieve by asserting the primacy of the national question over the social question and by proposing the socialisation of the land as a means to both satisfying the immediate requirements of the peasantry and for laying the basis for the future transformation to a socialist society once the period of capitalist development had exhausted itself.

The latter proposal, however, borrowed from the Russian Social Revolutionary Party, did not take sufficient account of the extent of private farming in Georgia and ignored the virtual disappearance of the commune. As noted in Chapter Three, sat'emo, or communal, ownership was non-existent in the west of the country with the exception of Ratcha, while in the east it survived only in the use of grazing grounds and woodlands. The SFs' hopes, therefore, that the redistribution of all land to specially created communes modelled after the Russian mir would win them support, foundered in the absence of a strong tradition of communal ownership and existence and against the desire of the peasantry for land of their own.

On the other hand, despite the social antagonisms that fissured Georgian society, the attempt to win support for their national unity platform was at least conducted against a background of maturing national consciousness and growing insistence on the satisfaction of specific national demands. The SFs solution to the problem of how to exploit the mood

of national assertion without appearing to favour the interests of any one class was to acknowledge the importance of class struggle to the development of society without attaching to it exclusive significance. Thus, throwing down a challenge to the Social-Democrats, they rejected the latter's argument that the nation was a product of the capitalist epoch by asserting that although class struggle influenced the transformation of society and capitalism had contributed to the further consolidation of the nation, the history of nations actually preceded the history of class struggle.¹⁴⁰ Developing this argument, Gr. Gvelesiani, an SF theorist of the national question, maintained that the initial divisions of society were based not on class or property ownership, but on tribal rivalries. Without really explaining the cause of this rivalry, he further argued that the tribe was the immediate precursor of the nation and sometimes even synonymous with it.¹⁴¹ He concluded:

From this, it is clear that tribal conflict is essentially the same as national conflict, with the difference that today the latter takes a different form and is more complex. To the extent that the tribe fought for the whole tribe, to the extent that it defended its separate entity and factual situation, it was conducting a national struggle.¹⁴²

Without suggesting how tribal society was transformed into the nation, Gvelesiani now felt able to question the Social-Democrats' case that it was unnecessary to make a particular issue of the national question since the successful conclusion of the social struggle would remove the cause of national conflict. Thus, if, as the SFs asserted, tribal or national conflict preceded class struggle and was therefore an entirely independent factor, it was evident that the

disappearance of class antagonism was no guarantee that national rivalry would not persist. It was a mistake, they maintained, to try to understand the national question solely in terms of socio-economic forces, a point emphasised by the SF, S. Gabunia, who claimed that

the innate, essential characteristic of the nation is consciousness (shegneba) and self-awareness (t'vit'shemetsneba); nationality is the consciousness by a defined group of its individual personality and the desire to defend that personality.¹⁴³

Moreover, to the Social-Democrats' claim that by making a special issue of the national question they divided the working class, the SFs responded that the reverse was in fact the case, that by making provision for national aspirations they would defuse the national question. On the other hand, the reluctance of the Social-Democrats to recognise the existence of a separate national factor risked offending national sensibilities and driving a wedge between the peoples of the Russian empire even after the class struggle had been won. Gvelesiani wrote

...besides the material instinct there exists within man something which motivates him powerfully and which makes him fight. One form of this is the idea of freedom for one's country, for, if you like, the national idea. Wherever this idea collides with some obstacle, wherever it is trampled on by someone, the struggle which we call the national struggle will slowly awaken and develop.¹⁴⁴

Nor, they added, even assuming the victory of a socialist revolution, could one rely on the working class to prevent national oppression. The proletariat of a great power, by implication the Russians, was no more or less prone to chauvinism than the bourgeoisie and just as likely

to use its position to secure itself advantage.¹⁴⁵ The national question was, therefore, a practical question of immediate concern to the working people of both the oppressed and the oppressor nations, for until such time as full national rights were conceded to the minorities by the people of the great power, national chauvinism would persist and thus hinder the development of class consciousness.

That the Social-Democrats were aware of the need to combat national chauvinism among the Russian proletariat and to meet certain of the aspirations of the national minorities can be seen from articles three, eight and nine of the party programme discussed above, while Lenin's sensitivity to the dangers posed by Russian nationalism to the unity of the working class was clearly indicated in his reply in 1914 to the critics of article nine, the right of nations to self-determination:

Let us consider the position of an oppressor nation. Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot. The interests of the freedom of the Great-Russian people require a struggle against such oppression.¹⁴⁶

It was his belief, moreover, that not only did the right establish the principle of equality between the nations of the empire and satisfy the desire of the minorities for national freedom, thus paving the way for proletarian unity, but that it would, in practice, actually reduce the likelihood of secession.

The SFs were, however, dismissive of the right to self-determination suspecting, and not without reason, that it was no more than a tactic designed to disarm the national liberation movements. The right was so broad, it was argued, as to be bereft of real content. What, they

pointedly asked, did the Social-Democrats have in mind by the nation? Were the minority nationalities to take this to imply the entire nation regardless of class, or did the rights of the proletariat carry rather more weight than those of the peasantry, the bourgeoisie and the nobility?¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, even assuming that the Social-Democrats conferred this right on the entire nation how, in practice, was the will of the nation to be elucidated? And was it conceivable, asked Gvelesiani in 1908, that the Bolsheviks would accept the result of a referendum which supported something considerably more extreme than the national autonomy and federation demanded by the SFs?¹⁴⁸ And why, if the Social-Democrats were sincerely concerned with national freedom, did they reject federation in favour of outright political secession when they knew perfectly well that independence went beyond the aspirations of many nationalities for greater control over the determination of their own affairs?

In reality, however, the SFs considered the establishment of a bourgeois-democracy to be the most likely outcome of the overthrow of the autocracy, a circumstance which, in their view, made the protection of national minority rights more crucial than ever. The danger, they argued, was that in a centralised republican state in which one nationality enjoyed numerical superiority over the rest, the de jure rights of the minorities would count for very little against the de facto power of the Russian bourgeoisie and its desire for economic expansion. Worse still, the resentment likely to be engendered among the minorities by the frustration of their ambitions was likely to manifest itself

in the emergence of nationalist movements led by the indigent bourgeoisie and a subsequent decline in the class-consciousness of the population. It was precisely the possibility of such an eventuality that made it essential that national freedom be protected by the devolution of control over domestic affairs to autonomous republics and federations. Writing for Tsnobis P'urtseli in 1905, Laskhishvili expounded on this point:

If we were sure that the Russian liberation movement would end in total triumph for the ideals of the proletariat, then, of course, we could consider talk about the national question superfluous. But unfortunately, it is still premature to talk about this victory and in the near future the bourgeoisie will be in command. We take into consideration all these facts and maintain that today it is necessary to force the bourgeoisie to concede to autonomy so that in the future we can avoid far worse national struggle which would impede the direct struggle between the classes ... not even the daselebi deny that national oppression ensures the domination of the bourgeoisie. They should not therefore deny that the interests of the proletariat demand that the state be so organised as to weaken the oppression of one nation by another. We think that one can achieve this better in conditions of autonomy than through the central democratic representative government proposed by the daselebi.¹⁴⁹

During 1905 the organisational structure of the SFs undoubtedly improved, enabling them to make use of the increased political freedom accorded by the decline in governmental authority to intensify their campaign for national unity and autonomy. Combined with the slogan "Georgian land for the Georgians", this provided the party with a platform which won considerable support among many of the t'avadaz-nauroba and particularly those who had lost land to foreigners or were in danger of doing so, among the intelligentsia gathered around Ilia Tchavtchavadze, Akaki Dseret'eli and others who, whilst not in agreement with everything

advocated by the SFs, at least identified with their demand for autonomy, and the bourgeoisie which though suspicious of the socialist overtones of the SFs' pronouncements nevertheless welcomed their advocacy of class unity in the interests of the nation and their support for the development of a strong and progressive Georgian middle-class. In this respect, it was the SFs' contention that the bourgeoisie had a major role to play in raising the cultural level of the nation and paving the way through the economic development of the country for the eventual triumph of socialism.¹⁵⁰

Encouragement for national autonomy came consistently from Iveria which, like Tsnobis P'urtseli presented decentralisation based on national-territorial autonomy as both the most democratic solution of the requirements of the national minorities and the best means of rooting out national discord.

We support autonomous self-government for the Caucasus [wrote the editor of Iveria] and we also consider union between its nations to be essential, ... but at the same time we want to retain our national existence and entirety within defined territorial bounds. The central organ of the Caucasian self-government should not be concerned with matters relating to the control of each nation's and, specifically, the Georgian nation's domestic life; only questions concerning the resolution of the socio-political relations of the peoples of the entire Caucasus should enter its competence.¹⁵¹

Less predictable than the support of Iveria, however, especially in view of the assistance given by many leading t'avadebi during 1905 to the 'Black Hundreds' and the tsarist regime, was the decision of a special meeting of the t'avadaznauroba of T'bilisi and K'ut'aisi Gubernii in April of that year to appeal to the tsar for autonomy on the

grounds that the full cultural development of the Georgian people could only be achieved if it had its own administration and laws.¹⁵²

Despite these successes, however, the influence of the SFs proved limited in the main to the large towns, while the peasantry, the main target of their propaganda, remained out of reach, a state of affairs which continued to blight the party's prospects up to the invasion of Georgia by Russia in 1921. In part, the failure of the SFs may be attributed to the peasantry's concern, whether justified or not, that autonomy would weaken Georgia's ties with Russia and thus invite the unwanted attentions of Turkey and that the demand for autonomy might isolate Georgia from the broader opposition movement. But at root, the SFs greatest difficulty lay in the fact that the call for saert'o niadagi (common ground) was no more popular in the early 20th century than it had been in the late 19th. If one bears in mind that the peasantry's economic predicament continued to grow worse, that unlike in Russia peasants remained "temporarily obligated" to their landlords until such time as they redeemed their plots of land, that landlords could veto peasants' requests to purchase these plots, that only 47.6 per cent of ex-sabatono peasants had actually succeeded in purchasing any land since the 1860s,¹⁵³ and that under the pressure of population growth and mounting debt, the average area of land farmed by the peasants had been steadily reduced (see Chapter Three), it is difficult to imagine how the SFs hoped to persuade the peasantry of the benefits of a class alliance that incorporated the t'avadaznauroba without first indicating their wish to satisfy the peasantry's thirst for their own land. Furthermore, in a country where individual

farming was already well established and against a background of mounting peasant militancy and demands for the abolition of "temporary obligations", the immediate and free transfer of the land used by the peasantry into their private property, the return of money already paid for the redemption of land plots, the return of all land taken from the peasantry by the nobility in the 1860s and 1870s, the abolition of all duties to the landlords, the free use of forests and pastures and the reduction of the ghala and kulukhi payments for rented land to a maximum of 10 per cent of the harvest, the SFs proposal for socialisation of the land demonstrably failed to meet the peasantry's expectations.¹⁵⁴

In the period between 1906 and the beginning of the first world war, the SFs hopes of linking the national question to the agrarian question and of thus winning the allegiance of the peasantry were boosted by the government's decision to step up the colonisation of the Transcaucasus. Thus by 1908, the Transcaucasian branch of the Peasant Land Bank established in T'bilisi in March 1906 had purchased 258,000 desyatiny of private land for its colonisation fund,¹⁵⁵ while from 1906-08, 10,000 Russian peasants of both sexes settled in Georgia alone.¹⁵⁷ Designed in part to enervate the peasant movement in the inner gubernii of Russia by offering peasants favourable conditions on the periphery of the empire, the policy also had the purpose of furthering the government's Russification schemes stepped up in the wake of 1905 and of dividing Russian and Georgian peasants and workers against each other. However, the determination of the SFs to stand by the principle of

party may have retained of transforming itself from a party of the intelligentsia into a mass-based organisation. Thus instead of emphasising the injustice of selling land to Russian peasants when so many Georgians were landless, the party objected to the policy on nationalist grounds. The resolution of the land question, wrote the SF paper Amirani (Amirani) in April 1908, demanded not the inflammation of internal struggle but the unification of all the Georgian people to ensure that Georgian land remained in Georgian hands, a statement which faithfully reflected the majority view at the party's third congress in October 1907.¹⁵⁸ Then, despite confirmation of the party's support for socialisation of the land and its opposition to privatisation, it was stated that,

in the period of domination by reaction the choice of the present socialisation tactic is incorrect.¹⁵⁹

What was needed, they believed, was a peasant land bank which would not only prevent the loss of land to foreigners, but also enable Georgian peasants to buy land from the t'avadaznauroba. Such a policy, however, while likely to have won friends among the poor and deracinated gentry, ignored that the Georgian peasantry regarded the land they were being asked to buy as rightfully theirs. Consequently, when the SFs appealed to the national ideals of the peasantry, suggesting that it buy land to preserve its national heritage, the latter questioned why respect for the same national ideal should not oblige the nobility to return land to the peasantry. It was further observed that the bank would do nothing for the problems of the non-creditworthy

majority of peasants.¹⁶⁰

The SFs inconsistency over socialisation, moreover, was to lead to a parting of the ways with the SRs in 1910 and reflected growing frustration at the party's failure to deepen its influence.¹⁶¹ Differences within the party at its congresses in 1906 and 1907 continued to prevent the publication of a joint programme and witnessed the emergence of a considerable divergence of views on the party's role. Thus even Archil Jorjadze, one of its leading figures, found himself in a minority both in his view of the state as an impediment to the realisation of socialism¹⁶² and that the party should be reinforcing its commitment to socialisation, not qualifying it, by extending it to include the means of production as well as land.¹⁶³ By 1914, not only had the SRs abandoned the alliance, but a new party, the National Democrats, standing on a more blatantly nationalist platform had split away from the SFs. The break-up of the party, however, did nothing for the fortunes of the organisations concerned, but merely divided their previous support and prompted a further decline in their influence.

The Social-Democratic Response

Although in other respects the decisions and events of the Second RSDLP Congress were to divide the Transcaucasian party organisations, just as they divided the party as a whole, they contrived nevertheless to achieve a temporary consensus among them on the national question. Thus the resolution passed by the First Congress of the Caucasian Union in March 1903 approving a federal structure for the future Russian state was quickly abandoned in favour of articles seven, eight and nine of the RSDLP statutes and the

provision for regional self-government approved by Noe Zhordania and, of course, the majority of the delegates to the Brussels/London Congress. Consequently, 1904 witnessed what in retrospect was to prove the rather rare spectacle of Zhordania and Stalin in alliance against those, both outwith and within the party, who saw the solution to the national question in the provision of national territorial autonomy for the minority peoples.

Among the Armenian population the latter idea quickly gained ground following the announcement on 12th July 1903 of an ill-considered government decree appropriating all the property and funds owned by the Armenian Church.¹⁶⁴ Able to exploit the mood of popular outrage over what was perceived as a wholly unwarranted attack on the central pillar of the nation's cultural identity, the nationalist Hnchak and Dashnaktsutiun parties, both of which had suffered a decline in recent years, enjoyed an unexpected revival.¹⁶⁵ But more significantly, both for the government and the Social-Democratic Party, the decree prompted a reexamination of their relationship with Russia and a move away from their preoccupation with liberating West Armenia from the Turks. This still remained their ultimate goal, but the doubt now thrown upon the autocracy's intentions towards Armenia inclined the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia to greater participation in the Russian opposition movement and, like the Georgian Socialist-Federalists, but with rather more success, to propagandise for the creation of an autonomous republic.

Of particular concern to the Social-Democrats was the Dashnak and Socialist-Federalist appeal to Armenians and Georgians to subordinate their particular class interests to those of the nation as a whole and their argument that not

only were the common traits of their respective populations of greater import than the social issues dividing them, but that class struggle was an active impediment to national revival. Clearly contained in this was both a challenge to the social-democratic view that the national question was a social issue which would automatically be resolved by the victory of the international proletariat and the conviction that in Russia only the united efforts of the workers and peasants of all nationalities would achieve the overthrow of autocracy.

In response, the Social-Democrats denied the incompatibility of class struggle and national renaissance and asserted that far from being incompatible, it was a necessary precondition. In other words, national renaissance was the product of economic advance, but the latter was impossible without class struggle. Developing the argument further, they maintained that abandonment of the class struggle would lead to the sacrifice of workers' interests to those of the national bourgeoisie and that autonomy, by dividing the workers' movement, would ultimately facilitate the exploitation of the proletariat. Furthermore, the mutual antagonism of the Armenian and Georgian bourgeoisies, combined with concentration of much of the former in T'bilisi, would ensure that any attempt to establish national autonomy on a territorial basis in the Transcaucasus would lead to conflict between the Armenian and Georgian proletariat and the submersion of class consciousness in chauvinism.¹⁶⁶ As the Georgian Bolshevik Alek'sandr Dsulukidze put it:

Despite the fact that today the Georgian and Armenian bourgeoisie are squabbling with each other, the Georgian and Armenian proletariat are bound tightly to each other and the fire of national schism has been extinguished between them; but if you now bring in autonomy, the fire will ignite again... In today's conditions autonomy is harmful and dangerous for the proletariat.¹⁶⁷

More immediately, and particularly in view of the government's attempts to whip up inter-ethnic conflict among the indigenous nationalities of the Transcaucasus, emphasis on national differences was deemed by the Social-Democrats to be playing into the hands of the regime.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, what need was there for autonomy, they argued, brushing aside objections that the RSDLP statutes on national rights contained no guarantees that these rights would be respected, when the Social-Democrats had already proposed regional self-government for areas like the Transcaucasus distinguished by a specific way of life or national make-up.¹⁶⁹

The genuine anxiety shared by most of the Transcaucasian Social-Democrats that the notoriously volatile relationship between the Armenian and Azeri populations could degenerate at any moment and thus destroy instantly their patient endeavours to establish mutual trust and an awareness of common class interests among the workers of the two communities was also an undoubted factor in their opposition to the Bund's attempt to win approval for the division of the RSDLP into national organisations. Noe Zhordania, among other Georgian Mensheviks subsequently berated as "nationalists" by the Bolsheviks, consistently opposed the division of the party along these lines and was quite unequivocal in his condemnation of the Bund. Writing for Iskra in August 1904 (by which time Lenin had been ousted from the editorial

board), he maintained that given the amalgam of different nationalities living in the Caucasus and the region's long history of inter-ethnic conflict the principle of the unity of all nations in a single, powerful, social-democratic organisation was of the utmost importance.

The proletarians of all nations [he wrote of the Transcaucasus] - Armenians, Georgians, Russians, Tatars (sic) etc. - responded to this call and, in spite of the inflammation of national hatred by the bourgeois press, held out their hands to each other as brothers in the common struggle against our common enemies. The local committees of the party which, in their turn, joined the Caucasian Union, sprang up on this soil. As you see, our organisational principle is directly at odds with the Bund's, for which the latter can never forgive the Caucasian Union.¹⁷⁰

What, however, prompted their particular concern on this issue was the decision of a group of Armenian Social-Democrats to break away from the Caucasian Union and the RSDLP in the wake of the Brussels/London Congress and form a separate party called the Organisation of Armenian Social-Democratic Workers (OASDW).¹⁷¹ The catalyst for this decision appears to have been the failure of the Caucasian Union delegates to the congress to stand by the latter organisation's mandate recommending a federal solution for the national question, and certainly federation was to occupy a central position in the new party's manifesto. What most troubled the remaining Transcaucasian social-democratic committees, particularly in view of the alleged low class-consciousness of the Armenian proletariat and its susceptibility to nationalist propaganda, was the organisation's decision to emulate the Bund and declare that not only was it the case that only an Armenian social-democratic party could defend the interests of the Armenian pro-

letariat, but that the Armenian proletariat was inseparable from the rest of Armenian society and that:

The Armenian proletariat, united in a socialist party, should try to elucidate the public opinion of Armenians so that the Armenian proletariat will be the true child of its race.¹⁷²

Clearly sharing Zhordania's concern, Stalin accused the OASDW in an article for Proletariatis Brdzola (Proletarian Struggle) in September 1904 of distracting the attention of the proletariat from the class struggle. It was not the purpose of the Social-Democratic Party, he wrote, to elucidate and represent the views of public opinion as a whole, but to make clear the irreconcilable nature of the class interests dividing society. It was not the duty therefore of Social-Democrats to ensure that the national proletariats be the "true children" of their respective races, but that they educate the workers, as indeed the united Transcaucasian organisations had been doing since long before the OASDW made its appearance, in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.¹⁷³

The federal issue aside, the Armenian party cited as grounds for its break away from the RSDLP its opposition to "the absolute centralism in its form of organisation", and one statute in the Caucasian Union's regulations allowing for the cooption of members to that body's central institution. But as Zhordania argued, the organisational dispute was still very much a live issue within the RSDLP, whilst objection to one statute in the Caucasian Union regulations was scarcely grounds for forming a new party.¹⁷⁴ It is perhaps more likely that the Armenian decision was conditioned by the circumstances of the time, that the

combination of Armenian national sensitivity in the wake of the Turkish massacres in the 1890s and the government's appropriation of the Armenian Church's property in 1903, together with the predominance of Georgians in the Transcaucasian Social-Democratic organisations lay at the heart of their decision to separate.

Ironically, the commitment to the principle of party unity demonstrated by the Transcaucasian Social-Democratic organisation in its dealings with the Armenian group was itself proved wanting with the return of Noe Zhordania from exile in 1905. In reality, the appearance of unity maintained by the Bolshevik-dominated Caucasian Union up to this point was something of a facade, insofar as it had failed to inform the local committees of the results of the Second Congress. Consequently, although many party members were aware that a dispute of some kind existed among the leadership, they did not fully understand the issues involved nor did they appreciate the extent or the implications of the division that had occurred in London. Even in late 1904, when a representative of the party centre was sent to speak on the nature of the split, the Caucasian Union ensured that the provincial committees received the content of the paper in the most abbreviated form.¹⁷⁵ In January, however, the Union took the first steps towards embroiling the Transcaucasus in the dispute when, in accordance with Lenin's advocacy of a party of professional revolutionaries appointed from above, it commanded the T'bilisi Committee to disband itself whilst it selected a new body to replace it.¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately for the Caucasian Union, its decision to take action coincided with the unexpected arrival of Zhordania in

...placing his prestige within the party at the service of the T'bilisi Committee, he encouraged its resistance to the Caucasian Union and quickly set about explaining the nature of the issues dividing the party leadership. In an article written in cooperation with Noe Ramishvili for the Georgian paper Sotsial-Demokrati, Zhordania focused on the dispute over party membership at the Second Congress. It was Lenin's argument, he upheld, that left to themselves workers could not obtain social-democratic consciousness, that they could get no further than the trade union struggle for higher wages, shorter hours and better living conditions and that they could only achieve political awareness with the assistance of the revolutionary intelligentsia.¹⁷⁷ This, combined with the attentions of the tsarist police, necessitated the creation of a centralised party of professional revolutionaries formed from the intelligentsia whose task would be to direct the course of the workers' movement. Thus the role of the Central Committee would no longer be to,

...just advise, convince and argue (as it had done in the past), but actually to direct the orchestra ... It can, by its own judgement, disband a local committee, establish a new one, forcibly introduce a new member to the committee and dismiss an old one. In this way, in the opinion of Lenin, the local committee becomes a mere agent of the Central Committee.¹⁷⁸

Seen in this light, Lenin's approach threatened the basis of most of the party organisations in the Transcaucasus where, since the 1890s, there had been both a tradition of heavy recruitment from the working class and a commitment to election of party leaders by the rank and file. Moreover, the recent rapid expansion of the party had drawn not

just on workers, but also on the peasantry and had as such taken the local organisations in completely the opposite direction to that envisaged by Lenin. Consequently the idea of an elitist party organisation drawn primarily from the intelligentsia dictating to the local committees from somewhere in Russia or, worse still, in Europe was scarcely calculated to win much sympathy in the area. Problems of communication aside, Caucasian Social-Democrats questioned the wisdom of an undifferentiated approach to questions of organisation, tactics and strategy when conditions in the Transcaucasus so clearly demanded quite different methods.

If Zhordania had needed any further support for his case against the Bolsheviks, the decision of the Caucasian Union to demand the resignation of the T'bilisi Committee could not have been better timed. Here was a concrete example of Leninist policy in action. The latter, however, buttressed by Zhordania's support, issued a strong reproof to the Caucasian Union informing it that the T'bilisi Committee was elected by the T'bilisi workers and only they had the right to dissolve it.¹⁷⁹ Confronted by this challenge the Bolsheviks responded by publishing a leaflet which they distributed among the Transcaucasian organisations, declaring the old committee disbanded and the appointment of new personnel. But within a month of the start of the struggle for control of the T'bilisi district organisations support for the old committee was so overwhelming that the position of the new body became untenable.¹⁸⁰ In the provinces too the Caucasian Union found itself fighting a losing battle and by the spring every Transcaucasian organisation with the exception of Baku had embraced Zhordania's position.¹⁸¹

The Caucasian Union, however, continued to act as if it alone was representative of Transcaucasian social-democracy, with the consequence that just as revolutionary fervour in Georgia reached its climax, the party which depicted itself as the vanguard of the proletariat was divided against itself and incapable of doing more than follow in the tail of events. A police report issued at this time estimated that because of inner-party disputes in T'bilisi "...productivity of the organisation fell by 50 per cent...".¹⁸²

Meanwhile, the militant mood of the workers and, most remarkably, the Gurian peasantry provided an ironic background to the continuing dispute over the ability of workers, let alone peasants, to go beyond "trade-union consciousness". Such a situation clearly could not be permitted to persist and to break the deadlock the T'bilisi Committee, now "cleansed" in Zhordania's words "of Bolshevism", called a conference of the Transcaucasian organisation to elect a regional committee and thus bypass the Caucasian Union.¹⁸³ Despite the split, however, there was as yet little to divide the party over the national question and rank and file party members who had cooperated together happily for years continued to do so.

In fact, for much of 1905 the radical parties, including the Social-Democrats, the Socialist-Federalists, the Hnchaks and Dashnaks managed to find a modus vivendi over the divisive national issue. But this was conditioned as much by their common fear that the violent clashes between Armenians and Azeris in Baku in December 1904 would spread to T'bilisi and dissipate the revolutionary fervour of the population in ethnic violence, than any agreement over the

future settlement of the national question. Thus throughout the first months of 1905 all parties laid heavy emphasis on the unity and friendship of all nationalities and warned the people to be on guard against what they saw as government attempts to contain the revolutionary mood by setting the nationalities against each other.

In mid-summer, however, the first cracks in the alliance began to appear when Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, newly appointed as viceroy to the Caucasus, quickly nullified the destabilising effect of the appropriation of Armenian Church property by repealing the decree on 1st August.¹⁸⁴ The placatory effect of this measure was quickly compounded by the tsar's decision to permit elections for the so-called "Bulygin Duma", a purely advisory body with an extremely narrow electoral base, made even narrower in the Transcaucasus by the restriction of the franchise to the major cities.¹⁸⁵ As a consequence, the Armenian bourgeoisie retained its domination of the T'bilisi City Council and seemed almost certain to win the right to represent T'bilisi in St. Petersburg. The first of the measures, in particular, helped strip the opposition of the Armenian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia to the government of much of its strength, giving rise to spontaneous parades, church services and rapturous press comment in celebration of the great event. Most disconcerting, however, for the opposition movement as a whole, was the spectacle of a delegation of the Armenian population's most "worthy" representatives conveying their gratitude for the compassion of the tsar to the viceroy's palace.¹⁸⁶ The Dashnaktsutun too almost completely abandoned its anti-tsarist activities to focus its attention on Turkey and T'bilisi's deteriorating Armeno-

This volte-face by the Armenians inevitably prompted accusations of treachery from the Social-Democrats and expression of nationalist outrage among the Georgian bourgeoisie and sections of the intelligentsia. More importantly, it undermined the limited trust established between the radical parties and destroyed the prospect of a united front against autocracy. Thus in November 1905 when the Armeno-Azeri violence all had been at such pains to prevent earlier in the year finally exploded, the Dashnaks played an active part in the hostilities, exacerbating rather than facilitating the task of the Social-Democrats in appeasing the two sides.¹⁸⁸

As too the government regained the initiative towards the end of the year and the opposition movement came under increasing strain, the schism which had divided the Social-Democratic Party in the early spring reasserted itself. With friction between the two factions already raised by arguments over the advisability of encouraging or even preparing for armed insurrection and the Mensheviks' decision to participate in the elections to the state дума, their remaining areas of cooperation were brought to an abrupt halt by the government's closure of the daily paper Elva (Lightning) in April 1906.¹⁸⁹ Coinciding as it did with a marked increase in the arrest of party members and evidence of mounting confidence in government circles that they could sustain the offensive against the opposition movement, this appears to have convinced the Bolsheviks that the existing conditions necessitated the cessation of all further activity and the temporary disbandment of the party to prevent

more arrests. But at a joint meeting of the social-democratic organisations in the T'bilisi workers' district of Nadzaladevi, the Mensheviks, who by now far outnumbered the Bolsheviks, rejected this advice, no doubt suspecting the latter's motives, and agreed to expand the party's underground activities.¹⁹⁰ Frustrated and powerless, the Bolsheviks went their own way, scattering across Transcaucasia. It was, claimed Zhordania,

...their final separation from the Georgian people.¹⁹¹

It is true that even after the Fourth RSDLP "Unification" Congress, held in Stockholm between 23rd April and 8th May 1906, the Bolsheviks continued to maintain separate organisations in the Transcaucasus, but by then their influence was already minimal. All the Caucasian delegates elected to the Stockholm Congress were Mensheviks,¹⁹² while at the Fourth Congress of Caucasian organisations in September of the same year, the Bolsheviks were reduced to a powerless minority. The Mensheviks, meanwhile, used their participation in the May elections to the First Duma to further enhance their prestige. Despite government repression all five of their candidates were elected while their combined vote doubled that of all the remaining parties put together.¹⁹³

Signs too now began to emerge of a divergence of views amongst the Social-Democrats on the national question and more specifically on the desirability or otherwise of autonomy. Here too there was argument over what kind of autonomy was most appropriate to the Transcaucasus. Should there, for instance, be territorial autonomy and, if so,

should it be granted to the region as a whole or separately to the major nationalities, or should autonomy be devolved from the principle of territory altogether and confined to the cultural sphere?¹⁹⁴

No doubt influenced by the apparent growth of national self-consciousness among the peasantry, evidenced in their mounting demands for education in the vernacular and the use of Georgian in the courts and government offices, as well as by the increasingly strident chauvinism of the "Black Hundreds" and other Russian nationalist organisations operating in the Caucasus, certain Georgian Mensheviks sought new ways to satisfy these demands and protect national cultural development against Russification. Thus in late 1905 a small group advocating the inclusion of national territorial autonomy in the party programme formed around V. Darchiashvili, I. Gomart'eli and E. Egvitashvili. Writing for Iveria in December 1905, which suggests that they were having difficulties airing their views in the social-democratic press, the latter of these stated:

I, as a Social-Democrat, call on all conscious proletarians and all those Georgian Social-Democrats who in recent times have come to regard centralism as in some way more to the advantage of the proletariat, to cease their duplicity and recognise, once and for all, that the cultural flourishing and development of the proletariat of every nation demands broad self-government and that the image of broad self-government is democratic national autonomy.¹⁹⁵

Ivane Gomart'eli, one of the five Georgian Social-Democrats elected as deputies to the First Duma, developed this theme in a lengthy pamphlet on the national question in early 1906. Anxious to avoid the criticism that they were nationalists, he argued that while the victory of the

international proletariat would indeed put an end to nationalism, eradicate national frontiers impeding the further social and economic integration of mankind and even after time lead to the erosion of such national characteristics as language,¹⁹⁶ such a victory lay in the distant future and that in the meantime Social-Democrats should concern themselves with the practical problems of raising the class consciousness of the proletariat and overthrowing the tsarist regime. Important to understanding Gomart'eli's approach was his belief, shared by most Social-Democrats, that the defeat of autocracy in Russia would lead not directly to socialism, but to an interim period of bourgeois-democracy which, amongst other things, would facilitate the development and expansion of the Russian bourgeoisie. Threatened by the domination of a central state apparatus by the Russians, the Georgian bourgeoisie might well prove able to use the existence of national oppression to unite the proletariat and peasantry around itself, thus distracting them from the class struggle. It was precisely such a development, argued Gomart'eli, that had formed the basis for the existing class alliance of the Armenian proletariat and bourgeoisie.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, since the emergence of a bourgeois government in Russia would exacerbate rather than ease national oppression, it was to be expected that the national language, schools, courts and literature, all of which were essential to the development of the cultural level of the national proletariat, would be at risk. It was, therefore, not nationalism that drove him to advocate national territorial autonomy, but concern for the future socialist transformation of society. Consequently, under a "liberal-bourgeois constitutional monarchy" of the type he

anticipated would come to Russia, every nationality should seek to win as firm a guarantee of internal freedom as possible.¹⁹⁸

The demand for territorial autonomy was not, of course, new to Caucasian Social-democracy. It had been supported by the Union of Armenian Social-Democrats in their manifesto of 1902 and approved by the Caucasian Union's first congress in March 1903. But since then, most of the local party committees had come to regard it as unsuited to the Transcaucasus because of the extensive intermingling of nationalities in the area and the risk that class consciousness might sink in inter-ethnic rivalry. Consequently, its resurrection, particularly at a time when the party's fortunes were at a low ebb, and the revolution of 1905 had been thrown onto the defensive, was regarded with hostility by most Social-Democrats, whether Bolshevik or Menshevik, and as likely to further divide the Russian workers' movement.¹⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the debate on the national question sharpened during the course of 1906 and occupied a central place in the discussions of the Fourth Congress of Caucasian Social-Democratic Party organisations in September. Here, indications that attitudes to the issue were undergoing a gradual transformation received further confirmation when a small group from the K'ut'aisi delegation, led by the Menshevik, B. Nat'adze, criticised the territorial autonomists on the grounds that there was no longer any such thing as a pure national territory, but which instead of going on to reassert the policies established by the Second RSDLP Congress, proposed the acceptance of national-cultural autonomy, according to which authority over the nation's

cultural and educational affairs would be granted not to a territorial administrative organisation, but to an extra-territorial body entrusted with responsibility for national cultural development.²⁰⁰

It was hoped that by devolving national cultural affairs from the territorial principle and thus removing them from the competence of the state administration, it would be possible to ameliorate if not prevent what was seen as the tendency of the bourgeoisie of the most powerful nationalities in multi-national states to seek hegemony over the minority peoples, and in the interest of greater-economic and administrative efficiency, to use the power of the state to eradicate all linguistic and cultural impediments to the assimilation of all parts of the state. However, whilst this idea (drawn largely from the Austro-Marxists, Otto Bauer and Karl Renner) was soon to be adopted by the Transcaucasian Mensheviks it had not yet won the approval of the party majority and was overwhelmingly rejected.

For the moment, the position of the Mensheviks on the national question appeared indistinguishable from that of the Bolsheviks. Zhordania, as was noted by his contemporary and fellow Menshevik, K. Zalevskii, continued to content himself with the demand for regional self-government and to oppose autonomy which

...in his view, was harmful to the proletariat since it was both utopian and set the Georgian workers special tasks, thus dividing them from the proletariat of the rest of Russia (Rossiya) and holding back the struggle for political freedom.²⁰¹

Despite this apparent unity, however, it was already becoming clear that the Bolsheviks viewed the question from

a rather different perspective. Thus while the Mensheviks were concerned more with the problem of minimising national oppression in the period of bourgeois democracy and the related task of immunising the proletariat against the lure of nationalism, the Transcaucasian Bolsheviks' greater concentration on the final victory of socialism was leading them to the view that since national oppression, like the pauperisation of the proletariat, was a product of capitalism and as such could only be overcome by the triumph of socialism, the national question should be entirely subordinated to the class struggle. In a manner indicative of his insensitivity to the national aspirations of the minority peoples Makharadze wrote that

...the main force in social relations is not the national question, but the class struggle, not the subject of ethnography, but the social question.²⁰²

However, this emphasis on ultimate ends rather than current tactical needs not only ignored that the Second Congress provisions on this issue belonged to the RSDLP's minimum programme and were thus discussed in the context of a bourgeois democratic revolution, but further damaged the Bolsheviks' prospects of using the national aspirations of the indigenous nationalities to form a broad class alliance against the autocracy. As the Georgian Bolshevik A. Jap'aridze warned his colleagues, it was a mistake to believe that only the bourgeoisie was concerned with the national question:

If the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation is interested in defending its market, the proletariat of the same nation is interested in defending its language, the tool by which it becomes conscious of its class interests. Thus the entire

nation becomes involved in the national struggle and takes an active part... Therefore it is correct that we, i.e. social-democracy, cannot afford to leave the national struggle unattended, because the latter is genuinely a national struggle and not just a bourgeois struggle.

But where the Georgian Mensheviks were quick to recognise the need for greater flexibility to meet the growing national aspirations of the population and for class alliances in a country whose proletariat remained very small and the peasantry dominated, the local Bolshevik leadership ignored Jap'aridze's advice and remained, even in the face of rebukes from Lenin, lukewarm on the right to national self-determination and hostile to autonomy.²⁰⁴ Thus, while the Mensheviks, despite government harassment, continued to strengthen their hold on public opinion contriving, despite the exceptionally limited franchise to send their deputies to each of the four all-Russian dumas and maintain, in the face of mass arrests and exile of party cadres, both an underground and a legal organisation through to the beginning of the war in 1914, the Bolsheviks found themselves isolated and unable to respond to local conditions. In Revolutsiis Matiane (The Chronicle of the Revolution), the journal of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party in the 1920s, the old Bolshevik, Kaladze, summed up the demoralisation of the Bolshevik party leadership in Georgia when he wrote:

From 1905-1917, Koba (Stalin) moved to Baku, Filipp (Makharadze) became a cosmopolitan on the national question and Mikha (Tskhakaia) could no longer bear the confines of Georgia and for 10-12 years left Georgia completely and settled in Europe.²⁰⁵

Now, as the government's confidence grew and the concessions of 1905 were rolled back, the Caucasus began to suffer a period of reaction reminiscent of the worst years of the 1880s. The colonisation referred to above was stepped up, whilst to voice criticism of tsarist educational policy or demand improved cultural and linguistic rights was to risk being labelled a separatist and subsequently arrested. In November 1907 the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Stolypin, reflected the new mood when, in an address to the Third Duma, he condemned the idea of national self-determination, demanded the defence of Russia "one and indivisible" and declared to the national minorities:

First trust in our point of view, gratefully accept the favour being granted you, recognise that to be a Russian citizen is a supreme treasure ...then we will give you every right.²⁰⁶

It was, as the Georgian Menshevik paper, Dsqaro (The Source) retorted,

...like the step-mother who says to her step-child whilst constantly slapping her face: first love me, then I will help you.²⁰⁷

But whereas in the 1880s the national movement had been limited in the main to the intelligentsia, by 1907 the situation was very different. Not only had the efforts of the t'ergdaleulni succeeded in engaging a greater proportion of the population in the struggle for national renaissance, but the events of 1905 had politicised Georgians of all backgrounds and given them an awareness of their corporate identity and ability to effect change in a way that no amount of propaganda work could have achieved. It is an indication too of the change that had affected Georgian society that

When in 1900 Ilya Ichnavashvili, recently returned from his place in the upper chamber of the Second Duma, was murdered by a gang of unidentified assassins, his death should have triggered an almost unprecedented outpouring of communal grief. Like his contemporary, Akaki Dseret'eli, he had become one of the first modern national heroes of the Georgian people.²⁰⁸

Against this background of official chauvinism and offended national sentiment, many Georgian Mensheviks began to reassess their position on the national question. Most importantly, Noe Zhordania wrote a pamphlet in 1908 entitled Kart'veli Khalkhi da natsionalizmi (The Georgian People and Nationalism) in which he abandoned his opposition to the K'ut'aisi Group and declared his support for national-cultural autonomy. Maintaining that nationalism was very weak in Georgia, largely because the course of socio-economic development in the 19th century had prevented the emergence of a strong indigenous bourgeoisie, Zhordania argued that its place had been taken in Georgian society by a desire for national cultural advancement. The important distinction was that while the Georgian people wanted national schools and thirsted for Georgian literature and culture as never before,

...it rejects national politics today just as it did in the past. It set out on this path from the very beginning and even now has not deviated. This is the historic path of the Georgian people, by which it is distinguished from other cultural nations. Therefore, when Georgian social-democracy demands cultural autonomy for its nation and not political autonomy, it is reflecting life's course, reaches the heart-felt wishes of the people and unerringly engraves them in its programme.²⁰⁹

However, while Zhordania clearly demonstrated his support for national-cultural autonomy in this passage, there was nothing more in this pamphlet either to explain or substantiate his conversion and only in July 1912 in an article for the Menshevik paper Chveni Tskhovreba (Our Life) did he make it a demand of the Transcaucasian party programme.²¹⁰ Following this, however, the Vienna Conference of the All-Russian Menshevik Party organisation in September quickly succumbed to pressure from the Transcaucasians and the Bund and accepted national-cultural autonomy within a united future democratic state as official party policy,²¹¹ a decision which received confirmation with its announcement by the Georgian Menshevik, A. Chkhenkeli, to the Fourth Duma on 10th December.²¹²

Zhordania's decision to change course on the national question was no doubt influenced by a number of factors, not least of which must have been the upsurge of national feeling in the years immediately after 1905 and perhaps a fear too that if the Social-Democrats did not revise their position to cater for the shift in mood, the nationalist parties might capture public support. But more importantly, Zhordania had come to the conclusion, in the aftermath of the Armeno-Azeri violence of 1904 and 1905 and the sporadic clashes between Georgian and Russian workers in T'bilisi, that any attempt to settle the national question in multi-ethnic areas on a territorial basis alone was likely to exacerbate rather than solve the problem. He consequently came to the conclusion that the only way to resolve the situation was to remove national-cultural affairs from the competence of the state:

all nations [he later wrote] but territorial autonomy open to question, because the mingling of nations would give rise to domestic rivalry and conflict.²¹³

Following the adoption of national cultural autonomy as official party policy and its subsequent fierce criticism by the Bolsheviks, Zhordania endeavoured to justify and explain the need for its inclusion in the party programme in a pamphlet entitled Natsionaluri kitkhva chvenshi (The National Question in Our Country) written in 1913, and a series of articles for the Russian social-democratic journal, Bor'ba. In accordance with his orthodox Marxist belief that the nations of the Russian empire would have to pass through a relatively prolonged phase of bourgeois-democracy before advancing to socialism, Zhordania saw the problem on the one hand from the perspective of the party organisation and the need for a united workers' organisation to provide for the close cooperation of the proletariat of every nationality within the state,²¹⁴ in preparation for the achievement of the ultimate goal and, on the other, from the more immediate political perspective of creating conditions which would ensure the peaceful coexistence of peoples living in the same state territory and allow for the free cultural development of all of them. The particular importance of the latter, moreover, lay not just in its immediacy, but in the ease with which nationalism, if allowed to emerge, distracted workers from the class struggle. If the latter could develop unfettered by the national question, argued Zhordania, its prospects of rapid fruition would be considerably enhanced.

the early 1890s, he reasserted that although the nation was a product of capitalism and divided by social conflict, its members were nevertheless united by their,

National language, literature, art, shared memories, customs and morals, a shared psychological outlook or character inherited from their ancestors - in short, a whole spiritual culture.²¹⁵

But now he went a step further by claiming that although the close association of peoples with particular territories had played an important part in the formation of national identity in the feudal period, this was now losing its former significance. The modern nation had become,

...a purely cultural manifestation ... conceivable only as a cultural community.²¹⁶

It was this, he argued, that enabled Armenians to live all over the world and yet retain their distinctive national-cultural identity. Conversely, with the intermingling of nationalities over time, territory had ceased to be coextensive with any one ethnic group and become instead, one of the distinctive features of the state. Moreover, since the latter was the political organisation of the ruling class or, more precisely, the ruling class of the dominant nation in the state, it was Zhordania's contention that territory had become a means by which the bourgeoisies of more powerful nations could foist their language, culture and goods upon the subjugated nationalities. It was, in other words, a major source of national oppression and nationalist antagonism. Consequently, the resolution of the national question demanded its divorce from the territorial principle,

theless the political organisation of the ruling classes.²¹⁷

The removal of the national question from the political arena, he concluded, would defuse the nationalism of the working class of both the oppressor and oppressed nations and thus focus their attentions on the class struggle. Furthermore, the expansion of the cultural rights of the minority nationalities and the expansion of teaching in the national languages would at last allow the mass of the population to advance its own cultural level.²¹⁸

Whatever the weaknesses and impracticalities of Zhor-dania's argument there can be little doubt that the Mensheviks' adoption of national-cultural autonomy and the influence of the Georgian Mensheviks, both in the Transcaucasus and the wider field of Russian Social-Democracy, at a time when nationalist feeling was mounting, had a considerable influence on Lenin's decision to give greater substance to his own position on the national question. Thus Stalin's pamphlet, 'Marxism and the national question', as well as a series of polemical articles by the Armenian Bolshevik, Shaumian, and Makharadze in the Caucasian social-democratic press have to be seen against this background and the growing awareness of both factions of the revolutionary potential of the national movement.²¹⁹

For all the vehemence of the polemics, however, the outbreak of war temporarily swept the national question aside. Attention now centred on the behaviour of the Socialist International, on the conduct of the war and the correct attitude to be adopted towards it. Three years later, however, with the collapse of the tsarist autocracy, the national question moved back into focus, only this time

as an urgent practical problem that threatened the unity of
the Russian state.

1. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi sak'art'veloshi, op.cit., p. 126.
2. Guria is a province in West Georgia situated close to the Turkish border (see provincial map in Chapter One). An independent principality until 1829, it was subsequently incorporated into the Russian empire.
3. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli-mogonebani (My Past - Memoirs), (Paris, 1953), p. 14.
4. Niko Nikoladze was of the opinion that Georgia's future was almost organically tied up with that of Russia's. An independent, separate Georgia, even if protected by a European power, would be destined to economic dependence on that power. Georgia, he maintained, would become another Algeria or Indochina.
5. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi k'art'veli inteligentsiis istoriidan (Essays from the History of the Georgian Intelligentsia), (T'bilisi, 1980), p. 153.
6. Ibid., p. 150.
7. Ibid., p. 242.
8. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 153.
9. Ibid., p. 154.
10. Grigol Uratadze, Vospominaniya gruzinskogo sotsial-demokrata, (Stanford, California, 1968), pp. 9-10.
11. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi, op.cit., p. 253.
12. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 157.
13. Ibid., pp. 162-3.
14. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi, op.cit., p. 253.
15. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 12. Uratadze claims that the meeting was attended by 13 people, but only gives the names of 12. It is more likely that the thirteenth was P'ilipe Makharadze, a contemporary of Zhordania's at Warsaw University and a self-avowed Marxist. Makharadze certainly played a significant part in the development of social-democracy in Georgia in the 1890s and in the early 20th century became one of the leaders of the Georgian Bolsheviks.
16. Most commentators on this meeting, including Zhordania himself, have pointed to the radical, but rather eclectic views of those present. If a dominant school of thought existed it was populist, although some of those present, notably Makharadze, subsequently presented themselves as fully-conscious Marxists already.

17. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 13. Zhordania's programme, written on the request of those in attendance at the Qvirila meeting, was initially entitled 'What is to be done?' and presented to the group's second meeting in T'bilisi. It was subsequently published, however, under the title given here, as a series of articles in the journal Moambe in 1895. Speaking at a meeting to commemorate Plekhanov's death in 1918, Zhordania said that it was only after the group had received Plekhanov's works that it began to understand Marx. Of the programme he said that it was written in the spirit of Marxism but when the group had finished it it was felt that it was more populist than Marxist. See Noe Zhordania, Za gva goda, dokladyi i rechi, (Tiflis, 1919), p. 104.
18. Noe Zhordania, Ekonomiuri dsarmeteba da erovneba (Economic progress and nationality) in Noe Zhordania, Tomi I, (Tp'ilisi, 1920), pp. 33-34.
19. S. Jibladze, 'Kvali' da mesame dasis mdserlebi' (Kvali and the writers of the Third Group) in Kvali, 1895 nos. 8,9,10,12,13,14 and as an addendum to Noe Zhordania, Tomi I, op.cit., p. 286.
20. A. Surguladze, op.cit., p. 202. Egnate Ingoroqva or Ninoshvili, as he subsequently came to be known, was born into a peasant family in West Georgia in 1859 and suffered from poverty all his life. Educated at an ecclesiastical school, Ninoshvili did not have the means to pursue a university education and was forced to seek work to maintain himself. His first contribution to Georgian literature appeared in 1887 with his novel Janqi Guriashi (Rebellion in Guria) describing the peasant uprising of 1841. His novels and short stories depicting the impact of the socio-economic changes of the late 19th century on the Georgian peasantry made him the most popular writer of his day. But in 1894 the weak health that had pursued him all his life led to an early death at the age of 35.
21. A. Kikvidze, Gazet'i 'kvali' (The Newspaper, Kvali), T'bilisi, 1969), p. 9.
22. Ibid., pp. 22-23
23. G. Dseret'eli, 'Ert'i dslis Kvali' (One year of Kvali), Kvali, no. 1, 1894.
24. Moambe was established in January 1894 by Aleksandr Tchqonia, but the main influence on the paper was Niko Nikoladze who used it, among other things, to conduct his campaign for the democratisation of the municipal elections in T'bilisi (See Chapter Four).
25. G. Dseret'eli, 'Egnate Ingoroqvas/Ninoshvilis gasveneba' (The funeral of Egnate Ingoroqva/Ninoshvili), Kvali, no. 21, 1894.
26. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., pp. 24-25. Mikha Tskhakaia, later to become one of the leading Georgian Bolsheviks,

claimed that whilst he had been on the editorial board of Iveria, four of its editors received an honorarium of 2-3,000 rubles and distributed it amongst themselves whilst simultaneously failing to pay the poverty-stricken and dying Ninoshvili for his contributions to the paper. It is not clear how justified the accusation was.

27. G. Dseret'eli, op.cit., 'Egnate Ingoroqvas/Ninoshvilis gasvenebeba', Kvali, no. 21., 1894.
28. G. Dseret'eli, 'Kvalis ori dsilis naghvadsis' (Kvali's two years' service), Kvali, no. 1, 1895.
29. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi, op.cit., p. 200.
30. G. Dseret'eli, Kvali, no. 5, 1895.
31. Ibid.
32. See footnote 26.
33. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi, op.cit., p. 205.
34. S. Jibladze, op.cit., p. 267.
35. In his introduction to Jibladze's article (op.cit.) Zhordania writes that both Jibladze and Qaribi's contributions to Zhordania's compilation caused their authors considerable embarrassment because of their sharp tone.
36. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 43.
37. N. Zhordania, 'Gazet'i Iveria da erovneba' (The paper Iveria and nationality), Noe Zhordania, T.1, op.cit., pp. 89-90. The article was first published in series form for Kvali in 1897.
38. Ibid., p. 83.
39. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi, op.cit., pp. 211-12.
40. Ibid., p. 212.
41. N. Zhordania, 'Gazet'i Iveria da erovneba', op.cit., pp. 99-100.
42. N. Zhordania, Ekonomiuri dsarmateba da erovneba, op.cit., pp. 3-4.
43. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
44. N. Zhordania, 'Gazet'i Iveria da erovneba', op.cit., p. 101.
45. A. Kikvidze, Sak'art'velos istoria, op.cit., p. 202.
46. A. Bendianishvili, T'bilisis sak'alak'o t'vit'mmart' veloba, op.cit., 1960), p. 21.

47. A. Kikvidze, Sak'art'velos istoria, op.cit., pp. 203-4.
48. E. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., pp. 208-9.
49. A. Kikvidze, Sak'art'velos istoria, op.cit., p. 212.
50. N. Sturua, T'bilisis revolutsiuri dsarsuli (The Revolutionary past of T'bilisi), (T'bilisi, 1959), p. 11.
51. Ibid., p. 11.
52. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 18.
53. Z. Chichua, Sak'art'velos sotsial-demokratiuli mushat'a partiis mokle istoria (A Short History of the Georgian Social-Democratic Workers' Party), (Paris, 1933), p. 11.
54. N. Sturua, op.cit., p. 11.
55. E. Khoshtaria, Ocherki, op.cit., p. 210.
56. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 18.
57. Ibid., p. 19.
58. Since the second half of the 1930s the official view of Soviet historians of this period has been that two trends were discernible in Mesame Dasi from the very beginning: the opportunist wing of Noe Zhordania and the revolutionary wing of Mikha Tskhakaia, P'ilipe Makharadze et al. N. Sturua in T'bilisi's revolutsiuri dsarsuli (op.cit., p. 10) is a typical example: "From the very first day of 'Mesame Dasi's existence", he writes, "serious disagreements emerged. Mesame Dasi's majority perverted Marxism and reconciled it with the interests of bourgeois-capitalist development. It advocated the so-called saert'o niadagi theory... the minority, however, did not agree with the political orientation of the majority..." But it is a view that remains unsubstantiated by firm evidence and most recently Soviet Georgian historians have shown signs of dispensing with it. Thus, Akaki Surguladze (1982, op.cit., p. 258) repudiates it in his history of the Georgian intelligentsia and notes its origins in the 1930s. He further points out that during the 1920s no mention was made of a division within Mesame Dasi and that in 1924 a commission set up by the Presidium of the Georgian CP to establish the key moments and dates in the establishment of the T'bilisi Social-Democratic organisation made no reference to the existence of an "opportunistic" group.
59. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 41.
60. E. Akhobadze, Erovnuli sakit'khis istoriidan sak'art'veloshi 1900-1917 ds ds. (From the History of the National Question in Georgia 1900-1917), (T'bilisi, 1965), p. 131.
61. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 16.

62. Ibid., p. 15.
63. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 43.
64. Ibid., p. 43.
65. Ibid., p. 45.
66. Ibid., p. 14. Zhordania's experience was, in this respect, limited to Guria in West Georgia, but it does nevertheless provide a rough guide to the popular mood on the national question. Most peasants, he claims, saw Russian soldiers as their protectors against the Turks. It was the Gurian t'avadaznauroba which most resented Russia's presence because their authority had declined and because of the latter's interference with the lucrative slave trade.
67. Z. Chichua, op.cit., p. 11-12.
68. Ibid., p. 13.
69. A. Kikvidze, Sak'art'velos istoria, op.cit., p. 215.
70. Ibid., p. 220.
71. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., pp. 47-48.
72. Ibid., p. 51. Zhordania was not actually arrested in the first mass detentions in May but survived until June when he was imprisoned in K'ut'aisi.
73. A. Kikvidze, op.cit., p. 229.
74. B. Souvarine, Stalin, (London, 1939), p. 44. Commenting on this incident, Souvarine claims that it was Stalin who, he says, had established a separate and smaller social-democratic group to the Bat'umi Committee led by Karlo Chkheidze, who incited the crowd to attack the barracks, something for which the Bat'umi workers never forgave him. Souvarine, unfortunately, does not disclose his sources.
75. G. Urat'adze, op.cit., p. 20.
76. A. Surguladze, Narkvevebi, op.cit., p. 258.
77. B. Souvarine, op.cit., p. 60.
78. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 85.
79. Lado Ketskhoveli, Sbornik dokumentov i materialov, (T'bilisi, 1969), p. 22.
80. Brdzola, the first underground social-democratic journal in the Transcaucasus, began to appear in September 1901. Published in Georgian from Baku under the guidance of Lado Ketskhoveli, the journal was more radical than Kvali, explicitly calling for an alliance with the Russian proletariat to overthrow the autocracy. The

journal was very close to Iskra and its printing press, known to the latter's operatives as 'Nina', is known to have printed a number of its editions. It is often asserted that the appearance of Brdzola confirmed the existence of an alleged opportunist-revolutionary rift within the Transcaucasian organisations, but there is no strong evidence for this. On the contrary, the T'bilisi Committee approved the use of both legal and illegal methods in 1897 and was responsible for sending Ketskhoveli to Baku to help with the organisation of social-democratic cells in the city. It is true that the T'bilisi Committee turned down Ketskhoveli's initial application for funds to set up Brdzola, but those who rejected it were S. Jibladze and I. Jugashvili (Stalin). After a second request, the committee, headed by Zhordania, agreed to give financial backing of 100 rubles (A.S. Enukidze - 'Nelegal'naya tipografiya 'Nina' i ee pervy organizator i osnovatel' in Lado Ketskhoveli, op.cit., p. 135 from Proletarskaya Revolutsiya, 1923, no. 2, (14) pp. 108-134). The initial reluctance of the committee appears to have been based more on a concern that limited funds should not be wasted, than a division over tactics or principles. It is also very likely that it was concerned at the appearance of a journal over which it would have no control. However, the government's increasing hostility to the social-democratic movement, particularly after the 1901 May Day demonstration, and its arrest of Kvali's editorial board, brought the viability of a legal Marxist journal into question and increased the attraction of an underground journal unimpeded by censorial control. Thus in 1901 the T'bilisi committee sent two type setters to Baku to help Ketskhoveli set up the operation. (I.B. Bolkvadze, 'Maya rabota s Lado v nelegal'noi tipografii' in Lado Ketskhoveli, op.cit., p. 161.

81. Lado Ketskhoveli, op.cit., p. 17.
82. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 79.
83. Leon Der Megrian, Tiflis during the Russian Revolution of 1905. (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkley, 1968), p. 11.
84. Ibid., p. 12.
85. Ibid., p. 8.
86. A. Bendianishvili, T'bilisis sak'alak'o t'vitmmart'-veloba, op.cit., p. 36.
87. Ibid., p. 36.
88. Leon Der Megrian, op.cit., p. 22.
89. Ibid., p. 22.
90. A.E. Ebralidze, Bor'ba bol'shevikov Gruzii protiv burzhaznogo natsionalizma (1903-1921 gg), (Doctoral dissertation, University of T'bilisi, T'bilisi, 1969), p.

91. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 87.
92. Lado Ketskhoveli, op.cit., p. 32.
93. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., pp. 81-88.
94. Ibid., p. 85.
95. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 53.
96. Ibid., pp. 55-56.
97. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 91.
98. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 54.
99. Ibid., p. 55. Curiously, Zhordania claims that he was convinced of the need for a central body for Georgia. It is curious because there is nothing else to suggest he was linking the party organisations to the national principle at this time. It may well be that Zhordania, who became more imbued with the spirit of nationalism after the Russian invasion of Georgia in 1921, was trying to attribute greater continuity to his views than in fact existed.
100. Ibid., p. 56.
101. Ibid., p. 56.
102. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 98.
103. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 84.
104. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 111.
105. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 58.
106. A.E. Ebralidze, op.cit., p. 20. On Iskra, Uratadze wrote: "The newspaper Iskra, which this group [Plekhanov's 'Emancipation of Labour' group] published abroad also had an enormous influence [on us]. It would not be out of place to note that Iskra was printed illegally in Baku in our part of the world for a considerable time and that a special illegal printing press was equipped for it ... the Iskra orientation had no opposition whatsoever". (G. Uratadze, op.cit., pp. 85-86.
107. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 90.
108. S.G. Shaumian, Izbrannye proizvedeniya (Moskva, 1957), pp. 17-18.
109. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 59.
110. Ibid., p. 59.
111. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 96.

112. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 108.
113. G. Uratadze, op.cit., pp. 87-88.
114. I.I. Mirtskhulava, Agrarno-Krest'yanskii vopros v Gruzii v 1900-1921 gg (T'bilisi, 1978), p. 104. Mirtskhulava notes that the Imeret'i Committee was initially divided into separate workers' and peasants' committees, but that the two quickly merged as the peasant movement in West Georgia became more politicised. Uratadze (op.cit., pp. 49-52) notes the initial reluctance of the Bat'umi Committee to include the Gurian peasant movement under the party banner because of its ideological scruples about the peasantry. The Bat'umi Committee did, however, consent to lead the movement in 1902 through a specially created 'Committee of Rural Workers'. The Gurian Committee came into being in 1903.
115. G. Uratadze, op.cit., pp. 79-82. The Gurian Committee was based on grass-roots democratic organisations called at'eulebi (literally 'tenners' - bodies of 10 people) which elected one representative each to their respective communities of villages, which in turn elected representatives to the district committees which then elected a member to the Gurian Committee.
116. I.I. Mirtskhulava, op.cit., p. 106.
117. Rene Girault, Sur 1905 (Paris, 1974), p. 112.
118. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba 1905 dslidan 1921 dslis 15 martamde (Memoirs from the end of 1905 to March 15, 1921) (Paris, 1938), pp. 5-6.
119. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 89.
120. D. Shvelidze, 'Sotsialist-p'ederalistt'a partiis dsarmoshobis istoriidan (From the history of the origin of the Socialist-Federalist Party) in Sak'art'velos istoriis sakit'khebi (Questions of Georgian History) (T'bilisi, 1982), p. 89.
121. A. Bendianishvili, T'bilisis sak'alak'o t'vit'mmart'veloba, op.cit., pp. 39-40. From 'Tsnobis p'urtseli' 1901, no. 1427.
122. A. Surguladze, op.cit., p. 223.
123. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 116.
124. Ibid., p. 115.
125. D. Shvelidze, op.cit., p. 91.
126. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi sak'art'veloshi, op.cit., p. 170.
127. Aware that its demands were the cause of some anxiety among non-Georgians living in Georgia, Sak'art'velo stated in its second edition in 1903 that the national

rights and languages of the other nationalities living on Georgian territory would be protected by the constitution. Tsnobis p'urtsele, moreover, declared all nations to be equal and the suppression of one nationality by another grounds for a national movement. (Bendianishvili, ibid., pp. 172-7).

128. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 119.
129. Ibid., pp. 125-26.
130. D. Shvelidze, op.cit., p. 94.
131. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 91.
132. Rene Girault, Sur 1905, op.cit., p. 146. Chayet noted that the Gurian peasantry established their own police and system of justice. He observed too that although there was a marked fall in crimes committed by peasants against peasants, there was an increase in the number of collective attacks on the properties of the nobility.
133. L. Villari, Fire and Sword in the Caucasus (London, 1906), p. 84.
134. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 167.
135. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 83.
136. G. Gvelesiani, Erovnuli sakit'khi da sotsial-demokratia (The National Question and Social-Democracy). (K'ut'-aisi, 1908), p. 15.
137. M. Gap'rindashvili, 'Erovnul-ganmat'avisup'lebeli modzraoba 1905-1907 dslebshi' (The national-liberation movement in the years 1905-1907), in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.6, (Essays on Georgian history, v.6) (T'bilisi, 1972), p. 239.
138. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 164.
139. M. Gap'rindashvili, op.cit., p. 239.
140. G. Gvelesiani, op.cit., p. 27.
141. Gvelesiani is very vague about the cause of tribal conflict, but the reasons he does give - conflict over hunting grounds, grazing grounds, arable land and over "many other things" - could very easily be regarded as disputes over property and the source of the conflict as economic self-interest.
142. Ibid., p. 28.
143. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 127.
144. G. Gvelesiani, op.cit., p. 30.
145. Ibid., pp. 34-37. Gvelesiani cited as evidence the

attitude of Russian workers to Jews and argued that autonomy would correct this prejudice by ensuring equality of rights. His example is, however, a problematic one insofar as the territorial autonomy proposed by the SFs could scarcely have helped the Jewish diaspora. Jews would, under this system, have remained dependent on the government of whatever territory they lived in.

146. V.I. Lenin, The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Moscow, 1976), p. 24.
147. Ibid., pp. 38-39. Lenin answered this question when he wrote The Right of Nations to Self-Determination in 1914. "In the question of the self-determination of nations," he states, "as in every other question, we are interested, first and foremost, in the self-determination of the proletariat within a given nation."
148. G. Gvelesiani, op.cit., pp. 8-9.
149. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., pp. 176-77.
150. Ibid., p. 177.
151. Ibid., p. 166.
152. M. Gap'rindashvili, op.cit., p. 237.
153. I. Ant'elava and V. Guchua, Sak'art'veloshi sotsialuri urt'iert'obis istoriidan, op.cit., p. 5.
154. I.I. Mirtskhulava, op.cit., pp. 122-135.
155. I.I. Mirtskhulava, 'Stolipinis agraruli rep'orma da agraruli sakit'khi sak'art'veloshi. 1912 dslis kanoni' (Stolypin's agrarian reform and the agrarian question in Georgia. The Law of 1912) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.6, op.cit., p. 320.
156. Ibid., p. 319.
157. Ibid., p. 321.
158. I.I. Mirtskhulava, 'Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros', op.cit., p. 247.
159. Ibid., p. 247.
160. Ibid., pp. 249-50.
161. Ibid., p. 251.
162. Archil Jorjadze, Dzveli da akhali (The Old and the New), (Tp'ilisi, 1906), p. 4.
163. Ibid., p. 8.
164. Leon Der Megrian, op.cit., p. 40.

165. The Hnchak (The Bell) party was formed in Geneva in 1887 by a group of Armenian students claiming to be the exclusive representatives of the Armenian proletariat. The party saw its first task as the liberation of West Armenia from the Turks. The Dashnaktsutjun first appeared in the Transcaucasus in the 1890s. It sought to unite all Armenians, regardless of class, in a national liberation movement. Like the Hnchak, its attentions were focused primarily on Turkey till the government decree of 1905.
166. Both Makharadze and Zhordania saw the Austro-Hungarian experiment in autonomy, so often cited by Socialist-Federalists and others, as evidence that autonomy only exacerbated the national question. Not only were the rival parliaments in constant conflict, but in practice the de jure rights of minorities were no use against the de facto power of the major nationalities.
167. M. Gap'rindashvili, op.cit., p. 251. From Al. Dsulukidze, T'khzulebani (Works), (T'bilisi, 1967), pp. 350-52.
168. To avoid the accusation of nationalism the Social-Democratic organisations attempted to use Armenian party members when they were criticising the Armenian parties. See E. Akhobadze, op.cit., pp. 200-02.
169. I. Stalini, T'khzulebani, T.1, (Works, Vol.1), (T'bilisi, 1947), p. 45.
170. N. Zhordania, 'Novye soyuzniki Bunda', Iskra, No. 72, (Geneva, Aug. 25, 1904), p. 4.
171. S.G. Shaumyan, Izbrannye proizvedeniya, op.cit., p. 528.
172. A. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 143.
173. I. Stalini, op.cit., pp. 38-40.
174. N. Zhordania, 'Novye soyuzniki Bunda', op.cit., p. 4.
175. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 151.
176. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 66.
177. N. Zhordania, Bol'shinstvo ili men'shinstvo? (Geneva, 1905), pp. 10-11.
178. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
179. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 152.
180. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 66.
181. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 153.
182. Leon Der Megrian, op.cit., p. 104.
183. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 153-4.

184. Leon Der Megrian, op.cit., p. 131. Till Vorontsov-Dashkov's appointment the post had borne the title of 'governor-general' since 1882. It was upgraded on his request.
185. Ibid., p. 132.
186. Ibid., p. 134.
187. Ibid., p. 134.
188. On November 25, 1905 the viceroy, unable to control the fighting between T'bilisi's Armenian and Azeri population, agreed to supply the Social-Democrats with 500 rifles on condition that they use them solely for restoring peace and returned them once the fighting was over.
189. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 156.
190. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 71.
191. Ibid., p. 71.
192. Stalin appeared at the congress purporting to represent the Borchalo Committee. Since the Borchalo organization was subordinate to the T'bilisi Committee, however, and had no separate committee of its own, he was initially not admitted to the congress. But according to G. Uratadze, he was eventually allowed to stay as an observer following negotiation with the accredited Transcaucasian delegates.
193. B-ov (M. Balabanov) and F. Dan, Rabochie deputaty v pervoi gosudarstvennoi Dume (St. Petersburg, no date), pp. 31-59.
194. S.G. Shaumyan attempted to clarify the sometimes confusing distinction between autonomy, federation and regional self-government in a series of articles for the Armenian Social-Democratic paper Kaits (The Spark) in 1906 under the collective title, 'The national question and social-democracy' (see Izbrannye sochineniya, op.cit., pp. 132-64). Federation, he claimed (pp. 154-56) implied a multi-national state in which the various nations had their own sovereign constituent assemblies. These would determine the relationship of the nations with each other. Each nation would have its own legislature, whose powers would be restricted only by the constraints it had agreed to with the other nations. The powers of the federal parliament would therefore be limited by the need for the approval of the national parliaments. Autonomy, however, would not confer such broad powers on the national parliaments and would only involve the one central constituent assembly. It would determine the bounds of the national parliament's authority and restrict their legislation to purely local affairs. Regional self-government, on the other hand, involved no legislative powers whatsoever, but was simply "an elected, democratic institution, which

was called upon to administer the region on the basis of laws passed by the general parliament, and to care for its cultural, economic and administrative needs".

195. E. Egvitashvili, 'Proletariati da erovneba' (The proletariat and nationality), Iveria, no. 222, (T'bilisi, Dec. 9, 1905). Cited in A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi..., op.cit., p. 192.
196. I. Gomart'eli, Erovnuli sakit'khi (The National Question), (T'bilisi, 1906), pp. 37-8.
197. Ibid., p. 49.
198. Ibid., pp. 49-52.
199. S.G. Shaumyan, 'Natsional'nyi vopros i sotsial-demokratiya', Izbrannye sochineniya, op.cit., p. 159.
200. A. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 247.
201. K. Zalevskii, 'Natsionalnyia [sic] dvizheniya', Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii, T.IV, ch. 11 (St. Petersburg, 1910), p. 227.
202. A. Ebralidze, op.cit., p. 33.
203. A. Bendianishvili, op.cit., p. 189.
204. Ibid., p. 196.
205. G. Uratadze, op.cit., p. 154.
206. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 252.
207. Ibid., p. 252.
208. Though rumour suggested at the time that revolutionaries may have been responsible, the suspicion remains that the authorities took their revenge for Tchavtchavadze's life-long espousal of the national cause and his more recent attacks on government policy in the Second Duma. Some support for the theory that the Okhrana disposed of him came from the confession of an old man during World War II to the effect that he had been paid by the local police to commit the crime (see D.M. Lang, A Modern History of Georgia, 1962, p. 176). Soviet sources consistently attribute the murder to the police.
209. N. Zhordania, K'art'veli khalkhi da natsionalizmi (The Georgian People and Nationalism), (K'ut'aishi, 1908), p. 6.
210. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 297.
211. H. Carrere d'Encausse, 'The Bolsheviks and the national question', Socialism and Nationalism, Vol. 3, (Nottingham, 1980), p. 116.
212. A. Ebralidze, op.cit., p. 43.

213. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 89.
214. It is sometimes implied, if not always clearly stated by Soviet historians, that Noe Zhordania sought to divide the party along national lines. In fact, he remained committed to the idea of an All-Russian party right up to Georgia's declaration of independence in May 1918. On occasions this brought him into conflict with other Transcaucasian Social-Democrats, most notably the Armenian OSDW. The latter applied to join the RSDLP at its Fifth Congress in 1907 on the condition that it be allowed to keep its own organisation. Zhordania objected on the grounds that the party's statutes expressly ruled out national party organisations. The congress, however overruled his objections, upon which the Transcaucasian organisations announced that if the question of the AOSDW's unification was settled without their agreement they would simply refuse to put the unification into effect.
215. N. Zhordania, 'Natsional'nyi vopros', Bor'ba, Nos. 2,3,5, 1914. In No. 2, p. 31.
216. Ibid., No. 3, p. 24.
217. Ibid., No. 3, pp. 25-26.
218. Ibid., No. 3, pp. 28-29.
219. For a detailed account of the Bolshevik critique of national-cultural autonomy see E. Akhobadze, op.cit., pp. 305-334.

The Drift to Independence

6.1 The Effects of War

Taken unawares, like most people, by the outbreak of war, Zhordania had been convalescing from a lung infection in Switzerland when the first news arrived of Germany's advance through Belgium and Russia's involvement in the war on the side of Britain and France. He appears not to have been taken aback, however, by the failure of most of the socialist parties of the belligerent powers to abide by the 1907 resolution of the Socialist International which called on its members to do all in their power to prevent the outbreak of war, but, if unable to do so, to exploit the ensuing crisis to "rouse the peoples and thereby hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule". In fact, Zhordania's first concern, as a self-confessed Francophile, was that France should be saved from Austro-German imperialism.

In Russia, however the attitude of most Social-Democrats proved rather different. The party fraction in the Duma, refusing to be caught in the tide of chauvinism that had swept the European socialist parties, voted against credits for the war, whilst in Georgia the prevailing opinion among both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks was that Germany was more advanced in every respect than France and that a German victory would be a victory for progress. Moreover, recalling the impact of Russia's war against Japan a decade earlier, many argued that a Russian defeat now could lead to revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy.

Such was the mood in Georgia, in fact, that Zhordania, for so long used to leading opinion within the

Transcaucasian organisation, found himself unaccustomedly isolated. Uratadze, who was one of the few to share his views on the war, recalled that he came close to being ostracised in the party press when he attempted, in a series of articles entitled Omi da zavi (War and the peace), to justify the "defensist" position in the party's legal journal T'anamedrove Azri (Contemporary Thought). The editorial board, finding itself constrained by the government's censorship from making the full case for the opposing "defeatist" point of view, decided to halt polemics over the issue by ceasing to publish the series.

Zhordania and other "defensists" complained to the party Regional Committee, but the latter upheld the decision and restated its own opposition to the war. Frustrated by the rules of party discipline, Zhordania and other "defensists" requested permission to publish their views in their own paper, the K'ut'aisi-based Akhali Kvali (The New Furrow). Despite considerable opposition, consent was finally given, but only after Silbistro Jibladze, one of the founder members of Mesame Dasi, had appealed on their behalf, arguing that such a senior figure in the party should not be denied the opportunity to express his views and that if permission was denied and the "defensists" nevertheless went ahead and published, it would create the impression of a split within the party. Even still, very few editions of Akhali Kvali were printed before the Regional Committee decided to prevent its further publication.¹

Despite this, and the apparent prevalence of pro-German sentiment among Georgian Social-Democrats, Zhordania was by no means without support in the party. Traditional fears of Turkey had been reawakened by the Ottoman troops' initial

successes on the Caucasian Front, with the consequence that many Georgians, and particularly those living in the southwestern provinces adjacent to Turkey, had begun to grow concerned that Russian defeat would lead to Turkish invasion. This fear, and Zhordania's ability to exploit it, became evident at a conference of Caucasian Mensheviks held in Akhali Senaki in October 1915. The meeting was attended by 15 delegates representing 1000 party members but, of these, 500 were from Zhordania's home province of Guria, one of the most vulnerable to Turkish attack. Not surprisingly, therefore, the conference supported Zhordania's defensist position, even advocating involvement in the military-industrial committees, although it drew the line at Zhordania's proposal that the Social-Democrats should vote for war credits in the Duma.²

That the conference may not have been entirely representative, however, is suggested by a letter from Shaumian to Lenin and Krupskaya sent at the beginning of October 1915, the same month as the meeting in Akhali Senaki, which claimed that Zhordania was virtually alone in supporting the allied cause.³ Whatever the case, Zhordania himself made no mention of the conference in his memoirs, remarking only that following the closure of Akhali Kvali, he resolved to keep his views to himself on the issue rather than cause divisions within the party.

This caution on Zhordania's part typified the attitude of the Caucasian Mensheviks throughout the war. With party membership badly depleted by the call-up of over 200,000 Georgian workers and peasants, they were concerned to avoid doing anything that the government could construe as

treasonable and grounds for the repression of the party organisation. Even those who regarded German victory as the best possible outcome of the war appear to have refrained from propagandising their views - though this may well have been because these were unpopular with the mass of the population. The party's main concern was to survive the war intact and be able to exploit whatever conditions developed from the peace. In this respect, and as a measure of its passivity during the war, it is noteworthy that the Caucasian administration allowed it to continue its activities virtually unhindered.⁴

In the meantime, however, economic conditions throughout Transcaucasia deteriorated as first the closure of the Dardanelles cut access to world markets and then mobilisation deprived agriculture of the labour force to work the land. To make matters worse, Georgia's grain supply from the North Caucasus, by then one of its main sources, was diverted to meet the needs of European Russia. The mining industry too and in particular manganese mining, cut off from world markets, slumped, whilst industrial production, starved of raw materials, spare parts, fuel and experienced workers ground almost to a standstill.

Against this background inflation, as elsewhere in the Russian empire, rose rapidly. Workers' wages in T'bilisi had by 1916 risen only marginally above their 1913 level, but the cost of staple products had risen on average by over 400 per cent. In addition, the cost of housing had soared as the city strove to cope with the massive influx of soldiers and Armenian refugees.⁵

As the problems of poverty, hunger and homelessness grew worse, so social tension throughout the Transcaucasus

mounted. Zdanevskii, the T'bilisi chief of police, reported in December 1915 that shortages and speculation were bringing the poor to the verge of despair, and in 1916 the frustration building up in the region gave way to violence as food riots spread through the main Transcaucasian cities, beginning in February in Baku. In July there were more riots in T'bilisi and violent attacks, often by women, on merchant properties in the city's bazaars. In the countryside, and particularly those areas directly affected by the war, the situation was, if anything, worse. T'anemedrove Azri described a picture of destitution in its correspondence from the area in 1916:

It presents a terrible picture: [The Atcharan peasants] are emaciated, filthy, long-haired, unkempt and naked. To see them is more dreadful than seeing corpses spread out on the field of battle. For me it was unimaginable... I saw people who were completely naked who had not yet lost their sense of shame and who had wrapped themselves in rags, but none of them had a trace of clothing.⁷

The Georgian Menshevik leadership, however, and Zhordania in particular, continued to stress the importance of maintaining a low profile and avoiding precipitate action. In his memoirs, the latter cited Atchara as a case in point. The tsarist authorities, interpreting signs of unrest among the population as evidence of sympathy for the Turks, had razed several villages, thereby exacerbating the already miserable existence of the local inhabitants. "From this", Zhordania said, referring to the incident, "I learnt the lesson that no step should be taken which the government might interpret as duplicitous."⁸

The same caution governed the Caucasian Mensheviks' approach to the national question during the war, an approach well illustrated by Noe Zhordania's categorical rejection of the National Democrat Mikhako Dseret'eli's request that the Social-Democrats help prepare the ground for an uprising in Georgia timed to coincide with an invasion by the Germans and Turks. The Menshevik leader wanted nothing to do with it:

We are not conducting war, nor do we belong to any coalition; we cannot show duplicity towards Russia - quite the opposite in fact. To the people's question: Should we accept mobilisation or should we go into hiding? we advise acceptance and oppose any form of sabotage. In our country the Germanophile point of view predominates, but no one supports rebellion; our path leads not that way, but along the way of internal revolution within Russia.⁹

However, while the Mensheviks marked time over the national question, the SFs and, in particular, their offshoot, the National Democrats, saw the war as an opportunity for further propagating their views on what they regarded as the central issue in Georgian political life. Thus, the SF paper Megobari (The Friend) described the war as a "national war" and for that very reason "impregnated with great ideals and aims",¹⁰ while another prominent member of the party, T'. Ghlonti, declared that the war was not about states extending their influence, but about nations defending their rights and existence. It had, he maintained, strengthened national self-consciousness throughout Europe and even bolstered the national inclination in social-democracy. "The national direction", he wrote, "is now developing to an extreme among Social-Democrats". Pointing to Plekhanov's support for the war, he claimed that the father of Russian

...turned his back on Marxist socialism and acknowledged the national question. First comes the defence of nationality and then socialism. The anti-nationality Plekhanov is dead, but the bearer of the national-social flag Plekhanov has arisen.¹¹

Yet for all their new found optimism on the national question, most SFs continued to think in terms of autonomy, which they linked to the political changes they expected to develop in post-war Russia. The National-Democrats, however, took a more aggressive approach during the war, believing that it presented Georgia with a chance to liberate itself from Russia and reestablish an independent Georgian state. As they had already demonstrated in 1912 with the formation of the Georgian Separatist Committee (otherwise known as the Dadiani Committee) in Constantinople, and the publication in Geneva the following year of a new journal, T'avisup'ali Sak'art'velo (Free Georgia), they no longer regarded autonomy as enough. In its first number the journal proclaimed,

Patriots of Georgia! Crude force threatens the annihilation, destruction and spiritual degeneration of the Georgian nation. Our native land is in great peril. Our country demands sacrifices of you. Gather round our native country and fight for the defence of its land... Freedom can only be achieved through struggle and only political freedom can ensure Georgia's existence. So fight for the political freedom of our homeland... Let's gather our forces and whoever thirsts for the happiness of the Georgian nation, unite. Let's raise the flag of Georgia's freedom, the flag of great heroes... victory to the fighters for our native land, victory to free Georgia!¹²

According to another article published in the same journal in 1914 entitled, "Why do the Georgian people need

their own state?" the latter represented a natural point in the nation's evolution without which no nation could hope to survive. No "historic nation", it said, had failed to create its own state, or having lost its independence, not struggled to regain it.¹³ For this new strain of militant Georgian nationalism the war appeared to present an ideal opportunity for Georgia to reassert its national identity and reclaim its lost statehood by forcibly liberating itself from Russian domination. Mikhako Dseret'eli and G. Machabeli, both outspoken proponents of separation, approached the German government and raised the issue of support for Georgian independence. The Germans, seeing an opportunity to undermine the Russian position on the Caucasian Front, but no doubt dubious of the National Democrats' claim to be able to mobilise 50,000 people against the Russians when and if the need should arise, agreed to make available weapons stored in Trebizond on the Turkish Black Sea coast on the condition that should Germany and Turkey invade the nationalists would stage an uprising in the Russian rear.

In the meantime the Germans helped them spread leaflets among Georgian prisoners of war claiming that Georgia had signed a treaty with Germany and Turkey and that the latter states would recognise Georgian independence. Such endeavours, however, enjoyed little credibility and, like the policy of separating Georgian prisoners from the Russians and attempts to recruit them for underground work within Georgia and the Russian army, produced few results.

In October 1914 Machabeli returned to Georgia with the aim of preparing an anti-tsarist uprising. Joined later by M. Dseret'eli, the two National Democrats set about persuading the other political parties and leading Georgian

public figures to participate in the formation of a Georgian National Committee whose task would be to prepare for an uprising in the event of a Russian collapse in the Caucasus. However, although they had some success among the SFs, particularly during the initial stages of the war when the Turks were still on the offensive, most lost interest when the Russian army regained the initiative. The Social-Democrats, as is clear from Zhordania's reaction (see above) to Dseret'eli's approach on the matter, were quick to dissociate themselves from the project. As in the pre-war period, the problem facing the SFs, and to an even greater extent the National Democrats, was their inability to establish any significant support among the peasantry. Their views may have won them ground among Georgian students, but to the peasantry and working class they seemed at best irrelevant and at worst threatening. In this respect, it would appear that Zhordania's assessment of the popular mood was closest to the truth - with the Turks still active on the Caucasian Front and rumours rife of a possible Russian withdrawal, thoughts strayed not to independence or even to autonomy, but more to self-preservation and survival through the material difficulties posed by the war. Even the police, who were well-informed on the National-Democrats' activities both in Georgia and abroad, were dismissive of their challenge, confident in the belief that though the intelligentsia, and in particular its younger members, might support them, the peasantry remained largely indifferent both to their and the SFs' propaganda.

Among the Social-Democrats, and notably among the Mensheviks, in view of the importance they attached to it

prior to 1914, the national question was scarcely discussed during the first two years of the war. In October 1915, however, the Bolsheviks, whose influence in Georgia was still very limited, held a conference of Caucasian organisations in Baku, at which they blamed the reversal of their fortunes in the previous 10 years on the failure of the 1905 revolution, the ensuing reaction and what they regarded as the consequent drift towards bourgeois-nationalist concepts like national-cultural autonomy. Believing that a proper understanding of the Leninist position on the national question was all that was needed to convince the population of its merits, the conference reaffirmed the Transcaucasian Bolsheviks' opposition to federalism and restated the case for the right to national self-determination, without coming any nearer to explaining how this might be applied in practice.

One of the few indications of prevailing Menshevik opinion on the national question came in a response to an article by the SF writer Archil Jajanashvili, who had presented the document of the Baku Conference on the national question as representative of all social-democratic opinion in the Caucasus. An editorial in T'anamedrove Azri reaffirmed the Mensheviks' pre-war support for national cultural autonomy and reminded Jajanashvili that the Leninists in the Caucasus represented an exceptionally small minority.¹⁴ In fact, Zhordania later asserted that a variety of views had existed among the Transcaucasian Mensheviks on the national question at this time and that,

...in this period we did not yet have a party view or a general policy on the question of independence; everyone had their own ideas...¹⁵

He, or so he asserted in his memoirs, believed that should the opportunity arise to declare independence, the step should be taken. It is, however, difficult to reconcile this statement of his views with his subsequent comments both in 1917 and even early 1918. While it is quite conceivable that a shift did occur in the attitudes of the Mensheviks during the war, there is very little evidence on which to base an assessment. They may, of course, have been affected by the same mood of chauvinism that swept the European socialist parties and it may be the case that the prospect of a Russian defeat may have emboldened previous closet nationalists among them to abandon their inhibitions and declare themselves in favour of either a separate or a federal state. But the view expressed by Armenian and Osian emigres in Europe after the invasion of Georgia in 1921, at least, was that up until the February Revolution, the Georgian Mensheviks had always impressed on them that they sought not the creation of a Georgian republic within the bounds of its old state borders, but rather a system of national socialist cantons based on ethnicity in which each canton would have control over its own affairs.¹⁶

According to Zhordania, however, the confusion on the national question by the end of 1916 was such that it was decided to call a conference of the Georgian organisations specifically to draw up an official position on the issue. The conference, which met in the West Georgian village of Junjuat'i in January 1917, agreed that Georgia should be prepared to declare its independence, but only in the event of Russia abandoning the Caucasus while the war still continued. Moreover, on Zhordania's advice, it was decided not

to make the decision known to party members. To do so, the latter said, would be to lay the party open to the accusation of treachery from the Russian government and risk repression.¹⁷ Thus while the meeting does suggest a move towards a territorial approach to the national question, the final decision was so cautious and hedged by conditions as to render it virtually meaningless. Shortly afterwards, moreover, news from Petrograd of the overthrow of the monarchy threw whatever consensus had been reached into renewed confusion.

6.2 The February Revolution in Georgia

The first news of the revolution was received in T'bilisi in the form of a cryptic telegram sent from Petrograd by the National Democrat and future author of the Georgian Declaration of Independence, Gogita Paghava. In the absence, however, of corroborating evidence, or an official statement from the local representatives of government, the major parties cautioned against precipitate action and awaited further developments. In the meantime rumour spread across T'bilisi that a certain Mt'avrobadze (from the word, m'tavroba, meaning government) had passed away.¹⁸

On 3rd March, by which time it was clear that the government had indeed collapsed, the Bolsheviks, led by P'ilipe Makharadze, decided to steal a march on their rivals by calling a meeting of workers in Mikhailov Street, the purpose of which was to declare itself the T'bilisi Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Zhordania, who learnt of the meeting purely by chance, managed to convince those present of the unrepresentative nature of the gathering and prevent Makharadze's attempt to have himself elected chairman. Persuaded

by Zhordania's arguments that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies should be elected by all workers and not by an ad hoc and selectively advertised meeting, those present elected an electoral commission to organise elections for the Soviet in the party organisations, workshops and enterprises.

That same day the Viceroy, Prince Nikolai Nikolaevich, bowing to the inevitable and in recognition of the authority of the Mensheviks in Transcaucasia, arranged a meeting through the city mayor, A. Khatisian (Khatisov), with Zhordania and Noe Ramishvili, at which he declared his intention to leave for Petrograd and ceded control of power to the Social-Democratic Party, which he called upon to maintain order and prevent excesses.¹⁹

On 4th March, with the revolution gathering momentum and the need to fill the vacuum of power increasingly urgent, the Georgian Mensheviks demonstrated both their own readiness to sacrifice principle when it suited them and their ability to keep a step ahead of the Bolsheviks by calling a meeting of workers at Narodnyi Dom on Golovinskii Prospect at which they demanded the removal of the old regime, the disarming of the police, the creation of a national militia and, more importantly in view of Zhordania's speech to the Mikhailov Street meeting the previous evening, agreed that the meeting should declare itself the T'bilisi Soviet of Workers' Deputies until such time as elections could be arranged. Zhordania was elected chairman.

Anxious not to move ahead of events in Petrograd and equally concerned to prevent the eruption of the sort of internecine conflict that had marked the 1905 revolution in

T'bilisi, the newly-constituted Soviet, with the co-operation of the city дума, set up a temporary City Executive Committee whose purpose it was to replace the old administration and represent the city's major social and ethnic groups.²⁰ Comprising 59 members, among them the representatives of every political party and major nationality in the city, the new organisation perfectly reflected the Georgian Menshevik view that in a bourgeois revolution it would be impossible for the proletariat to take the lead on its own. This same understanding of the revolutionary process appears equally evident in the election on 8th March of the bureau of the City Executive Committee. Only three of the nine-man body were Social-Democrats, although interestingly and no doubt indicative of the confusion in the Caucasian Bolshevik organisation, one of these was Makharadze.²¹ Similarly, the three commissars appointed by the bureau, Zhordania, A. Khatisian and D. Popov, a Russian Social Revolutionary officer, represented not just the three main nationalities, but also the major social forces in T'bilisi - the working class, the bourgeoisie, and the predominantly peasant army. The T'bilisi Soviet thus avoided, at least superficially, the paradox of the organ of the proletariat leading a bourgeois revolution. As Zhordania said,

Such a proposition was for us unacceptable. We were prepared to take on the protection of law and order, but remained faithful to and ready to help the Provisional Government. We did not want to create the impression of the establishment of workers' power, as this would have frightened all liberal elements and cast them over to the Right.²²

On the same day, the new body declared itself the supreme local power and called on the Provisional Government

to recognise its authority. The latter, however, which throughout 1917 viewed all attempts by the minority nationalities to secure more autonomy with great suspicion, had other ideas. On 9th March, "with the aim of establishing order in the Transcaucasian Region", the Provisional Government ordered the formation of a Special Transcaucasian Committee (Ozakom) to act as its representative in the area.

It was evidently intended to placate the local nationalities by ensuring that the five-man body, made up with one exception of members of the Fourth Duma, contain at least one Armenian, Azeri and Georgian. However, the inclusion of the Socialist Federalist, Kita Abashidze, and the absence of a Social-Democrat was not to the liking of the T'bilisi Soviet: Zhordania pronounced Ozakom unrepresentative of "Caucasian democracy" and demanded its abolition.²³ Despite this protest, the seriousness of the soviet's objection must be open to doubt. It did, after all, relieve them of the responsibility of governing; was, with the notable exception of the absence of a Social-Democrat, broadly representative of the political, social and ethnic groupings of the Transcaucasus, and, as the representative of the Provisional Government, provided a direct link with Petrograd. Whatever the case, the soviet was placated by the addition of A. Chkhenkeli, a Georgian Menshevik, who, as a member of the Petrograd Soviet, also acted as the representative of the revolutionary organisations within Ozakom, which says Urat'adze, greatly facilitated the harmonious work of these organisations within Ozakom itself.²⁴

Viewed by the centre as a temporary organ of local government with powers something akin to that of the

viceroys, Ozakom's authority remained severely circumscribed throughout 1917 by a government insensitive to the aspirations of the minority nationalities and intent on preventing anything which it construed as leading to the disintegration of the empire. Constantly frustrated by the ill-defined nature of its relationship with the centre, Ozakom found itself forced on every major issue to consult with a government that was not only entirely out of touch with the events at the periphery but which, in the circumstances of the time, was unable to maintain a stable and rapid system of communications.

From the outset too it declared that whilst it would establish freedom of conscience, reform the judiciary and city administration and introduce the zemstvo system to the Transcaucasus, the crucial issues of labour, land and national rights would remain outwith its remit, to be resolved in due time by the Constituent Assembly.

Even the well-intentioned decision to ensure ethnic balance in its membership resulted in the end in further confusion and indecision with political and national differences hindering all attempts to establish unity of purpose.

The powerlessness of Ozakom to effect significant change or, through its own authority, to establish any sort of control within Transcaucasia was inevitably accentuated by the almost anarchic atmosphere in which it found itself asked to govern. The disintegration of the coercive and administrative apparatus of the former regime and the reluctance of the Georgian Social-Democrats to take direct control of government, had created a vacuum of power which very quickly began to give way to violence and disorder.

Denied legislative powers and lacking either an established organisational basis or popular roots, Ozakom found itself, in Zhordania's words, "suspended in air". With the newly-appointed government body thus powerless to alleviate the situation and the army for the moment content to stand on the sidelines and watch, pressure built up for the Executive Committee of the T'bilisi Soviet of Workers' Deputies to assume control.²⁵ This, as had already become clear with the establishment of the T'bilisi City Executive Committee, it was not yet prepared to do. Nevertheless, such was the disorder, particularly in T'bilisi, that the Workers' Soviet, as the only body with popular support and the ability to exert control, quickly became established as the de facto centre of power.

Ozakom remained in position as the symbol of central authority, but as a body, it was aware of its limitations. Thus, while it continued to issue decrees throughout its period in office, it was wholly dependent on the soviets for their execution. This, of course, also enabled the latter to exert a powerful influence on the administration without actually assuming direct control. Given the domination of the workers' soviets by the Georgian Social-Democrats (the Mensheviks made up 80-85 per cent of membership)²⁶ this, as Zhordania pointed out, meant that almost all fundamental political and organisational questions were first settled at meetings of the party bureau.

The work of the soviet and party went ahead as one, and the resolutions of their organs were implemented by agreement. The great majority of the soviet was Social-Democratic and it is hardly surprising that the work of all its forces was co-ordinated. In a word, the ideological and tactical leader of the entire movement was our party,

The Georgian Mensheviks' domination of the soviets had further implications, insofar as it underlined the unfortunate coincidence of class and nationality in Georgia. Thus the desire frequently expressed by the Social-Democrats in 1917 not to alienate the bourgeoisie was rendered more difficult by their close identification with the Georgian peasantry and working class on the one hand and Armenian domination of commercial and industrial life in Transcaucasia on the other. Nowhere was this more apparent than in T'bilisi in 1917, where the dramatic swing in the social balance of forces in March had led to a sudden shift in power away from the Russian bureaucracy and Armenian bourgeoisie and back, after an interval of over 100 years, to the Georgians. The Social-Democrats' prospects of convincing the bourgeoisie that its interests would not be jeopardised by the new regime in the city were thus considerably reduced by the predominantly Armenian composition of the bourgeoisie.

Against a background of national sensitivity that had at times in the recent past spilled over into inter-ethnic violence, the very real danger existed that the bourgeoisie would exploit its influence within the Armenian community in Georgia, and particularly in T'bilisi where it was most concentrated, to depict any reform which threatened its interests, even, for instance, so liberal a measure as the abolition of the property qualification in the municipal elections, as an attempt by the Georgian Social-Democrats to penalise Armenians on national grounds.

On the initiative of the T'bilisi Soviet of workers' Deputies, on 18th March deputies from all 17 soviets in the Caucasus met in T'bilisi for the first Regional Congress of Workers' Soviets, at which Zhordania, newly elected as chairman of the 10-man Menshevik-dominated Executive Committee of the Regional Centre, advanced his theses on the tactics of the working class in the revolution. No doubt in part seeking to allay the fears of the Armenian community but also reflecting the Georgian Mensheviks' view that this was a bourgeois revolution, he stressed that while the proletariat was the major force in the revolution it would nevertheless have to share leadership with those other classes who had taken part in it:

In order to work out the correct tactic, one must try to grasp the essence of the current revolution at the head of which stand three main forces: 1) the proletariat 2) the progressive bourgeoisie and 3) the army, which is made up of the sons of the people... If we compare the present revolution with 1905 it is clear that the difference between the situation then and now is great. In 1905 we did not see the bourgeoisie during the movement, but observed the motley crowd led by the working class... Today such a situation does not exist and it is impossible to subordinate today's tactics to the interests of one class. We must advance together with all those forces which are taking part in the revolution, in order, through our combined strength, to establish a republic... The workers, peasant and national question must be finally settled in the Constituent Assembly. We must not forget that the current revolution is based on the co-ordination of different forces and that consequently our course must correspond to this situation.²⁸

Zhordania's message was underlined by the main resolution of the Congress which aside from calling for all disputes to be settled where possible by arbitration, stated that the aim was the formation of a democratic republic, the resolution of the workers and national questions within the

limits imposed by a bourgeois structure, and the confiscation of land.

Other considerations aside, there can be little doubt either that by steering clear of the demand for soviet power and immediate resolution of the national question, the Georgian Mensheviks recognised the sensitivity of and enormous potential for damage represented by inter-ethnic relations in Georgia and, in particular, its capital city, for the three major nationalities were not only divided along class lines but also, broadly speaking, along party lines. Thus while the majority of the Georgian population identified with the Social-Democrats, most Armenians and particularly the so-called progressive bourgeoisie, supported the Dashnaktsutiun, and the majority of Russians, most of whom were soldiers, the SRs.

Nor, it should be stressed, were the Mensheviks alone in this respect. Both the Dashnaks and the SRs were committed to the success of the Provisional Government, and while the Russian soldiers that made up most of the Caucasian Army were by June disenchanted both with the war and the government for failing to bring it to an end, throughout March, April and May the soldiers' soviet, led by the SRs, gave unconditional support, convinced that the war's end was near and that land reform would swiftly follow. The mood among the soldiers was consequently hostile to anything that appeared to threaten the successful conduct of the war effort, not least of which in their view was discussion of and agitation for greater national rights. Thus when the First Regional Congress of the Caucasian Army met on 22nd April, its resolution on the national question stated bluntly:

The resolution of the national question in its totality is only possible through the Constituent Assembly. However, until the Constituent Assembly meets all attempts to settle it are inadmissible and would be harmful.²⁹

A similar attitude informed an article in the Dashnak paper Orion on 7th May which warned that the national question should not yet be broached, so as to avoid disrupting the forces of revolution. The most important and immediate task was to support the Provisional Government.³⁰

The conviction that the times demanded patience and support for the Petrograd government was undoubtedly reinforced in the Caucasus by the proximity of the war and the genuine fear of the indigenous population that if the government were to collapse, so too would the Caucasian Front, leaving the way open to the Turks. Against such a background it is scarcely surprising that the endeavours of the Socialist-Federalists and National-Democrats in mid-March to form a Georgian soldiers' executive committee in the Caucasian Army and to organise a demonstration calling for national autonomy should have enjoyed so little success among the peasantry and working class. As in the past, the viability of the nationalist parties continued to founder upon their inability to extend their influence beyond the intelligentsia, a weakness that the Menshevik majority in the T'bilisi Soviet was able to exploit when it threatened to expel the nationalist parties if they continued to raise the issue of political autonomy.³¹

However, while there was a consensus among the main political parties that the Constituent Assembly should be the final arbiter over the future relationship between the

national minorities and the centre, and that they should postpone their demands until such time as the Constituent Assembly was convoked, the expectation that that date was not far off and that when it arrived they would have to have clarified their positions ensured that the national question continued to preoccupy them throughout 1917.

There appears too to have been a real fear among the Georgian Mensheviks that failure to achieve immediate and evident progress on national issues could lead to sufficient disenchantment among the peasantry, which although it still had little time for the advocates of separation was nevertheless impatient to reap the benefits of the February revolution, for it to turn a more sympathetic ear to the SFs and National Democrats, particularly as the nationalist parties were less inhibited about pressing for immediate concessions from the Provisional Government. It was a fear, moreover, that had been given greater substance by the caution the SFs in particular were taking to emphasise that national autonomy would not mean severing the tie with Russia - a major consideration if they were to win the support of a population much of which had recently experienced the reality of Turkish invasion.

Abandoning their pre-revolution machinations with the Germans, the nationalist parties turned their backs on Europe and called instead for the establishment of a federal state in the new Russia. Thus, Grigol Rtskhiladze, a leading member of the SFs, argued that while on the one hand national interests demanded the establishment of separate national states, other considerations demanded a joint administration for the whole of Russia. Self-evidently,

there could only be one solution to this apparent dilemma.

However, the best political form, which will completely satisfy both sets of interests, is a federation of national states, a federal republic of Russia. To ensure the solidity and strength of this federation, the administration of common affairs would have to be based on the representation of all the peoples of Russia, rather than on agreement between national states.³²

The paramount consideration of the SFs remained national renaissance and while there was division in the party as to the significance to be attached to class struggle once national autonomy had been achieved, they continued to maintain that the national idea united all classes and that all parties should join together in pursuit of national freedom. In a book published in 1917 entitled Avtonomia da p'ederatsia (Autonomy and Federation), T'edo Ghlonti expressed the mood of the party when he said that in the history of national-liberation movements there always occurred moments when all classes united in the struggle for liberation even though each class might have its own aims in that struggle. Noting what he perceived to be a shift in the Menshevik position towards acceptance of federalism, he argued that such a moment had indeed already arrived in Georgia and that the ground already existed for joint action on the national question. In such circumstances, he declared,

...we consider it a crime to remain silent and not to fight for agreement between the nation's various groups in defence of national interests.³³

In effect, this threatened to strike at the heart of Zhordania's approach to national and class relations in 1917 for by calling on Georgians to press their separate demands

for autonomy there was a very real risk that they would at the same time alienate both the Russian troops in the Caucasus, 100,000 of whom were stationed in T'bilisi, and the Armenian bourgeoisie whose control of commerce and industry in T'bilisi stood to suffer a serious blow should the Georgians reestablish it as their national capital. It is no surprise therefore that Zhordania should have gone to considerable lengths to silence the nationalist parties on this issue (above). What made it doubly sensitive for the leader of the Georgian Mensheviks, however, was that Ghlonti's claim of a shift in Menshevik views on the national question, while not entirely accurate, was not without foundation. There had, of course, been different views among the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP in Transcaucasia at least since the formation of Darchiashvili's group of territorial autonomists in 1905 (see Chapter 5), but there was little doubt either that support for national territorial autonomy, as opposed to the national-cultural solution still favoured by Zhordania, had grown in popularity during the war and since the revolution.

The clearest evidence of this came at the Congress of Transcaucasian Peasants' Deputies in late June when Akaki Chkhenkeli, who prior to the war had been one of the leading proponents of national-cultural autonomy not just within the ranks of Caucasian Social-Democracy, but at the All-Russian Menshevik Conference in Vienna in 1912 and as a deputy to the Fourth Duma, abandoned it in favour of a national territorial solution.³⁴ Such an about turn by a major figure in the Caucasian party organisation inevitably added weight to the SF argument, but also did much to strengthen the position of the territorial autonomists within the party, whose

views were now finding a regular outlet in the bi-weekly literary and political paper Alioni (The Dawn), which ran a long series of articles on the revolution and the national question in 1917,³⁵ and in the weekly Khalkhis Ert'oba (Unity of the People), whose main contributor, Ivane Gomart'eli, was one of the longest standing advocates of national autonomy in the party.³⁶

It was in fact Gomart'eli who took the lead in 1917 in presenting the territorialist case with a lengthy pamphlet directed primarily at the Georgian workers and peasantry, entitled Sak'art'velos teritorialuri avtonomia anu erovnul-teritorialuri t'vit'mart'veloba (The Territorial Autonomy of Georgia or National-Territorial Self-Government). Interestingly, particularly in view of his own long support of the idea, Gomart'eli was quick to concede that the peasantry viewed autonomy in a negative light. This, however, he put down to poor education and lack of information.³⁷

Citing Finland as an example of the sort of relationship he envisaged between Georgia and Russia, Gomart'eli called for an elected Georgian parliament with powers to raise tax and pass legislation. The power to raise tax was, he argued, essential in view of the need to effect wide-ranging changes in education, health, justice, communications and the economy. Georgia would, however, remain part of Russia, and although Georgian would be the state language, Russian would be the lingua franca of the federation and the centre would be empowered to intervene in Georgian affairs should the Georgian administration contravene federal law.³⁸

As in his previous contributions on the subject, Gomart'eli's arguments hinged on the conviction that Georgia and Russia would have to undergo a relatively long period of capitalist development before the proletariat would be strong enough and conscious enough to advance society towards socialism. In this view, and it was one that was to gain many adherents before long among the Georgian Mensheviks, the government in Petrograd, while already in the hands of the bourgeoisie, was still operating under severe constraints. With the progression of time, however, it would be able to break free from the fetters imposed by the Petrograd Soviet and impose its will on Russia. Once that happened, the Russian bourgeoisies, led by the Kadets and Octobrists, would be loathe to grant any concessions to the national minorities that might hinder the economic exploitation of the outlying parts of the former empire.

In this context, he argued, the only way to ensure against future encroachments by the Russian bourgeoisie on Georgian national rights was to acquire the constitutional right to national territorial autonomy before the bourgeoisie was firmly ensconced in power. Supporting autonomy would not, he emphasised, mean selling out to the SFs, nor did the fact that the SFs and National-Democrats were demanding autonomy of necessity mean that it should be opposed. On the contrary, it would accelerate the development of class struggle and expedite progress towards socialism. Autonomy would provide the means, such as education in the national language, whereby Georgian workers would acquire greater consciousness. Moreover, he argued, the establishment of T'bilisi as the Georgian capital and Georgian as the language of commerce, administration and law would lead the

Armenian bourgeoisie to shift its sphere of activities to an Armenian national unit based, he suggested, in Erevan and Aleksandropol Gubernii. This would have the immediate effect of clarifying the class struggle in Georgia, which until now had been obscured by the predominantly Armenian composition of the bourgeoisie.³⁹

In such circumstances, Gomart'eli concluded, echoing the arguments of the SFs, it was essential to achieve a party agreement so that pressure could be brought to bear on the centre. The autonomy of Georgia, he said, was not a party matter, but the "affair of the whole nation".⁴⁰

Against this background Zhordania attempted to hold the Social-Democrats to their pre-war position on national-cultural autonomy and regional self-government. In his first major contribution to the debate on the national question in the aftermath of the February Revolution, a polemic against the SFs entitled Chven da p'ederalistebi' (Us and the Federalists), which betrayed his anxiety at their growing influence if not among the mass of the population, then at least within the intelligentsia and, more importantly, the Social-Democratic Party itself, Zhordania attacked the concept of federalism which, he declared, could guarantee Georgia neither democracy nor socialism. It was, moreover, a territorial notion, implying a union of territories rather than nations and, as such, given the multi-ethnic composition of the Transcaucasus, could only lead to national tension and deflect the working people from the social movement, an argument that was to find ironic confirmation in the pathos of the December 1918 Armeno-Georgian conflict, the constant friction between Armenia and

Azerbaijan and Georgia's persistent difficulties with her own national minorities in the years of independence. Reverting to his pre-war arguments, Zhordania maintained that as a cultural manifestation the nation could only be properly catered for by national-cultural autonomy, a formula that could both meet the proletariat's cultural demands and maintain the unity of the social movement within Russia as a whole.⁴¹

The article was too a testimony to the consistency of Zhordania's views on the national question since he first began writing on the subject in the 1890s. Though he adopted the idea of national-cultural autonomy rather later, the essence of his approach had remained largely unchanged since he wrote Gazeti Iveria da erovneba (The newspaper Iveria and nationality) for Kvali in 1897. Thus, he continued to stress that while national-cultural interests could transcend class, economic advance, to which the future success of any nation was tied, inevitably led to class conflict, with the consequence that any attempt to hinder its development, as he now accused the SFs of doing, would not only impede economic progress in Georgia, but would, as a consequence, also impede national renaissance.

On 23rd May, however, at a Caucasian Regional Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, and then in mid-June at the Sixth Congress of Transcaucasian Mensheviks, Zhordania indicated that he was moving away from a purely national-cultural solution of the national question towards one that took in elements of a territorial approach. Thus while at the meeting of soviets in May he was on familiar ground when he argued that the national interests of the proletariat flowed not from an interest in creating a strong

state, but from cultural development, and that the Social-Democratic Party was therefore concerned to establish the cultural conditions for national development rather than a national state, he took a step closer towards the national-territorial autonomists within his own party, as well as to the SFs, when he argued that the three main nationalities in Transcaucasia should have the right to establish self-governing bodies delineated along territorial lines for the administration of national cultural affairs, and that the rights of national minorities living within those territories should be protected by setting up national cultural unions.⁴²

It is indicative of Zhordania's continuing hold over the party that despite evidence of a gradual shift towards acceptance of national autonomy for Georgia within a Russian federation, his speech at the Sixth Congress, which was subsequently published under the title Natsionaluri kit'khva amierkavkasiashi (The National Question in Transcaucasia), should have formed the basis of the party resolution on the national question.⁴³

Zhordania carried on where he had left off in May, blending elements of national-cultural autonomy with acceptance of the idea that administration needed to be based on territory. But instead of the formation of federal republics favoured by the SFs and groups within his own party, Zhordania contented himself with proposing the all-Russian Menshevik idea of broad regional self-government in those areas distinguished by an individual way of life and ethnic origin.⁴⁴ For the Transcaucasus, however, he proposed the formation of a regional administration,

intermediate between the major nationalities and the centre, based on the whole of Transcaucasia. Echoing Sergi Meskhi and Droebea in the 1870s, he argued that the future of the Transcaucasian nations lay in unity:

The nations of the Transcaucasus must work out a single, joint national programme. Only in such conditions will it be possible to reduce the existing dissatisfaction and enmity between the nationalities to a minimum within the confines of a modern bourgeois structure.⁴⁵

What was required was a form of political organisation that ensured both the economic interests of the area and met the national-cultural aspirations of its constituent nationalities. Thus within the Transcaucasian administration, which was to be responsible for overall economic and civic interests, Zhordania proposed the creation of three national self-governing bodies which, he said, conceding that it was impossible to divorce government from territory, should be based on the areas in which the three largest national groups in the area, the Georgians, Armenians and Azeris, formed the majority of the population, regardless of such considerations as traditional national borders and natural economic areas.

It was not a proposal that enjoyed much popularity among the Georgian nationalist parties nor, for that matter, among the national autonomists within the Social-Democratic Party, most of whom favoured establishing Georgia within what they regarded as its historical borders.⁴⁶ The problem here was that certain areas considered part of traditional Georgia had, since the 19th century, been occupied by so many Armenian refugees that the latter now formed the majority of the population. Under Zhordania's formula these

would have been placed under an Armenian administration. Ironically, Zhordania was to be reminded of this by the independent government of Armenia little over a year later in the dispute over Borchalo, Akhalk'alak'i and Akhaltsikhe districts. However, as Zhordania justifiably pointed out, his proposals in 1917 had been made on the understanding that all three national self-governments would be part of a broader Transcaucasian administration, and were inapplicable to the situation in 1918, by which time Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan had all declared themselves independent.

As well as acting as the executives of central state policy, the national governments would be able to pursue their own cultural, economic and juridical interests, while the languages of the national majorities would become the languages of all state, educational and legal affairs within their own territories. The problem of national minorities living within these areas could be resolved, Zhordania suggested, by setting up national units which would have responsibility for the cultural needs of their respective national groups but would in all other matters be subordinate to the government of the territory in which they were situated.

It is quite clear, therefore, from the Menshevik position at the Sixth Congress that although the majority of the Caucasian party had, by incorporating territory into its conception of the nation, compromised the argument that it was a purely cultural manifestation, it still, even at this late stage, just months before the declaration of Transcaucasian independence, remained strongly opposed to any attempts to break or weaken the link with Russia. Nevertheless, a chain of events had already begun in 1917

which was to erode still further Zborian's efforts at federalism and move him by the autumn to a position on the national question that was in many respects indistinguishable from the Socialist-Federalists.

Although the Provisional Government on 19th March abolished all restrictive legislation imposed on the national minorities by the tsarist authorities and established full equality before the law regardless of race, religion or nationality, it demonstrated considerable reluctance to recognise the nationalities as communal entities, arguing, as on so many other issues, that that was the proper concern of the Constituent Assembly.⁴⁷ At no time in its period of office, moreover, does it appear to have understood that although the Transcaucasian nationalities did not seek independence, they did, nevertheless, expect of the February Revolution rather more than Petrograd was ever prepared to concede. Part of the problem was no doubt that the government was more preoccupied with the issues of war and peace and the land question, but it seems likely too that few of its ministers, at least before the formation of the coalition government, were favourably disposed to measures that might weaken the grasp of the centre over the outlying areas of the former empire. It is true, of course, that it conceded independence to Poland and autonomy to Finland, but the former was at the time occupied by the Germans and had already been offered independence by the central powers, while in Finland's case it merely restored institutions that had been in existence prior to 1899 without actually consulting the Finns about what they really wanted. Moreover, in July, when the Finnish Sejm passed a

law limiting the authority of the Provisional Government to defence and foreign policy, the latter responded by dissolving it. When one considers too the determination of Foreign Minister Miliukov to ensure that Russia annex Constantinople as a price for its contribution to the allied war effort, one can readily understand why many among the national minorities suspected that the Provisional Government was more concerned to pursue the previous regime's practice of empire-building than placate its minority nationalities.

In Transcaucasia this suspicion was for many confirmed by the government's refusal to grant anything more than an administrative function to Ozakom, with the consequence that it was quite unable to fulfil the aspirations of the population for a greater say in the direction of its own affairs, a point that was soon underlined by its failure to settle the issue of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church (see Chapter 1). Shortly after the revolution the Georgian bishops expelled the Russian exarch and his bishops from the exarchate building, seized all church property and demanded the immediate restoration of autocephaly. Ozakom pronounced itself unauthorised to judge on the matter and referred it to Petrograd where the government acknowledged the national character of the church, but instead of granting its demands, gave it the right to work out a project on its legal position in Russia, which would then have to be submitted to the Provisional Government for approval before eventually being decided upon by the Constituent Assembly. To the church, however, which felt there was nothing to discuss, this merely proved the continuing insensitivity of the centre to the demands of the Georgian people, a view that the nationalist parties were quick to endorse in their

campaign to demonstrate the urgent need for Georgia to acquire greater control over its own destiny.⁴⁸

The incident provided a further illustration of the limitations of Ozakom's power and contributed to undermining what little authority it had in the region. Requests to expand its responsibilities helped maintain an almost constant state of friction between Ozakom and Petrograd but achieved nothing. Thus an attempt by Chkhenkeli to secure powers of legislation and appointment was rejected by Prime Minister Kerensky who brusquely reminded him of Ozakom's status and reaffirmed that it could neither remove nor enact legislation and that its expenditure had to be strictly accounted for. This not only demoralised the staff but also destroyed the faith of Georgians in the will of the centre to satisfy national demands and helped create the climate for the idea that Georgia's needs could only be met by greater devolution of power.⁴⁹

It was also an embarrassment to the Mensheviks whose own insistence that the national question be left until the Constituent Assembly both made it awkward for them to criticise the Provisional Government on this account, and allowed the other parties to take up the nation's grievances almost unchallenged. It seems likely that Zhordania's gradual shift to a more positive position on the national question in 1917 was at least in part induced by a fear that the party might lose ground to its political opponents.

But while party political considerations no doubt influenced his approach to the national question it is probable that developments in Petrograd had the greater impact and did the most to undermine his conviction in the

efficacy of a purely national-cultural solution. The belief of the leader of the Transcaucasian Mensheviks', expressed shortly after the revolution, that the progressive bourgeoisie had played a leading role in its fruition and would continue to do so until such time as the contradictions inherent in capitalism led to a socialist revolution and the emergence of a new form of society based on qualitatively different relations of production, did not extend as far as condoning the sharing of governmental office with the political representatives of the bourgeoisie and amounted almost to an enshrinement of the principle of "dual power" then in operation in Petrograd. It was not the role of socialists, he maintained, to help the bourgeoisie maintain the efficiency of capitalism, but rather, with the aid of the soviets, to ensure that the government did not stray towards counter-revolution, to protect working people's interests and to raise the political consciousness of the proletariat and focus its energies on the class struggle that lay ahead. The soviets would too be able to guarantee that the national-cultural interests of the minority peoples were protected against any hegemonist designs on the part of the Russian bourgeoisie. This faith in the watchdog role of the soviets for the moment convinced him, and with him the majority of the Caucasian organisation, that the scenario depicted by the territorial-autonomists within the party of gradual assimilation by the Russian bourgeoisie of the nationalities was avoidable. It was not, however, a conviction that was destined to survive much longer.

It suffered its first major blow on 1st May when the Petrograd Soviet voted in favour of socialist participation in the Provisional Government. In Zhordania's view, this

could produce one of two results: either the socialist ministers would accommodate their liberal colleagues in the government and thus compromise their own principles, betray the working class and play into the hands of the Bolsheviks, or they could attempt to impose socialist measures and run the risk of provoking a counter-revolution, a possibility that the Transcaucasian Mensheviks considered very real, particularly after the rumours had filtered down to T'bilisi that during the crisis in April engendered by Milyukov's note to the allies on the 18th promising Russia's complete support for the war effort, he and General Kornilov had planned to provoke a conflict between rival groups of demonstrators in Petrograd as a pretext for a military coup. The resignation in late May too of the Minister of Trade and Industry, Konovalov, just two weeks after his appointment, fuelled the suspicion in Georgia that the bourgeoisie was indeed edging towards counter-revolution.⁵⁰

This fear, combined with the warnings of Gomart'eli and others of the danger of assimilation should the nationalities fail to secure recognition of the right to national autonomy while the Russian bourgeoisie was still weak, was for many strengthened by the government's hostility to the demands of the Ukrainian Rada for autonomy in April and its refusal even to concede the territorial unity of the Ukraine, a position it maintained until June, when, following a declaration from the Rada that without separating from Russia and whether the government liked it or not it was going to take control of the Ukraine, the government gave way and conceded the competence of the Rada to speak for the

Ukrainian people.⁵¹ While on the one hand this no doubt encouraged autonomists in Georgia, on the other it gave rise again to the spectre of counter-revolution, for following the announcement of concessions to the Ukraine, five Kadet ministers undermined the coalition by resigning, a step that not only indicated where their sympathies lay on the issue of nationality rights, but also triggered a fresh crisis in a government which was already faced with the collapse of its much-vaunted June offensive.⁵²

Increasingly distrustful of the bourgeoisie, Zhordania began to question not just the viability of coalition government, but also the wisdom of allowing the bourgeoisie to participate in government at all. His criticism of the participation of Mensheviks in the government now gave way to a derisive dismissal of the "democratic cretinism" of his erstwhile colleagues who, he said, had become fixated with earning the trust of the Kadet ministers and imagined they could placate the masses with rhetoric and ministerial reshuffles.⁵³

The news at the end of August of General Kornilov's abortive attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government finally convinced him of the futility of attempting to appease the bourgeoisie which, in a resolution adopted by the T'bilisi Soviet at the beginning of September, he declared to have moved to the side of counter-revolution, a view which he upheld at the Democratic Conference in Petrograd a week later, when he declared that the Transcaucasian organisation favoured the abandonment of coalition and the formation of a government of democratic socialist forces, including the Bolsheviks.⁵⁴ He found little support at the conference, however, and returned to T'bilisi convinced that

the Mensheviks and SRs had cut themselves off from their roots in the working class and peasantry and had as a consequence opened the way to the Bolsheviks. In such circumstances, in which the centre was "without hope" and threatened by counter-revolution from both the Right and Left, the sole option facing the Transcaucasus, he maintained, was to prepare to look after itself should the need arise.⁵⁵

Against this backcloth of confusion and loss of direction at the centre, Zhordania began to reassess his position on the national question and to ask whether in the circumstances national-cultural autonomy was a viable proposition. In the knowledge of Bolshevik hostility to the idea and concerned that a Right-wing counter-revolution, if it occurred, would, as Gomart'eli had argued, act as a catalyst for an upsurge of Russian nationalism, he inclined gradually through the summer and early autumn towards the latter's arguments on territorial autonomy. It should, however, be emphasised that Zhordania envisaged autonomy for Transcaucasia as a whole rather than its constituent nationalities separately and that he remained convinced of the importance of unity with Russia to the development of the area.

It is probable too that the gathering inter-ethnic tension in Georgia - in spite of the efforts of the major political parties to contain it - put pressure on Zhordania to revise his earlier insistence on postponing all debate on the issue till the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Because of the division of social class and political sympathies along national lines, the danger always existed that the tensions between the major actors in 1917 would at

times assume national form. Thus the different perceptions of the Georgians and of the predominantly Russian soldiers on such key issues as the Provisional Government and the conduct of the war, always threatened the possibility of degenerating into nationalist conflict.

Disenchantment among the troops with the government's policy on the war, fuelled by appalling conditions at the front and the suspicion that while they were fighting the land was being divided in their absence, came to a head in June with the announcement of a new offensive. The Bolsheviks, who only began to operate as a separate organisation again in the Caucasus from 5th June,⁵⁶ were quick to exploit the mood, and in elections to the soldiers' section of the T'bilisi Soviet that month served notice of the seriousness of their challenge when they won 14 seats to the SRs' 12 and the Mensheviks' 8. The sharpening delineation between the Menshevik-dominated Soviet, which took a revolutionary-defensist position on the war, and the T'bilisi garrison, was further underlined on 25th June when a demonstration called by the Bolsheviks against the offensive and the Soviet's decision, albeit half-hearted, to grant it support, rebuffed an attempt by the Mensheviks to co-opt it by voting in favour of a Bolshevik resolution condemning the offensive and calling for transfer of power to the soviets. Izvestiya, the soviets' newspaper, gave an indication of the national tensions underlying this division when it bemoaned the fact that "the peasant soldiers from distant Russian regions"⁵⁷ were so easily convinced by counter-revolutionary forces in the army acting under cover of extremist slogans.

However, while the slogan of peace at any price continued to win the Bolsheviks support among the Russian

soldiers, they failed dismally to make any impact on the Menshevik hold over the Georgian working class and peasantry, a fact which was in part cause and in part consequence of their increasing resignation to concentrating their efforts on propagandising in Russian among the troops, limiting their work in Georgian largely to the publication of the unsuccessful Brdzola (The Struggle). On the other hand, while the Bolsheviks found their attentions settling, wilfully or otherwise, on the Russians, the Mensheviks, whose defensist stance on the war enabled them to exploit the Georgian fear of a sudden abandonment of the front, became almost equally preoccupied with the struggle for support among the Georgians, so that just as the Russian-language Kavkazskii Rabochii became the focal point of Bolshevik propaganda, so the Mensheviks devoted considerably more thought and energy to the publication of the Georgian-language Ert'oba (Unity) than they did to their relatively weak Russian publication, Bor'ba.⁵⁸

It is evident therefore that as the political differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks re-emerged in the Transcaucasus, so they contributed to exacerbating the differences between the predominantly transient Russian population and the native Georgians, and so to strengthening the barriers between them. In such circumstances, for all the internationalist rhetoric of the rival organisations, it became all too easy for Georgians to find fault with "peasant soldiers from distant Russian regions" and for the latter to see in the Georgians only an obstacle to their desire to return home, failing either to understand or sympathise with the natural anxieties of the local

population.

In July the elections for the T'bilisi Duma confirmed the shift in the ethnic balance of power in the city with the Mensheviks securing 50 of the available 108 seats and over 45 per cent of the vote, while their closest rivals, the Dashnaks won 24 seats, followed by the SRs with 20. The Bolsheviks gained only seven seats, the same as the Kadets, and scarcely six per cent of the vote. Most significant, however, was the dramatic decline in the fortunes of the Armenian bourgeoisie, which had not only dominated the Duma since the 19th century but, to the anger of the Georgians, also consistently refused to support an extension of the franchise so as to incorporate the poorer and predominantly Georgian sections of T'bilisi society. The fear now existed among the Armenians that the resentment accumulated over the preceeding 30 years might lead the Georgians to exploit their democratically acquired advantage to the detriment of the Armenian community. Consequently, although the Mensheviks were still at that time convinced of the need to maintain an alliance with the bourgeoisie and between the main political parties to ensure that national conflict did not jeopardise the revolution, it was not long before the Dashnaks were labelling the Mensheviks Georgian chauvinists and debate had degenerated into mutual accusations of nationalism. Nevertheless, later that month the parties demonstrated their awareness of the dangers of allowing matters to get out of hand when they set up an inter-party bureau with the express purpose of preventing national conflict.

With Zhordania's faith in the ability of national-cultural autonomy alone to settle the national question undermined by events in Russia and Transcaucasia, the way

was now open for Menshevik acceptance of the territorial-autonomist argument, a development which the SFs had been predicting for some time and which would remove most of the remaining differences between them on the issue. Thus, in September, in a remarkable shift of party policy, the Mensheviks came to an agreement with the SFs and National-Democrats on the formation of an inter-party soviet, which, in turn, declared their unity on the national question.⁶⁰ A few days later at the Democratic Conference in Petrograd, A. Chkhenkeli, acting as official spokesman for the group, confirmed that all the Georgian parties were united in favour of national-territorial self-government and that all agreed that the strength of national feeling in Georgia was now such that it could only be satisfied by some form of state autonomy. He added that the national programme drawn up by the Georgian parties was founded upon an agreement with the other nationalities of Transcaucasia.⁶¹

Although for the first time there was now a broad area of agreement within Georgian society and between all the main parties bar the Bolsheviks⁶² on the national question, it still remained the case just weeks before the October Revolution and the start of the chain of events that would ultimately lead to independence, that most continued to regard separation as neither desirable nor realistic. Some of the National-Democrats, it is true, did advocate independence, but they formed a small group within a party whose influence was at most peripheral. It was too a point that Chkhenkeli was at pains to emphasise at the conference when he stated that the Constituent Assembly should still be the final arbiter on the national question and that any national programme adopted by the Georgians or any other

nationality should first be acceptable to the international revolutionary democracy of Russia. The Georgian nation, he proclaimed prophetically, would only contemplate acting separately if the revolution were to be defeated.⁶³

That in the view of many in Georgia was precisely what did happen on 25th October when the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, although it was a while before most came to see it in those terms. But before then relations between the centre had already begun to deteriorate, particularly in the wake of the Petrograd Conference, from which Zhordania returned to T'bilisi claiming that the Russian Mensheviks had finally surrendered power to the bourgeoisie. Even before that, on 30th August, the T'bilisi Soviet announced the formation of the Temporary Central Caucasian Revolutionary Committee (Revkom), comprising representatives of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, SRs, SFs and Dashnaks, which, it informed the Provisional Government, had temporarily assumed complete control of the region, in order to counter the threat of counter-revolution and compensate for Ozakom's manifest inability to meet the demands of the area. The Soviet demanded that Ozakom be reconstituted so as to devolve more powers on the local authority.⁶⁴ Shortly afterwards, following Kerensky's failure to respond to these demands, the Revkom declared itself the supreme authority in the Caucasus, a move which finally prompted Kerensky to acknowledge its existence, even if only by demanding in vain that it immediately disband. Such an act of disobedience, however, was too much for the SR members of Revkom who, not without reason, saw in it a step towards separation and resigned as a consequence.

In another indication of the Mensheviks increasing readiness to act independently of the government, the Regional Congress of Caucasian Menshevik Organisations on 20th September reversed previous party policy by agreeing to the formation of national army units, in order, so it was said, to prevent desertion by disenchanted Georgian soldiers from the front.⁶⁵ Whatever the true reason for the decision, it seems not improbable that in light of the party's fears of counter-revolution in Russia and anxiety at the potential threat to Menshevik aspirations posed by the Bolshevik-dominated Caucasian Army, that it was intended as a precautionary measure of self-defence. But despite this and earlier actions that intimated a growing impatience among Georgians with the inaction of the Provisional Government, there was nothing to suggest that prior to the October Revolution the Mensheviks were contemplating unilateral action over the constitutional relationship between Georgia and the centre. On the contrary, as even their recent agreement with the SFs and National-Democrats demonstrated, they held to the view that this was a matter for the Constituent Assembly. That position was, however, to be put to a sudden though not entirely unexpected test by the October Revolution, an event greeted with little enthusiasm in Georgia, certainly among the indigenous population, and one which in view of the Bolsheviks antipathy to the idea of the Constituent Assembly began gradually to undermine Georgia's commitment to the union with Russia.

6.3 Separation from Russia

To Zhordania and the other leaders of the Mensheviks in Transcaucasia who had been predicting that the Bolsheviks

would use the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets to establish themselves in power, the Bolshevik coup on 25th October was proof of the erroneous policies of the Petrograd Mensheviks. In Zhordania's view, the two rival forces of the revolution were the proletariat and bourgeoisie, but between them lay the petit-bourgeoisie, which was unable by itself to establish power. The victory of one or the other class would depend on which achieved hegemony over this stratum of society. The Petrograd Mensheviks, however, had ignored this possibility and mistakenly chosen to ally themselves with the bourgeoisie, a policy that had merely driven the proletariat into the hands of the Bolsheviks and culminated in the October Revolution. The Bolshevik coup, said Zhordania on 25th October at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the T'bilisi Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, was the

inevitable result of the isolation of the proletariat at the Democratic Conference and the formation of power without its will.⁶⁶

The problem facing all the parties in Georgia now, however, was whether or not to recognise the Bolshevik claim to power, and if not, what to propose in its place. The Bolshevik members of the T'bilisi Soviet inevitably declared their unanimous support for the "Petrograd revolutionary democracy", while the SRs demanded that armed force be used to suppress it. The Mensheviks, however, sensitive to the possibility that armed suppression might extend beyond the Bolsheviks to themselves, took a more circumspect approach and proposed a resolution, which was adopted by the Executive Committee, that called for a broad coalition of democratic forces:

The interests of the revolution dictate the necessity of peaceful liquidation of the uprising on the basis of an agreement of the entire revolutionary democracy and in the spirit of creating a democratic power without the participation of the rich bourgeoisie.⁶⁷

Drawing comfort from their own strictly linear interpretation of Marxism, the Mensheviks also maintained that any attempt to instigate a socialist revolution in a country so backward as Russia was doomed to failure. Thus at a meeting of the T'bilisi Duma on 28th October, the leader of the Caucasian Menshevik organisation not only repeated his call for the "peaceful liquidation" of the Bolshevik coup, but also asserted:

The uprising in Petrograd is living out its last days. From the very beginning it was doomed to failure, because such a secret, conspiratorial seizure of power is opposed to the natural path of revolutionary development.⁶⁸

The opinion that it was still possible to come to terms with the Bolsheviks and that they would be forced to seek allies among the other socialist parties continued to prevail into early November, as is indicated by a resolution issued on the third by the Regional Centre of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies which called for a coalition of the revolutionary democracy "from the Bolsheviks to the popular-socialists", but this time added the "essential proviso" that this take place within the context of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly at a set date.⁶⁹ It may in part too have been encouraged by the restraint displayed by the party's Caucasian Regional Committee (Kavkraikom), which although the only major force to recognise the legitimacy of the new government,

nevertheless opposed the idea of a military seizure of power and in doing so effectively ruled out its one realistic prospect of assuming control in the Caucasus. Thus on 1st November, the soldiers' section of the T'bilisi Soviet Executive Committee appealed to the soldiers to obey the recently established Committee for Public Safety, a Menshevik-dominated organisation which incorporated representatives from all the major parties and was intended to co-ordinate authority in the Transcaucasus.⁷⁰

Despite this apparent reticence, the Bolsheviks took a number of measures to strengthen their influence over the army, including the election in the T'bilisi garrison on 28th October of a delegates' assembly whose main aims were to arm as yet unarmed military detachments and to secure fresh elections both to the soldiers' section of the T'bilisi Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Regional Soviet of the Caucasian Army, which had been elected six months previously and whose composition was undoubtedly over-weighted in favour of the SRs.⁷¹ Alarmed at the evident popularity of these demands among the soldiers, the T'bilisi Soviet became still more suspicious when the delegates' assembly suggested the formation of committees to distribute weapons among the soldiers and forbade the issue of weapons to members of "counter-revolutionary and nationalist parties". At a meeting of the T'bilisi Soviet Executive Committee and representatives of the T'bilisi garrison on 4th November, the former accused the Bolsheviks of attempting to seize power and demanded that they either disperse the delegates' assembly or leave

the Executive Committee within three days.⁷² The Bolsheviks duly resigned and in doing so helped broaden the already widening gulf between the army and the T'bilisi Soviet and weaken the increasingly fragile thread linking the Transcaucasus to Russia.

The Bolsheviks, however, remained unwilling to advocate military action, a step that, all other considerations aside, would have placed them in a position of calling for a transfer of power to the soviets on the one hand, whilst attacking them on the other. Instead, they cautioned against precipitate action and appealed to the soldiers not to resort to force. In the event, it was the T'bilisi Soviet that broke the deadlock when on 10th November it agreed to the demand for new elections to the soviets. The following day the Bolshevik Kavkraikom, noting the concession, announced that it considered the mission of the delegates' assembly achieved and agreed to its dispersal, a move that once again underlined the relative weakness of the Bolsheviks in the area.⁷⁵

Although they did enjoy considerable support in the army, the party leadership was nevertheless mindful of the fact that the primary concern of the troops was to return home as quickly as possible rather than engage in internecine conflict in Transcaucasia, and that the vast majority of Georgian workers and peasants continued to support the Mensheviks. In such circumstances, an attempt to seize power could have had unforeseen and possibly disastrous consequences. On 2nd November, Zhordania warned that an armed uprising would not have the support of the workers and added:

Such an uprising would assume the character of a military coup, with all its terrible consequences. Civil war in our country would flow unavoidably into national war; a military coup would be complicated by struggle between Russian, Georgian, Armenian and other native national regiments.⁷⁴

The risk of a bloody national conflict aside, it seems not improbable that one factor in the Bolsheviks' relative moderation in early November was that having spent much of 1917 working in tandem with the Mensheviks, even after the formal split in June, the Bolshevik leadership did not imagine that either they or the Dashnaktsutun, whose understandable fear of the Turks had made the party a consistent advocate of the union with Russia, would ever seriously consider forming a separate government in Transcaucasia rather than recognise the new authority in Petrograd.

At the time of the October Revolution, the Transcaucasian parties, and in particular the Mensheviks, had sought to substantiate their almost reflex rejection of the legitimacy of the Bolshevik claim to power by denouncing it as unrepresentative, counter-revolutionary and doomed to rapid collapse. In this optimistic expectation the Transcaucasian parties contented themselves in the first two weeks of the revolution by marking time. As local conditions deteriorated, however, and it became clear that the Bolshevik coup was not to be the transitory phenomenon they had imagined, it gradually dawned on the principal actors that they would either have to come to terms with the new authority in Petrograd or set about filling the vacuum of power in the Caucasus themselves.

Against this background, on 11th November, at the initiative of the Committee for Public Safety, a conference was held in T'bilisi of representatives of all the major

political parties, including the Bolsheviks, the Soviets, Ozakom, Muslim organisations, trade unions, and military and consular officials of Britain, France and the USA, to discuss the formation of a temporary administration whose task it would be to govern until such time as the Constituent Assembly was convened.⁷⁵ The formation of such a government, the Mensheviks and Dashnaks, in particular, were at great pains to stress, should not be seen as a move towards separation, but simply an attempt to restore order to the area at a time when government at the centre had broken down. Even now, few Georgians thought in terms of independence. Zhordania, just months away from becoming President of the independent Republic of Georgia, declared:

Transcaucasia has already worked hand in hand with Russia for 100 years, considering itself inseparably linked with her. Now the link with Russia has been torn apart... We must stand on our own two feet and help ourselves or perish in anarchy... At present one cannot place one's hopes on the centre. The state is headed for financial collapse and the gold reserve has been seized by the Bolsheviks. In the Transcaucasus, money is running out. The situation is further complicated by the presence of a huge army for which there is no food. All this necessitates the organisation of a local authority to lead Transcaucasia out of this catastrophic situation. The organisation of central power, despite our efforts, is being dragged out. We must create a regional power in the localities which will lead the region until the Constituent Assembly or the creation of an authoritative central power.⁷⁶

Having shifted blame for the rift to the Bolsheviks, the conference agreed, with the exception of the Bolshevik participants (P'. Makharadze, M. Tskhakaia and A. Nazaretian), who walked out, to the formation of a Caucasian administration in which "all revolutionary-democratic bodies of national or local significance" would be represented. On

Safety ceased to exist and local authority passed into the hands of the newly-constituted Transcaucasian Commissariat.⁷⁷

Composed of three Georgians, three Armenians, four Muslims and two Russians, it announced its existence to the peoples of Transcaucasia in a declaration which again sought to emphasise that it had been formed in order to avert economic and social catastrophe. However, although the statement repeated that the Commissariat was a temporary body intended to govern Transcaucasia until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, its appointment of commissars with full ministerial powers and its declared intention to take "energetic measures" to bring the war to a speedy close, take steps towards a just resolution of the national question, introduce the zemstvo system throughout the region and legislate on such contentious issues as confiscation of land and labour rights, suggested that even if the Constituent Assembly were to be convened, the Transcaucasian parties would be united in calling for wide-ranging autonomous powers. Should the Constituent Assembly fail to convene, moreover, for whatever circumstances, the Commissariat declared its readiness to cede its authority to a body to be formed from the Transcaucasian delegates elected to the Assembly.⁷⁸

For the Georgian Mensheviks, and particularly Zhor-dania, who had been outspoken in his criticism of Menshevik participation in the Provisional Government with representatives of the bourgeois parties, the decision to cooperate in Transcaucasia with the SFs, Dashnaks, and the Azeri Musavat, amongst others, was clearly a potential source of

embarrassment. Nevertheless, it was equally evident, given the influence of the Dashnaktsutiun and Musavat within their own communities, that if the Transcaucasus was to be held together, and if the potential conflict between the nationalities of the area was to be contained, that there would have to be compromise between the main parties. For Zhordania too there was the consolation that the idea of a united Transcaucasia within a Russian federation had formed one of the central planks in his approach to the national question since the summer. 9/

Despite the powers invested in the Transcaucasian Commissariat, it suffered from all the weaknesses of its predecessor, Ozakom, and proved equally incapable of surmounting the national, political, class and religious differences dividing it. In this respect, a major problem confronting the new body lay in the burgeoning of national consciousness since the February Revolution and the growing prominence of national issues in the political life of the region as first the Azeris and then the Armenians took steps to establish inter-party national organisations. Thus in the spring of 1917, the two largest Azeri parties, the Musavat and the Ganja Turkic Party of Decentralisation merged, despite considerable differences in other areas, to present a united front on the demand for national autonomy within a Russian federation. Their joint platform, adopted in October, declared that each nationality possessing a defined territory in which it constituted a majority should be granted the right to territorial autonomy, a principle which applied to the Turkic lands, it stated, would include Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Kirghizia and Bashkiria.⁷⁹

The Armenians too stressed the primacy of national unity at an inter-party national conference called by the Dashnaks on 27th September. Better organised than the Azeris, the Armenians elected a National Assembly and a smaller National Committee of 15 members, which, well before the creation of the Transcaucasian Commissariat, established itself as the effective government of the Armenian population of Transcaucasia.⁸⁰ Thus by the time of its establishment, the Transcaucasian Commissariat found itself rivalled not just by the soviets, but also by national organisations which enjoyed the considerable advantage of popular support and without whose cooperation there was little the Commissariat could hope to achieve.

Through most of 1917 the majority of Georgian Mensheviks had continued to resist the appeal of the SFs and the National-Democrats for a joint platform on the national question, but with the party's consent in August to participation in the Inter-Party Soviet and the presentation of a joint programme at the Democratic Conference, much of the basis of their opposition to some form of coalition was eroded. However, such was the strength of the party within Georgia that it was not until after the October Revolution, with its decision to take part on 20th November in a Georgian National Congress, that it gave serious attention to the idea. There were deep reasons, Zhordania declared, for this change of heart:

We are a small nation and we live in a country close to which stretches a massive military front. Therefore we must act very carefully. This front on the one hand, and the discontinuation of the link with Russia on the other, are forcing us to take care of ourselves. All the political parties [with the exception of the Bolsheviks] have united on this ground and stated: Before us stand two

questions around which we must unite both national and international forces. The first question is one of provision for the physical existence of the Georgian people, while the second is one of creating the conditions which will provide the basis for our people to construct its free cultural edifice.⁸¹

Although acting under the pressure of events and, though he does not mention it here, the increasing national organisation of the Armenians and Azeris, Zhordania had clearly moved closer to the SF position on the national question, while for the first time in Georgia since the February Revolution national issues began to gain prominence over the class struggle.⁸² Before attributing an absolute volte-face to Zhordania, however, it is worth recalling that as early as 1894 he had acknowledged that at moments of great danger to the nation, national unity could temporarily overcome social antagonisms.

In light of Georgia's recent history of class and political division, the congress represented a remarkable display not just of national unity, but also of the distance national self-consciousness had advanced in Georgia since the 19th century. In many respects too it can be seen as the realisation, if only momentarily, of the call of Ilia Tchavtchavadze, Akaki Dseret'eli and others of their generation for Georgians to establish a common ground and, to recall the metaphor of the time, mend their broken bridges. Thus the representatives of the t'avadaznauroba, in a gesture that was not entirely devalued by its expectation of a decree on the confiscation of large estates, set the tone for the occasion by offering to transfer its banks, estates, houses and the kakhet'i railway to the Georgian people. As ^{CapK} always, declared Konstantine Abkhazi and Davit' Nizharadze,

the nobility was ready to serve the Georgian nation "not just through sacrifice of property, but also through sacrifice of ourselves".⁸³

For all the atmosphere of national euphoria surrounding the meeting, however, the majority of delegates remained reluctant to envisage a Georgia separated from Russia, not least because Russia provided their main access to European culture. For many of those present the choice was a simple one: either to maintain the union with Russia and with it the link with Europe, or to abandon it and turn back to the East. For the Westernised Georgian intelligentsia there appeared little option. Thus Zhordania, in his capacity as chairman of the congress, reemphasised that the formation of the Transcaucasian Commissariat and the plan to elect a Seim should not be regarded as an indication of the region's intention to separate but simply as measures to restore order to the periphery and meet the local demand for political authority until such time as a representative central authority could be reestablished in Russia.⁸⁴

Nor, it should be stressed, did the National Soviet elected by the congress ever acquire the authority of its Armenian and Azeri counterparts. Despite growing support among Georgian Mensheviks for inter-party cooperation on the national question, and despite a Menshevik majority on the National Soviet Executive Committee, many in the party remained hostile to cooperation with the SFs and National-Democrats. The main force in Georgian political life, as it had been since February, continued to be the T'bilisi Soviet, whose position became still stronger at the end of November following its seizure of the T'bilisi arsenal, an incident which many, Lenin included, regarded as of crucial

significance in the struggle for supremacy with the Bolsheviks.

The problem of defence aside, the abandonment of the Caucasian front posed a serious threat to the survival of the Transcaucasian Commissariat as whole regiments of soldiers made their way through the region to the North Caucasus. Already alarmed by threats from the Stavropol and Groznii regiments to destroy T'bilisi unless the Commissariat conceded to their demands for supplies, and by the refusal of the Bolshevik-dominated Kars regiment to leave the Georgian capital and resume its journey northwards,⁸⁵ the T'bilisi Soviet Executive Committee's fears were still further aroused when it intercepted a telegram from Stepan Shaumian, the leader of the Baku Soviet, to Lenin on 23rd November calling for authorisation to use the soldiers and Baku Soviet to force the Transcaucasian Commissariat to recognise the legitimacy of the October Revolution.⁸⁶

To counter these developments, the T'bilisi Soviet appealed to the Soldiers' Committee of the Artillery Depots for 2,000 rifles to arm the so-called Red Guard, a voluntary militia created by the Soviet in August. When this request was turned down, the Executive Committee declared martial law in the city, mobilised the Red Guard and formed a committee to plan the capture of the T'bilisi arsenal. On the night of the 29th a motley band of some 60 poorly-armed guards, "some wearing top hats, others bashlyks and others shepherds' hats"⁸⁷ set off for the arsenal with the sole hope, as Zhordania put it, that the moral authority of the workers would prevail over the garrison.⁸⁸ Remarkably they achieved their goal without loss of life on either side and

in doing so undermined the Bolsheviks' prospects of a military seizure of power. Valiko Jugheli, leader of the Red Guard, later claimed that it had in large degree determined the course of the revolution in the Caucasus, while the Georgian Bolshevik K. Tsintsadze, who was given the unenviable task of reporting the event to Lenin, recalled that the latter too had concluded that the Georgian Mensheviks were now the "masters of their own affairs".⁸⁹

Although the Bolsheviks subsequently performed well in the December elections to the Second Regional Congress of the Caucasian Army, securing 52 seats in the Army Soviet elected by the congress to the combined total of 48 of the Mensheviks and Left SRs, and in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in which they came close to equalling the Menshevik vote in T'bilisi,⁹⁰ their success was unable to conceal their persistent failure to win substantial support among the indigenous population, a weakness the seriousness of which only became fully clear in December as the exodus of Russian troops from Transcaucasia began to assume mass proportions. Quick to exploit the Bolsheviks' predicament, the Transcaucasian Commissariat on 18th December accelerated the process by giving the order for demobilisation, a move which the Bolsheviks could scarcely oppose and which left them still more debilitated. By February 1918 their position was so undermined that the T'bilisi Soviet Executive Committee was able to disband its soldiers' section without dispute, a fate which was shared on 9th March by the Regional Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies.⁹¹

Conversely, the mid-December elections to the Regional Soviet of Workers' Deputies testified to the strength of the Mensheviks among the native proletariat: of the 248

delegates elected to the Regional Congress on 19th December, 155 were Mensheviks, 43 Bolsheviks (reflecting their strength in Baku), 29 SRs, 14 Dashnaks, four members of the Musavat, two independents and one a Menshevik-Internationalist. In a clear demonstration of the Mensheviks' enduring domination of Georgian political life, all but one of the 119 delegates elected in K'ut'aissi and T'bilisi Gubernii were Mensheviks.⁹²

But while the departure northwards of the Russian troops may have ruled out the likelihood of a Bolshevik coup d'etat in the immediate term, and was in that respect welcomed by most in the Transcaucasus, it also brought the region for the first time in over 100 years into direct, unmediated contact with the Ottoman Empire, a development that before very long was to put enormous pressure on the Transcaucasian Commissariat to clarify its relationship with Petrograd. More urgently, the denuding of the Caucasian Front faced the Transcaucasus with the task of organising its own defence, a problem which it sought to resolve through the formation of Armenian and Georgian national regiments. The question of the discipline and dubious political loyalty of many of the Georgian soldiers aside, however, it is quite evident that the size of the force assembled, 30,000 men, was wholly inadequate to cover a 300-mile front which until very recently had been defended by an army of 500,000. In late November, therefore, when the Turks proposed to the Transcaucasian Commissariat that it agree to an armistice, the latter, despite being aware that it was behaving increasingly like the government of a sovereign state, was quick to accept, and on 5th December the

terms of a ceasefire were agreed.⁹³ It is noteworthy, however, that the Commissariat insisted that the armistice be regarded as an agreement between the Turkish and Russian armies. The leaders of the Transcaucasian parties and organisations held on to the hope that the Bolsheviks would cede power to the Constituent Assembly and thus pave the way for the reunion of Transcaucasia with Russia. As Noe Zhordania later argued, the main concern at the time was to ensure against Turkish attack:

Not one party, group or individual put forward the issue of independence. In those circumstances, such an idea was unthinkable. The Turkish troops were on our border, the Russian army was collapsing and our physical and ethnographic existence were in danger.⁹⁴

Despite this, however, and the impending convocation of the Constituent Assembly, all were aware of the possibility that the Bolsheviks would reject the authority of the newly-elected body and confront the Transcaucasus with the choice of remaining part of Russia and therefore recognising the Bolshevik claim to power, or of opposing it and thereby severing the link with Russia.⁹⁵ It was a dilemma that the Turks were quick to exploit. Recognising an opportunity to reestablish⁹⁶ their influence over the region and create a buffer state on their northern border, the Turks informed the commander of the Transcaucasian Army, General Odishelidze, in a letter received on 1st January 1918, of their readiness to negotiate an end to the war and recognise the independence of Transcaucasia.⁹⁷ Calculated to cause the Transcaucasian Commissariat maximum embarrassment on the eve of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, it also further undermined the already fragile unity of the region by

appealing to the Azeris, whose enthusiasm for establishing an independent state in close alliance with Turkey was not shared by the Armenian population, many of whom, as recent refugees from Turkish Armenia, had good cause for questioning the intentions of Ottoman diplomacy.

The Turks, however, can have held out little hope that the Georgians and Armenians, both consistent advocates of the union with Russia, would change their views so close to the first meeting of the long-awaited assembly. There can have been little surprise therefore when on 4th January the Regional Centre of Soviets declared that as an integral part of the Russian Republic, Transcaucasia could only enter into peace negotiations with the approval of the All-Russian Assembly.⁹⁸

To the last moment the majority in the Transcaucasus rested its hopes for reincorporation into the Russian Republic and the establishment of a federal system of government on the Constituent Assembly, but with its dissolution by the Bolsheviki on 5th January that hope was finally extinguished. A resolution adopted at an emergency meeting of the Regional Centre of Soviets on 6th January appeared to recognise as much:

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly has broken the last thread which could have united all Russia and the all-Russian revolutionary democracy. The struggle for the Constituent Assembly is the struggle for the unity of Russia and the triumph of the revolution. The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly has again left the Transcaucasus, where anarchy is becoming deeper and more widespread, to depend on its own forces. The vital interests of the region demand the convocation in the immediate future of an assembly of Transcaucasian and Caucasian Front deputies elected to the Constituent Assembly, whose first task must be to create a strong, authoritative power capable of supporting revolutionary order in the country and introducing urgent reforms.⁹⁹

Yet even now, after this reluctant acknowledgement of Transcaucasia's detachment from Russia, few supporters could be found for independence. Evgeni Gegetchkori, the President of the Transcaucasian Commissariat, expressed the Georgian Menshevik point of view at a meeting of Transcaucasian deputies to the Constituent Assembly on 10th January to discuss plans for the formation of a Transcaucasian Seim, when he declared that any such body would only operate until the reinstatement of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly.¹⁰⁰

This reluctance to concede defeat over the assembly was quickly becoming an impediment to the agreement of peace terms with the Turks, who now refused to draw up a treaty with Transcaucasia unless the latter declared independence, pointing out that such an agreement would otherwise have no standing in international law. The mutual suspicions and antagonisms of the Armenians and Azeris, however, and the refusal of the Georgian Mensheviks to accept the ideals of the February Revolution as lost, ensured that Transcaucasia continued to prevaricate in the face of Turkish requests for clarification of its position.

Exasperated by Transcaucasia's apparent inability to come to terms with its separation from Russia, the Turks began to seek pretexts for breaking the armistice and exploiting their military advantage on the Caucasian Front. Throughout January, Vekhib-Pasha, Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Caucasian Army, made a series of complaints to General Odishelidze and General Przheval'skii, Commander-in-Chief of what was left of the Russian Caucasian Army, about atrocities allegedly committed by Armenians against the

Muslim population in the area of Erzindzhan.¹⁰¹ On 30th January, he informed Odishelidze and Przheval'skii that as these incidents were continuing, despite repeated requests for punitive action, he felt compelled to order the intervention of Turkish troops.¹⁰² The following day Ottoman units advanced almost entirely unopposed into Armenian and Georgian territory, occupying land which, had the Transcaucasian leaders shown a greater sense of urgency, might at least have been the subject of negotiation in peace talks.

The greatest threat to Transcaucasia emanated not so much from the Turkish army, however, as the peace negotiations then under way in Brest-Litovsk between Russia and the Central Powers, at which the Ottoman Empire had laid claim to much of the Transcaucasian territory ceded to Russia in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Unlike the Ukraine, which had declared independence and sent its own delegates to the negotiations, Transcaucasia remained hampered by indecision and held back from participation. On 1st February, however, Turkey again invited the Transcaucasian Commissariat to send its delegates and repeated its readiness to do all in its power to achieve recognition of Transcaucasian independence.¹⁰³

Whilst one can safely assume that the Ottoman government's motives were not governed by altruism, and that the Transcaucasian leadership had ample grounds for suspecting Turkish intentions, the alternative of spectating whilst the hard-pressed Bolsheviks bargained away Transcaucasian land was scarcely more attractive. However, although this and the shock of the recent Turkish advance caused the Commissariat to respond favourably to the proposal, the Transcaucasian leaders, both in the Soviet and the Commissariat, again

demonstrated their apparent inability to grasp the urgency of the situation. Instead of executing immediate measures, they informed Vekhib Pasha that the directives for their delegates and the conditions for the negotiations would have to be drawn up by the Transcaucasian Seim which, following a resolution adopted at the meeting on 10th January (above), was to hold its first session on 10th February.¹⁰⁴

By that time the course of the negotiations in Brest-Litovsk had shifted dramatically following Germany's decision to break the armistice and advance into Russia and it was already evident that the Bolsheviks would be forced to accept severe terms. The need, therefore, for Transcaucasia to have a presence at the peace talks had become more pressing. This in part explained the new sympathy in the Seim for independence, not least among the Armenians, who now recognised the inability of Russia to provide further protection against the Turks. Zhordania too on 15th February proposed a juridically separate Transcaucasian Republic, declaring that it was no longer possible to wait for this to be achieved within a Russian context.¹⁰⁵ Addressing the Seim a week later, he added:

We [the Mensheviks] opposed not just separation, but also autonomy. But when conditions change and we're told it's either slavery or separation, of course I stand for separation.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, the Seim ignored the invitation to attend the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and proposed instead that Turkey and Transcaucasia hold separate talks in Trebizond. On 16th February a special commission of the Seim, headed by Georgian Menshevik Noe Ramishvili, stated the Seim's competence in the prevailing conditions to conclude peace with

Turkey, called for the reconstitution of the pre-war Russo-Turkish state border and declared the Seim's intention to seek autonomy for Turkish Armenia within the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁷

Ironically, just as the Transcaucasian leadership had come to terms with the need to negotiate directly with the Turks, the consequence of its refusal to either declare independence or concede the Bolsheviks' right to govern came to fruition. On 17th February news arrived from Brest-Litovsk that Russia had ceded the provinces of Kars, Ardahan and Bat'umi to Turkey, losses that would clearly have undermined the defensive and economic viability of Transcaucasia. Karlo Chkheidze, President of the Seim, and Evgeni Gegetchkori, President of the Transcaucasian Commissariat, protested, declaring that the treaty's stipulations concerning the Transcaucasus were invalid as they had been drawn up without the participation of its representatives.¹⁰⁸ The Turks, however were unimpressed and demanded the withdrawal of all troops to within the borders agreed at Brest. Thus, although they accepted the Transcaucasian proposal for talks at Trebizond, when these began on 1st March the leader of the Ottoman delegation, Rauf Bey, made clear from the outset that Turkey had no intention of renegotiating the terms agreed with Russia. In view of the repeated failure of the Transcaucasian Commissariat to take up the Turkish invitation to Brest-Litovsk and its insistence on being treated as a constituent part of Russia, he said, the Ottoman delegation considered the Transcaucasian claims unacceptable. It was, moreover, the Turkish view that no purpose could be served by the Trebizond talks unless Transcaucasia declared

independence, as Turkey could have no interest in negotiating with a part of Russia.¹⁰⁹

With its economy close to standstill, its small army poorly equipped and its population faced with hunger and disease, Transcaucasia was in no position to contest the disputed provinces. But few in the Seim would concede that the alternative to accepting the admittedly onerous terms of Brest-Litovsk was the certainty of an unequal and disastrous conflict with Turkey. We are not like the followers of Tolstoy, Zhordania declared, who do not oppose evil:

No, when democracy is faced by danger, be it internal or external, we must fight for democracy. To take from Transcaucasia the regions they seek to take would be to deal a mortal blow to all Transcaucasia as regards its cultural, economic and political relations.¹¹⁰

Unimpressed by what they no doubt regarded as the posturing of the Transcaucasian leaders, the Turks on 6th March served warning of their mounting impatience by seizing Ardahan. Sobered by this news and the pleas of the delegation in Trebizond for greater flexibility, the Seim on 12th March agreed to make some concessions and to grant more independence to the leader of the delegation, Akaki Chkhenkeli.¹¹¹ On the 23rd, however, when it became clear that the concessions did not extend as far as recognition of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the Turks declared their intention to resort to force. The following day, Chkhenkeli, who like most of the delegation, including its Armenian section,¹¹² was by now convinced of the futility of further resistance, telegraphed the Transcaucasian Commissariat. The Seim had to ask itself, he said, whether it was in a position to defend the provinces. If not, it must state how much it was

prepared to concede. Two days later, his telegram still unanswered and Turkish troops advancing rapidly into the Transcaucasus, Chkhenkeli informed the Turkish delegation of Transcaucasia's readiness to accept its terms.¹¹³

On the 31st March, however, following an ultimatum to withdraw from Bat'umi, the Seim repudiated Chkhenkeli's concession. Recognition of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, declared Gegetchkori, would transform Transcaucasia into a Turkish province,¹¹⁴ a view forcefully echoed by Irakli Dseret'eli, who categorically rejected any possibility that Transcaucasia might become party to a treaty that had signalled the death of revolutionary Russia.¹¹⁵ The frustration of exclusion from the Russian revolution, the failure to come to terms with which had culminated in the disastrous losses at Brest-Litovsk, now gave way to bravado. Democratic Transcaucasia would not be stifled by Turkish imperialism, Dseret'eli lectured, but would unite to struggle against the common enemy. All parties, he optimistically declared, would fight to the last drop of blood. Zhordania too harangued the Seim in similar vein.

Disgrace and slavery or war - we have no other choice... Everyone to arms! Everyone to the front! Everyone to the defence of freedom and the homeland!¹¹⁶

Within two weeks Kars and Bat'umi were in Turkish hands and the Commissariat, its unity seriously undermined by the refusal of the Musavat Party to support the war¹¹⁷ was forced to sue for peace. Before the Turks would grant this however they repeated their demand that Transcaucasia declare its independence, a demand which even now provoked the resistance of the Menshevik Caucasian Regional Committee

which, its reluctance to formalise the split with Russia aside, no doubt feared that once separated from its former protector, Transcaucasia would become the object of further Turkish designs.

Pressured by the provincial organisations, however, many of whose territories were already under Turkish attack, the committee gave way and on 6th April voted by nine to one in favour of independence. Despite his recent jingoistic appeal for the defence of the rather nebulous concept of the "homeland" Zhordania abstained, arguing that it was essential that there should first be an agreement on recognition of borders.¹¹⁸

On the 9th, when the issue was debated in the Seim, the Menshevik faction somewhat unenthusiastically (Zhordania, Ramishvili, Chkheidze and Dseret'eli failed to speak)¹¹⁹ declared its support for independence. Reflecting the party's mood, A. Arsenidze maintained that the hostility of both Bolshevik Russia and the Ottoman Empire had forced Transcaucasia to declare independence in order to save its own revolution.¹²⁰ Such a step, he said, might never have been necessary had Russian democracy not been so divided, an argument taken up by fellow Menshevik Oniashvili who added that one of the reasons why the issue had arisen for the first time at this moment was the reaction being committed in Russia in the name of social-democracy. The alternative to independence, he claimed, was for Transcaucasia to be caught in the civil war sweeping Russia.¹²¹

Now that the Georgians had joined the Muslim factions in support of independence - though for quite different reasons and expectations - the Armenians, fearful of the prospect of isolation, also felt compelled to join, leaving

only the SRs and Kadets in opposition.¹²² On 10th April, following the election by the Seim of a new government and the appointment of Chkhenkeli as Prime Minister in place of Gegetchkori, a statement was promulgated to all the powers announcing Transcaucasia's declaration of independence.¹²³ It was, said a meeting of the Regional Centre of Soviets on the same day,

...the sole way out of the military and political situation facing the entire country.¹²⁴

Zhordania, among other leading Mensheviks, viewed the course of events with evident misgivings. Since the summer of 1917 he had advocated the formation of a Transcaucasian federation, but had done so on the assumption that its ties with Russia and the revolutionary democracy would remain undisturbed. Instead, the formation of the Transcaucasian Federal Republic less than a year later served both to underline the separation from Russia and the further erosion of the hopes engendered by the February Revolution. Zhordania was not alone in fearing that the declaration of independence would signal not the beginning of a period of national regeneration but rather the exposure of Transcaucasia to Turkish imperial ambition and the prospect of degeneration as a provincial outpost of the Ottoman Empire.

Although Turkey announced its recognition of Transcaucasia on 13th April,¹²⁵ it rapidly became apparent that such concern was well-founded. On 28th April in Bat'umi, the site provocatively chosen by the Turks as the location for the next set of negotiations on border demarcation, the Turkish delegation announced that Turkey was no longer

satisfied with its gains from Brest-Litovsk and that it had prepared a new treaty which laid claim to Akhaltsikhe and Akhalk'alak'i districts, the town and most of the district of Alexandropol, most of Etchmiadzin district and the Kars - Alexandropol - Julfa railway, to most, in fact, of what was left of Armenia.¹²⁶ Moreover, with complete disregard for the armistice agreed with Transcaucasia, the Turks invaded Erevan Gubernia, taking Alexandropol on 2nd May.*¹²⁷

On 14th May the Transcaucasian government learnt of Turkey's decision, made without consultation, to direct its troops across the Transcaucasus to northern Persia using the Aleksandropol-Julfa railway, an act which made a mockery of its recognition of Transcaucasian sovereignty.¹²⁸ On the 20th, however, the government received still worse news in a telegram from General Nazarbegian warning of a build up of Turkish troops in Lore district and an impending attack on Karaklis and T'bilisi.¹²⁹

With the Turks now threatening to overrun Transcaucasia regardless of the negotiations in Bat'umi and to seize the vital Baku-Bat'umi rail link, Germany, which was close to an agreement with Soviet Russia on Baku oil exploitation and saw the Transcaucasus as a potential passage to Asia, decided to intervene. On the 18th, however, a German offer to mediate at Bat'umi was rejected by the Turks who, given Germany's preference for an agreement based on the terms of Brest-Litovsk, could see no useful purpose to themselves from their ally's involvement.¹³⁰ As matters stood, their military and diplomatic pressure had already stretched the fragile unity of the new state to the point where its

*The Gregorian calendar was introduced in Transcaucasia on 1st May 1918

ethnic, religious, political and class divisions threatened it with imminent disintegration. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Bat'umi, where the Azeri members of the Transcaucasian delegation had made known their refusal to become involved in military action against Turkey, defensive or otherwise, and its support for Ottoman ambitions in the Transcaucasus. Thus Hajinskii, the leader of the Azeri group, expressed the view that Turkey's territorial demands did not impinge on Transcaucasia's vital interests, an opinion that can scarcely have endeared him to either his Georgian or his Armenian colleagues.¹³¹ The latter, moreover complained that the Azeris were persistently undermining the delegation's plans by informing the Turks of the delegation's private deliberations.

As the political divisions in Transcaucasia came increasingly to assume national form so too did relations between the Armenians and Georgians deteriorate. Despite the common danger, the undercurrent of ill-feeling that divided the two communities, particularly since the Georgians gained control of the T'bilisi city administration in 1917, prevented them from uniting, even in adversity. Thus shortly after the declaration of Transcaucasian independence, when Chkhenkeli ordered the surrender of Kars in compliance with the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the Armenians accused him of treachery and initially refused to serve in the same cabinet as "that perfidious Georgian".¹³² Despite their rapid abandonment of this position, the atmosphere of mutual recrimination it engendered did nothing to facilitate the search for common ground in Bat'umi.

Faced by the apparent determination of the Musavat Party to cause the break-up of the federation, and its behind-the-scenes machinations in Bat'umi, the Georgian members of the Transcaucasian delegation, led by Chkhenkeli, began to take the view that in such circumstances Georgia might have to consider declaring its own independence. Aware that a mere declaration would not prevent further territorial encroachments by the Turks, the Georgians opened secret negotiations with General Von Lossow, the German military attache to Turkey, and the leading German representative at the Bat'umi talks.¹³³

Called to Bat'umi on 21st May to approve the latest shift in events, Zhordania was quickly persuaded that the Azeri position had undermined the unity of Transcaucasia and that Georgia now had to seek its own way out of the crisis:

Consequently, the declaration of Georgian independence was placed on the order of the day. This was completely unexpected and wholly unforeseen. How to get it passed in our revolutionary organisations became a major headache.¹³⁴

His mind already made up, Zhordania dismissed a suggestion by A. Khatisian, the leading Armenian politician at the talks, that if Georgia and Armenia were to perish, it would be better if they did so together, as a "cry of despair" - which indeed it was.¹³⁵ Yet this somewhat contemptuous response also reflected the very different circumstances confronting the two nations. Georgia, thanks to its strategic position, mineral wealth and the Baku-Bat'umi railway, was on the verge of an agreement guaranteeing its independence with Germany, while Armenia having no immediate allies to turn to and no mineral wealth to speak of, had

already lost 75 per cent of its territory to the Turks. Germany, moreover, was reluctant to become involved in Armenia, regarding it as a purely Turkish sphere of influence.¹³⁶

On the 22nd Zhordania returned to T'bilisi leaving the Georgian delegation in Bat'umi to draft an agreement with Germany and a declaration of independence, whilst he tried to convince the party of its need. The draft was finally submitted for discussion with the Germans on the 24th,¹³⁷ the same day that Zhordania succeeded in convincing a joint meeting of the T'bilisi and Regional Social-Democratic Party Committees that the circumstances of the Turkish military threat and the Musavat's connivance with the Turks in Bat'umi made it essential that Georgia declare its independence and accept German protection. The Transcaucasian Federation, he said, was living out its last days.¹³⁸

The following day, Von Lossow informed the Transcaucasian delegation in Bat'umi that because of the impasse in the talks and Turkey's rejection of his arbitration, he was returning to Berlin for instructions.¹³⁹ In fact, he sailed no further than P'ot'i, where, following an agreement with the Georgians, the provisional documents worked out in Bat'umi were signed. In T'bilisi, meanwhile, any lingering uncertainty over the wisdom or desirability of the move was dispelled by an ultimatum from the Turks to accede to even greater territorial demands or go to war.¹⁴⁰ At an emergency session of the Seim called to determine a response to this new crisis, Irakli Dseret'eli made no further attempt to conceal Georgia's intentions. Yet he could find nothing to celebrate in the step Georgia was about to take, seeing it, like most of his colleagues, as another blow,

following the collapse of the February Revolution, to the hopes of democracy in the Transcaucasus. Now that the unity of Transcaucasia had demonstrably been shown not to exist, Georgia found itself compelled either to accept Ottoman tutelage or create its own state organism. In such circumstances, Dseret'eli explained to the Seim, Georgian independence was both a matter of democracy and the physical survival of the nation.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Georgian Mensheviks felt very conscious that their credentials as socialist internationalists had been called into question by their decision, particularly as it involved accepting the patronage of imperialist Germany. In anticipation of such criticism Zhordania and Dseret'eli wrote to the Menshevik Central Committee explaining the decision and underlining their continuing commitment to internationalism.

We know that in fulfilling these duties we shall tread the same paths as we have until now been treading together with you. On this we base our complete confidence that the old ideological bonds will not be weakened by the blows which history is dealing us and you, Transcaucasia and Russia. However, comrades, we do want you to understand completely the full tragedy of our situation... But irrespective of the ways in which history is forcing us to go, our ultimate goal remains unchanged. And in the fixed consciousness that this goal - socialism - can only be attained by the united powers of the proletariat of the whole world, we place our hopes on the struggle of democracy throughout the world.¹⁴²

On the afternoon of 26th May the Seim pronounced its final decree on the break-up of the Transcaucasian Federation and its own dissolution. An hour later, the Georgian National Soviet gathered without pomp or ceremony to hear Noe Zhordania declare Georgia's independence. In a speech

devoid of nationalist rhetoric, the Menshevik leader studiously avoided reference to the creation of a nation state, described the collapse of the Transcaucasian Federation as a tragedy and expressed his conviction that it would be revived. Conscious too that the same national rivalries that had undermined the federation might well do the same to Georgia and, no doubt, that his own views on the national question would now be under closer scrutiny, Zhordania went out of his way to reassure the national minorities - and the Armenians in particular - that their interests would be protected. It had been the "fundamental historical ambition" of the Georgian people, he declared, to coordinate its interests with those of other peoples.¹⁴³

Only the National-Democrats showed no misgivings. Speaking on their behalf in the Seim, Giorgi Gvazava expressed the party's satisfaction that the Social-Democrats had at last embarked upon the correct path, the path of state construction on a national basis.¹⁴⁴

1. Grigol Uratadze, Vospominaniya, op.cit., p. 271.
2. S.F. Jones, Georgian Social-Democracy: In Opposition and Power 1892-1921, (Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1984), p. 291.
3. S.G. Shaumian, Izbrannye proizbenedeniya, op.cit., pp. 485-86.
4. K. Tsintsadze, 'Chemi Mogonebani' (My reminiscences) in Revolutsiis Matiane, 1924, no. 2-3, p. 248.
5. A. Surgudalze, 'Omis sidzneleebebi da sameurneo ngreva sak'art'veloshi' (The difficulties of the war and economic destruction in Georgia) in Sak'art'velos istoriis narkvevebi, T.6 (T'bilisi, 1972), p. 377.
6. Ibid., p. 378.
7. Ibid., p. 381.
8. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 99.
9. Ibid., p. 102.
10. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 338.
11. Ibid., p. 339.
12. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., pp. 199-200.
13. Ibid., p. 200.
14. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 383.
15. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 103.
16. D. Vachnadze, K'art'uli erovnuli dzirebi da rusuli bol-shevizmi (Georgian National Roots and Russian Bolshevism) (Munich, 1957), p. 59.
17. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., pp. 103-05.
18. Ibid., p. 106.
19. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya Gruzinskoi Demokraticheskoi Respubliki (Munich, 1956), p. 16.
20. G. Zhvaniya, Pobeda velikogo Oktyabrya v Zakavkaz'e (T'bilisi, 1977), p. 17.
21. Ibid., p. 17.
22. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 111.
23. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., pp. 20-21.

24. The members of Ozakom were B.A. Kharlamov (Kadet, Russian), M.I. Papadzhanyan (Kadet, Armenian), M.Yu. Dzhabbarov (Mussavat, Azeri), A.I. Tchkhenskeli (Social-Democrat, Georgian), and K. Abashidze (Socialist-Federalist, Georgian).
25. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 110.
26. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 16.
27. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 112.
28. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 17.
29. E. Akhobadze, op.cit., p. 388.
30. F. Kazemzadeh, The Struggle for Transcaucasia (New York, 1951), p. 42.
31. S.M. Kvachadze, Tbilisskie Bol'sheviki v 1917 godu (T'bilisi, 1977), p. 33.
32. G. Rtskhiladze, Amierkavkasiis t'vit'mmart'veloba (The Self-Government of Transcaucasia) (T'bilisi, 1917), p. 23.
33. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 208.
34. U. Sidamonidze, Sak'art'veloshi burzhuaziul-demokratiuli modzraoba da sotsialisturi garmarjvebis istoriografi 1917-1921 ds.ds. (The Bourgeois-Democratic Movement in Georgia and a Historiography of the Victory of the Socialist Revolution 1917-21) (T'bilisi, 1970), p. 185.
35. A. Abramishvili, Gruzinskaya periodika, op.cit., p. 183.
36. Ibid., p. 186. The title of the paper later changed to Khalkis T'avisup'leba (The Freedom of the People).
37. I. Gomart'eli, Sak'art'velos teritorialuri avtonomia anu erovnuli teritorialuri t'vit'mmart'veloba (The Territorial Autonomy of Georgia or National Territorial Self-Government) (T'bilisi, 1917), p. 3.
38. Ibid., p. 38.
39. Ibid., pp. 40-42.
40. Ibid., p. 30.
41. U. Sidamonidze, op.cit., pp. 162-67.
42. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda (1917-19) (Tiflis, 1919), p. 28.
43. Ert'oba, no. 77, 21.6.17.

44. I. Mirtskhulava, 'Sak'art'velos bolshevikeybis brdzola burzhuaziuli da dsvrilburzhuaziuli partiebis natsional-isturi politikis dsinaaghamdeg oktombris revolutsiis momzadebisa da gatarebis periodshi' (The struggle of the Bolsheviks of Georgia against the nationalist policy of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties in the period of the preparation and carrying out of the October revolution) in Matsne, 1965, no. 3, p. 4.
45. Ert'oba, no. 77, 21.6.17.
46. Zhordania recommended that in mixed areas within the three national autonomous territories in which there were substantial national minorities national units should be set up to deal with cultural affairs, while "territorial" matters should come under the authority of a joint administration, which would conduct its affairs in the language of the national autonomous territory in which it was situated. While the SFs continued to advocate the same federal solutions as in the past, Grigol Rtskhiladze had also begun to advocate national-cultural autonomy for minorities within Georgia. However, they would have to organise national-cultural and educational affairs at their own expense. Interestingly, Rtskhiladze took a similar view to Zhordania in 1917 on the principles to be used in establishing national borders.
47. M. Ferro, The Russian Revolution of 1917 (London, 1970), pp. 137-61.
48. D. Vachnadze, op.cit., p. 41.
49. Bor'ba za pobedu Sovetskoi vlasti v Gruzii. Dokumenty i materialy (T'bilisi, 1958), p. 80.
50. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 17.
51. R.P. Browder and A.F. Kerensky (eds), The Russian Provisional Government of 1917, Vol. 1 (Stanford, California, 1961), nos. 349-50.
52. L. Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution (London, 1979), p. 524.
53. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 113.
54. Ibid., p. 115.
55. Ibid., p. 116.
56. G. Zhvaniya, Pobeda velikogo Oktyabrya, op.cit., p. 39.
57. "Otsdakhut'i ivnisis mitingi nadzaladevshi" (The 25th June meeting in Nadzaladevi), Revolutsiis Matiane, 1927, No. 1, p. 84. Cited by S. Jones, op.cit., p. 323.
58. R. Kaladze, 'Mushat'a k'art'uli zhurnal-gazetebis istoria' (A history of the workers' Georgian papers and journals), Revolutsiis Matiane 1923, no. 3, p. 46.

59. S.M. Kvachadze, Tiflisskie Bol'sheviki, op.cit., pp. 116-18. At a joint meeting of the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks on 7th July, it was agreed to put forward a joint list of candidates. The T'bilisi Bolshevik Committee, however, subsequently put a stop to this. After their success in the elections, the Mensheviks sent a letter to the Bolshevik organisation proposing that they coordinate their activities in the Duma.
60. U. Sidamonidze, op.cit., p. 219. At the Moscow State Conference in August, Chkhenkeli had said that the Georgian national question did not exist and that Georgians' ideal was a united Russia. Only one member of the Georgian delegation had suggested that Georgia had its own aims.
61. Ibid., p. 239.
62. Ibid., p. 186.
63. Ibid., p. 186.
64. G. Zhvaniya, op.cit., p. 85.
65. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 42.
66. Ibid., p. 47.
67. Ibid., p. 47.
68. Ibid., p. 47.
69. Dokumenty i materialy po vneshnei politike Zakavkaz'ya i Gruzii (Tiflis, 1919), p. 2.
70. The Public Safety Committee consisted of four representatives from Ozakom and the military organisations, three each from the T'bilisi Soviet and Regional Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, two each from the Regional Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies and the T'bilisi Duma, one from the Transcaucasian Railway Organisation and one each from the Bolshevik, Menshevik, Dashnak, SF, SR, Musavat and other parties.
71. S.M. Kvachadze, op.cit., pp. 179-80.
72. Ibid., p. 182.
73. Ibid., p. 185.
74. Ibid., p. 181.
75. G. Zhvaniya, op.cit., p. 131.
76. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 27.
77. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 6, pp. 7-8. The following were appointed as commissars in the new body:

E. Gegetchkori	Chairman and Commissar of Labour and Foreign Affairs (Menshevik)
A. Chkhenkeli	Commissar of Internal Affairs (Menshevik)
D. Donskoi	Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs (SR)
Kh. Karchikyan	Commissar for Finance (Dashnak)
Sh. Meskhishvili	Commissar for Education and Justice (SF)
M. Dzhaferov	Commissar for Trade and Industry (Musavat)
Kh. Melik-Aslanov	Commissar for Roads and Communications (Kadet)
A. Neruchev	Commissar for Land (SR)
G. Ter-Gazaryan	Commissar for Production and Supply (Social-Democrat)
A. Ogandzhanyan	Commissar for Social Security (Dashnak)
Kh.B. Khas-Mamedov	Commissar for State Control (Musavat)
F. Khan Khoiski	Commissar for Education (Musavat)

78. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 7, p. 8.
79. T. Swietochowski, 'National consciousness and political orientations in Azerbaijan, 1905-1920', in Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change (Univ. of Michigan, 1983), pp. 219-20.
80. R.G. Hovannisian, Armenia: On the Road to Independence, 1918 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 90-91.
81. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 38.
82. Ibid., p. 37.
83. D. Vachnadze, op.cit., p. 42.
84. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 55.
85. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba, op.cit., pp. 30-31.
86. G.S. Akopyan, Stepan Shaumyan (Moskva, 1973), p. 150.
87. V. Chubinidze, op.cit., p. 32.
88. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 118.
89. K. Tsintsadze, 'Chemi mogonebani', op.cit., in Revolutsiis Matiane, 1924, no. 4-5, p. 225.
90. G. Zhvaniya, op.cit., p. 148.
91. S. Jones, op.cit., p. 359.
92. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 42.
93. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., p. 15.

94. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 122.
95. E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923, Vol.1 (London, 1973), p. 127. It was a suspicion strongly confirmed by a resolution published in Izvestiya of 4th January 1918 from the Soviet Central Executive Committee declaring that all power in the Russian republic belonged to the Soviets, and that many attempt to usurp that power would be crushed.
96. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 15.
97. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 32.
98. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 60.
99. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 33.
100. Ibid., p. 44.
101. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 26, pp. 41-42.
102. Ibid., no. 31, p. 47.
103. Ibid., no. 34,
104. Z. Avalishvili, The Independence of Georgia in International Politics 1918-1921 (London, 1940), p. 27.
105. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 65.
106. Ibid., p. 74.
107. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 45, pp. 73-83.
108. Ibid., no. 57, p. 117.
109. Ibid., no. 58, p. 119.
110. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 48.
111. Ibid., pp. 52-55.
112. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 54, pp. 144-46. The leader of the Armenian section of the delegation said that in the existing conditions it would be expedient to move towards the Brest-Litovsk treaty. If Turkey really were to occupy Bat'umi and Kars regions then in the future Transcaucasia could appeal for the right of these areas to self-determination.
113. Ibid., no. 77, p. 160.
114. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 58.
115. Ibid., p. 59.

116. S. Jones, op.cit., p. 373.
117. The party refused to involve Azeris in the fighting, arguing that their religious ties would not permit them to fight against the Turks, a justification given little credence by the Georgians and Armenians. Despite some reservations about union with Turkey, the Musavat party appears to have aligned itself with the imperial ambitions of the Ottoman empire.
118. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., pp. 126-27.
119. W.H. Roobol, Tsereteli - A Democrat in the Russian Revolution (The Hague, 1976), p. 191. Dseret'eli later explained this in a reply to a question in the Seim: "In an attack the leaders go ahead, but in a retreat they bring up the rear; the declaration of independence is a retreat and a defeat of the proletariat, and it was impossible for me to give an address".
120. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 99, pp. 215-18.
121. Ibid., p. 218.
122. The SRs and Kadets warned against Transcaucasian independence, arguing that no party had advocated it prior to the attack by Turkey and that the move was merely a rash response to external pressure. There was, they maintained, no desire for independence among the people.
123. Ibid., no. 108, p. 229.
124. Ibid., p. 228.
125. Ibid., no. 122, p. 253.
126. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., pp. 35-36.
127. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 124, pp. 256-57. Georgian General Odishelidze complained of Muslim bands claiming to be Turkish detachments terrorising Georgian villages in the area of Akhaltsikhe. If they are Turkish, he wrote, tell them to stop, and if they are not, allow us to wipe them out.
128. Ibid., no. 133, pp. 269-70.
129. Ibid., no. 150, p. 302.
130. The Turks also suspected that the Germans were ready to concede Russian control of Baku.
131. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 114.
132. R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia. Vol.1 The First Year, 1918-1919 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), p. 27.
133. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 43.

134. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 128.
135. Ibid., p. 128.
136. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 147. Explaining Germany's motives, General Von Ludendorff, Hindenburg's aide during the war wrote: "It had become essential for us to show a strong hand in this district - not merely because we hoped to secure some military assistance from this quarter, but also in order to obtain raw materials. That we could not rely on Turkey in this matter had once again been demonstrated by her conduct in Bat'umi, where she claimed the right to retain all the stocks for herself. We could expect to get oil from Baku only if we helped ourselves". In Ludendorff's Own Story Vol.2, p. 302.
137. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 52.
138. N. Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 129. Dokumen-ty i materialy, op.cit., no. 157, p. 307.
139. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 55.
140. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 159, pp. 309-10.
141. Ibid., no. 161, pp. 317-30.
142. Stimmen aus Russland, Ein Brief an das Centralcomite der Russiche Sozial-demokratische Arbeitpartei von N.N. Dschordanija und Ir. Zeretelli, 2nd June 1918, in W.H. Roobol, op.cit., p. 195.
143. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., pp. 76-77.
144. Ibid., p. 79.

Independence: A Struggle for Survival

7.1 Building the State: Campaign for National Unity

Georgian reluctance to embrace independence in 1918 reflected the conviction prevalent among the intelligentsia since the mid-19th century that while the nature of Russia's relationship with Georgia had to be changed the relationship itself, which was considered crucial to the preservation of Georgia's ties with Europe, had to be maintained. It was a view too that had been considerably strengthened since the beginning of the 20th century by the close identification not just of much of the intelligentsia but also of the Georgian peasantry and nascent working class with the Russian social-democratic movement. This sense of unity, which reached its peak in the immediate aftermath of the February revolution was reinforced by the Georgians atavistic fear of the threat posed, in Zhordania's words, to their "ethnographic existence" by the Turks.

Against this, however, it is clear that the sense of national awareness for which the t'ergdaleulni and their successors had struggled, and which in the first decades of the 20th century had already given rise to a new generation of artistic and literary talent, became more assertive throughout the course of 1917. In part this can be ascribed to the frustration caused by the failure of the Provisional Government to end the war and settle the land question, its apparent insensitivity to the national aspirations of the minority peoples of the former empire and its evident reluctance to make concessions towards autonomy. But more

positively, it may also be attributed to the new mood of confidence brought by the revolution and freedom of expression, to the feeling that national renaissance was close at hand, and to the Georgians' dawning awareness, witnessed in the T'bilisi Duma elections, of their ability to regain control of their own affairs through the ballot box. Thus, while there can be little doubt, even by 1918, that very few shared the National Democrats' desire for an independent, sovereign Georgian state, it is equally clear that the new-found support for territorial autonomy among the Georgian Mensheviks in the early autumn of 1917 reflected a popular demand for Georgia and Transcaucasia to have greater control over their own affairs.

Despite the reluctance of the Georgian leadership to declare independence the climate for such a decision had been at least partially prepared by the experience first of the Transcaucasian Commissariat and Seim and latterly of the Transcaucasian Federation. On the one hand this had severed the umbilical cord linking Georgia to Russia and on the other demonstrated the inability of the main nationalities of Transcaucasia to cooperate within the one government. Moreover, while it remained the case that the Georgian Mensheviks hoped to restore ties with Russia, they were ready to do so only in the unlikely event of the Bolsheviks giving way to the Constituent Assembly.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks' standing in Georgia and, by association, that of the Russians suffered a severe blow as a consequence of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. By conceding Bat'umi to the Turks, the Bolsheviks deprived the people of West Georgia of their main economic centre and a major source of seasonal employment. Depicted as traitors and

Turkish agents and their credibility among the local population at stake, many Bolsheviks found themselves forced to reject the terms of the treaty and support the mobilisation against the Turks.¹

Although Zhordania's observation in his inaugural speech that Georgia had been forced to declare independence in order to shelter from the "storm of history" and the statement within the Act of Independence itself that pressure from external forces had made it "imperatively necessary" for Georgia to create its own political structure point to the continuing regret felt by many Georgian Mensheviks at the course of events,² Zhordania nevertheless served quick notice that the concepts of nation and national unity would thenceforth feature more prominently in his plans when he rejected the original draft declaration of independence drawn up by Giorgi Gvazava, a National-Democrat and member of the Georgian National Council, on the grounds that it contained articles on social reform. These, he said, were misplaced in a document that had to be acceptable to all Georgians.³ The absence, moreover, of any reference to class in the final Act of Independence, and its emphasis on Georgia's long history of independence underlined Zhordania's conviction that the country's survival depended in large part on its ability, temporarily at least, to surmount the class divisions that until very recently he had been at pains to encourage.

More fundamentally, it also reflected the conviction of the Georgian Mensheviks that any attempt to achieve socialism in a country as economically backward as Georgia would antagonise the vast majority of the population and

risk the prospect of civil war. In June Zhordania endeavoured to provide a theoretical underpinning for the party's new course in an article entitled Social Democracy and the Organisation of Power. In Georgia, he wrote, social revolution was an aim,

...an historical perspective and not an immediate practical task... We are giving the state a clear aim: the transformation of society on a socialist basis, but on our way we must pass through unavoidable political-economic stages which history neither permits us to jump over or go around...there is no doubt that all governments operating within the confines of a bourgeois society will one way or another serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. There is no way that the Georgian state can escape or avoid this...⁴

As Zhordania conceded, however, this raised the question that had confronted the Mensheviks in Russia in 1917: How was the party to work towards the creation of bourgeois institutions without at the same time becoming subordinated to the bourgeoisie and abandoning the ranks of social-democracy? What, in effect, would there be to distinguish the party from its bourgeois rivals? The answer, in Zhordania's view, lay both in the long-term aims of the party, its "historical perspective", and its commitment to implementing the RSDLP's minimum programme. Thus while it would encourage the development of a native bourgeoisie in the hope of expanding industrial production, it would also strive to ensure social protection for the working class, the propertyless and the poor by using its own power and that of the soviets and trade unions to mitigate the influence of the bourgeoisie.

The government's most immediate task, however, was to establish its authority throughout the territory nominally under its control and begin the process of inculcating a

sense of identification with the new state. This was particularly important as it both lacked the means to impose its policies through coercion and was committed to impressing on the population the benefits of the new state and its superiority over the tsarist and Bolshevik regimes. The Menshevik government's survival in large part rested on the degree to which it could convince the various social strata to identify their interests with those of the state and on the extent to which it could induce a population that had traditionally played a passive role in the political life of the country to become actively involved. The gulf that had separated the rulers and the ruled, particularly in the period of Russian domination, had to be bridged.

But the obstacles confronting the Mensheviks were enormous. Not only had the economy been ruined by war and revolution, part of the country was occupied by the Turks, parts were contested by Armenia and Azerbaijan, national sovereignty was compromised from the outset by the treaty with Germany, communications between the capital and outlying districts were almost non-existent, the railway system was in a state of dilapidation, short of spare parts and oil, food was scarce, and the tsarist administrative infrastructure had collapsed leaving few with either the skill or experience to fill the role of the Russian bureaucracy. The task too of winning active popular support was complicated by the ethnic and religious divisions that split the country and the need to satisfy the competing expectations of the peasantry, working class and bourgeoisie.

Anxious to avoid Russia's experience of "dual power" in 1917 and determined to establish a strong central government

able to direct Georgia through the vicissitudes that lay ahead, the Georgian Mensheviks decided markedly to curtail the powers of the soviets and strengthen those of the state. The merits of the soviets were great, Irakli Dseret'eli declared to a meeting of the Regional Soviet on June 8th,

...but they cannot entirely replace state power. Ideological organs are neither suited to transformation into state organs nor able to fulfil their functions.⁵

Shifting the party's emphasis for the moment away from class struggle, the central theme of its campaign to win the active support of the population now became national unity, a concept long-espoused by the SFs and National-Democrats and scorned by the Social-Democrats, but one which in the circumstances the latter felt justified in advocating. Soviet power, it was argued, was unsuited to a country possessing such a small proletariat, threatened to alienate the bourgeoisie and thus undermine Georgia's hopes for economic revival, and raised the possibility of a dangerous rift between the town and countryside, particularly as inflation was already out of control, food in short supply and industrial output almost at a standstill. The disproportionate representation of Gurians in the soviets too risked exacerbating regional antagonisms and hampering the drive to weld the country's disparate elements into a united body.

The main measure of the Mensheviks' achievement, Konstantine Kandelaki, the Georgian Minister of Finance was later to write, was whether it,

...helped strengthen Georgian independence, was in accord with the aspirations of the great majority of the Georgian people and, at the same time, was

a vehicle of progress as this was and still is understood by similar parties - democrats and socialists - in the advanced countries, in Western Europe...or whether everything that happened in our country was a mere reflection of the Russian revolution, without a grounding or foundation in our own country - an experiment without a future.⁶

Exploiting their control over the soviets, the Mensheviks took the first steps towards ensuring their subordination to the state when on 8th June at a joint meeting of the party regional committee, the T'bilisi Soviet and the staff of the Red Guard, it was agreed that the soviets should transfer all armed forces still under their control to the government. A little over two weeks later, on 24th June, the process was almost complete. Zhordania was able to announce to the National Assembly that the soviets had passed a resolution ceding all their executive functions to the government and that the concentration of executive authority in one body had begun.

Conscious, however, that there was some dissatisfaction, particularly among the T'bilisi workers, with the downgrading of the role of the soviets, the Menshevik leaders persuaded Zhordania to abandon his original intention to confine his activities to party affairs and use his immense personal standing among the workers and peasantry to secure their support.⁷ That same day, Zhordania publicly endorsed the decision by accepting the leadership of the coalition government. In his address to the Assembly he declared that conditions demanded the creation of a strong administrative structure, a system of democratic local government and a regular national army. Without a strong coercive force, the new Premier went on, the state could not exist.

Accordingly, on 2nd July the Red Guard, which until then had been commanded by Zhordania in his capacity as chairman of the Regional Soviet, was brought under his control in his new role as head of government.⁸ By the same law, the National Assembly established a regular army of 24,000 men.⁹ Stripped now of most of their powers, the soviets were to remain in existence, but with their responsibilities reduced to agitation and propaganda and the almost notional function, given their domination by the Mensheviks and Zhordania's dual role as head of government and Soviet chairman, of control of government behaviour. With this, said Zhordania, a new era began in the evolution of Georgia's internal affairs, a period in which the government became the sole legislator and ruler.¹⁰ Symbolically too the Red Guard was renamed the Popular Guard.

If, as Zhordania claimed, a new era had begun, it had done so in the most inauspicious of circumstances. Thus one of the independent government's first acts was to sign a provisional agreement, the Convention of P'ot'i, with Germany that from the very outset imposed severe limitations on the new state's sovereignty, for while it may have bestowed de facto recognition of Georgian independence and for the moment at least have ensured Georgia's survival, the Georgians were forced to grant Germany the right to use their railways for the transport of troops and supplies till the end of the war, and exclusive rights to the purchase and mining of minerals. It is evident too that despite the publicly proclaimed neutrality of the T'bilisi government that its freedom of movement in foreign affairs was very circumscribed.¹¹

However, while German occupation can scarcely be said to have provided the most conducive conditions for the country's return to independence, it is equally true that by its recognition of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as the basis for its relations with Georgia and its rapid despatch of two battalions to help in the defence of its borders, Germany at least prevented Georgia's incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. Thus, although on 4th June the Georgians were forced to sign the humiliating Treaty of Bat'umi, according to which they were to provide free transit to Turkish troops, demobilise, respect the faith and customs of Muslims and permit the pronouncement of the Ottoman Sultan's name at public prayer meetings, the treaty was never ratified.¹² Moreover, Germany took Georgia's side in calling for its renegotiation. Extraordinarily, too, German troops on a number of occasions took an active part in repulsing incursions by their Turkish allies.¹³

For a short while Georgia was also able to use Germany to secure international recognition. Thus, according to Zurab Avalishvili, a member of the Georgian delegation sent to Berlin to secure Germany's formal recognition of Georgian independence, the Germans on 27th August persuaded the Bolshevik government in Russia to sign a supplement to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk recognising Georgia's independence. Only Germany's defeat in the war prevented its ratification.¹⁴

Karl Kautsky, who was an admirer of the Georgian socialists' approach and who visited Georgia in 1920, not unjustifiably observed that Georgia was one of the few places in the world where German soldiers had done propaganda work for Germany. They went to Georgia not as

plunderers, he said, but as

...organisers of its productive forces, as they needed the Georgian products, especially manganese, and also its railways. Thus they brought to Georgia precisely what was most lacking in the country, and what it could only obtain speedily by foreign assistance, namely economic organisation.¹⁵

Despite the unequal nature of the relationship, the Georgian Social-Democrats were nevertheless satisfied that the Germans, with a few exceptions, had honoured their agreement to refrain from interference in Georgian internal affairs,¹⁶ a point that the Menshevik government went to some trouble to stress in a letter to the International Socialist Bureau after the war had ended. Before long, too, it was to compare the German occupation very favourably with that of the British.¹⁷

However, while there is some truth in Kautsky's assertion that the Germans brought a measure of economic organisation to Georgia, their presence in the country was too short-lived and the scale of the task confronting the government too vast for its influence to have been any more than superficial. On the negative side, moreover, Georgia's association with Germany, however unavoidable, combined with the socialist convictions of its government, appear later to have formed the basis of a British prejudice, particularly among the military command in the Transcaucasus, against the new state.

A more fundamental obstacle to the ambitions of the Zhordania government than the German army lay in the economic chaos it inherited and which, at least while the war lasted, it was largely powerless to prevent. Georgia's

difficulties in this respect were no doubt exacerbated by the deliberate neglect of its industrial development in the tsarist period and its consequent dependence on Russia for such basic items as bread, sugar, clothes and shoes as well as industrial goods, chemicals and medicines. Such was this dependence, in fact, that even before the war Georgia had only produced an average of 10 rubles of factory products per head a year, as against an average of 50 in Russia as a whole and 110 in Latvia.¹⁸ Moreover, although when the Russian state had needed Georgian raw materials like manganese it had ensured their exploitation, it had taken a rather different approach when it had had adequate supplies within European Russia itself. Thus although the exploitation of Tqvarcheli coal in Ap'khazet'i would have provided Georgia with a relatively cheap supply of fuel, the government preferred to keep it reliant on coal from the Donbass. Now that it was independent and cut off from the Russian market both by the hostility of the Soviet government and the state of turmoil within Russia, Georgia was to suffer the consequences of its dependence particularly acutely.

Virtually isolated from the rest of the world, the Georgian Mensheviks found themselves forced to attempt to satisfy people's expectations and meet the cost of government and defence through Georgia's meagre domestic resources, a predicament that further committed them to the policy of national unity. If Georgia was to develop its own productive forces, it was argued, encouragement would have to be given to private initiative and the still embryonic Georgian industrial and entrepreneurial bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, the foundation of the Social-Democrats' support continued to be formed by the working class and

peasantry, both of whom expected rather more from the party than mere appeals for unity, however justified. But social reform was also expensive, as Zhordania was to point out a year later to the Georgian Constituent Assembly:

All this demands expenditure, great expenditure, and if we bear in mind the fact that from the day of the Bolshevik revolution the Georgian treasury has not received a single kopeck from Russia, it is easy to imagine our economic difficulties. Moreover, when we declared Georgia's independence the treasury was completely empty...¹⁹

Such costs, he went on, might in different circumstances have been covered by revenue from taxation, but the collapse of the administrative structure and the government's indecision about what criteria to apply towards property in its fiscal policy were preventing its collection, a fact that found some reflection in the revelation that in its first year government expenditure totalled 666,507,169 rubles while its income totalled only 174,254,169 rubles.²⁰ The above considerations aside, however, the deficit can also be attributed in part to the country's need to remain in a state of almost constant military alert against first the Turks and later the Armenians and Denikin, who continued to regard the Transcaucasus as part of the Russian empire. The cost of meeting defence requirements in this period accounted for over 30 per cent of all government spending.²¹

Even more worrying for the Mensheviks as they endeavoured to forge a spirit of national unity were the sporadic outbursts of peasant revolt that began even before independence had been declared. Centred for the most part in Lechkhumi, Senaki, Zugdidi and Ap'khazet'i in West Georgia,

and Dushet'i, Shorapani, T'ianet'i and Gori in the east, the revolts above all reflected the peasantry's frustration at the failure of successive administrations seriously to address the land question, for although attempts were made, first by the Transcaucasian Commissariat and then the Seim, to reform the system, it was not until 1919 that anything was done actually to redistribute land to the peasantry. In the meantime, and regardless of appeals for national solidarity in the face of the external enemy, the peasantry set about seizing the land for itself.

The failure of the Georgian Social-Democrats sooner to effect a redistribution of property to the peasantry could not however, be said to demonstrate any waning enthusiasm within the party for agrarian reform. On the contrary, the party press and Zhordania himself, who was well aware of the need for peasant support in a country as predominantly rural as Georgia, spoke on numerous occasions in 1917 and 1918 on the urgent need for reform. As the Menshevik paper Ert'oba put it,

We have to solve this problem on the spot...if we don't satisfy the people now, democracy will weaken and...disorder will arise.²²

Until Georgia declared independence, however, the Social-Democrats had to share office with politicians whose enthusiasm for reform did not always match their own. Thus the reform of December 1917, made in the wake of the agrarian reforms in Russia, agreed in principle to the transfer of treasury, crown, private, church and monastery estates to specially set-up land committees but failed to establish the norms above which land would be transferred to the committees. The result, as N. Khomeriki, the future Minister of

Agriculture in the independent Georgian government acknowledged, was a decree that was "more declarative than practical". The land committees, moreover, were often made up of members of the nobility whose commitment to the reform was in many cases questionable. Opposed by the Musavat party and hindered by the attempts of the Dashnaks to prevent the establishment of committees in multinational areas, the decree achieved little of note. It was, as Zhordania put it, a "paper reform".²³

In March 1918 however, more serious attempts to address the problem of land ownership led to the establishment of maximum norms for private estates which varied according to the nature and quality of the land in question. Thus the maximum permitted for high-value crop land, which included vineyards, was set at seven desyatyiny, for land sown to grain crops 15 desyatyiny, and for pasture 40 desyatyiny. The land committees were empowered to alter these in accordance with local conditions but could in no circumstances allow the norms to exceed 10, 20 and 50 desyatyiny respectively.²⁴

However, while these measures established the legal norms for land ownership and held out the promise of redistribution, they left unresolved the problems of who should get the land and what form land ownership should take in the future. They did nothing to ease land hunger among the peasantry. In June, Zhordania conceded:

We have an agrarian law, but it is one-sided, for while it notes how much to take from whom and how much to leave, we need to issue a new law about whom to give it to, the peasant or the state.²⁵

Nevertheless, whilst the problem and the need to do something about it were clear enough, the continuing

pressure of war, the collapse of the administrative apparatus, particularly since the disintegration of the Transcaucasian Federation, and the dislocation of the economy all hampered progress towards resolving the issue. Nor were matters helped by the confusion within the Social-Democratic Party about the form agrarian legislation should take. Should the land owners be compensated for land expropriated and if so, could the state afford to pay them? Should the party abandon the long-standing Menshevik commitment to municipalisation or should it commit itself to private ownership? And if the latter course were adopted, should land be given or sold to the peasantry?

While the party debated these issues, however, the peasantry began to resolve matters for itself. In late February and early March 1918 a number of uprisings broke out in the impoverished mountain provinces of Ratcha and South Oset'i, and in Ap'khazet'i and Samegrelo. Emboldened by the steady return of soldiers from the Russian army, many of them still armed and sympathetic to the Bolsheviks, the peasantry began to take by force what it had in vain asked successive governments to grant it by decree.

The revolts, however, remained sporadic, isolated and predominantly economic in nature, while attempts by the Bolshevik Party organisation to exploit the unrest and thus regain lost ground, came to nothing despite the undoubted presence of Bolshevik sympathisers among the peasantry. In part this can be explained by the demoralisation of the party since the return home of the Russian army and the blow to its reputation among the indigenous population caused by

the treaty of Brest-Litovsk.²⁶ Thus the Georgian Bolshevik K. Tsintsadze, like others of his contemporaries who in the early 1920s recorded the history of the party in this period in Revolutsiis Matiane (The Chronicle of the Revolution), recalled that the Regional Committee had been too weak and disorganised to lead the peasantry and that government harassment had forced it underground.²⁷

More importantly it also reflected the continuing support for the Georgian Mensheviks among the vast majority of the population, particularly among ethnic Georgians, and the feeling that national survival had for the meantime to take priority over economic self-interest. Such was the level of public support for the Mensheviks, in fact, and their intimate knowledge of the Bolshevik organisation in Georgia that many Bolsheviks found themselves forced to take refuge in the forests. In June 1918 they withdrew from Transcaucasia to regroup in Vladikavkaz.

While economic grievances provided the fuel for the peasant revolts in the spring and early summer, their coincidence, whether fortuitous or not, with moments of crisis on the Turkish front appeared to the Georgian Mensheviks, at least, to provide incontrovertible evidence of a grand design to maximise disorder at the rear. Thus the Osian rebellion in March, which spread through Gori and Dushet'i districts to Tskhinvali and Java, though relatively easily suppressed, drew off Red Guard (as they were known until July 1918) detachments that the desperately stretched Transcaucasian forces defending the front were in no position to spare. Moreover, no sooner had the Red Guard restored order to South Oset'i and its forces departed to strengthen Bat'umi's defences than news arrived of fresh

revolts in Ap'hazet'i and Samegrelo.

Although neither revolt in itself constituted a serious threat to stability - as is witnessed by the relative ease with which they were brought under control, despite the government's preoccupation with the war against Turkey - their coincidence with the attack against Bat'umi may well have facilitated the Turkish capture of the city. Valiko Jugheli, the commander of the Red Guard, was in no doubt. At a meeting of the T'bilisi Soviet in April he maintained that the uprisings in Oset'i and Samegrelo had played an important role in the "tragic" loss of Bat'umi, while Zhordania too was convinced that the Megrelian revolt had been an attempt by "Bolshevik hooligans" to undermine the Transcaucasian war effort.²⁸

Among Georgians the knowledge that at the moment of the loss of their second city and main access to the Black Sea and world trade, the Ap'khaz, Megrelian and Osian national minorities had taken up arms against the government created a legacy of ill-feeling that was to deteriorate through the year and undermine from the outset Zhordania's hopes for national unity. In June, Georgian anger manifested itself in the violent suppression of another revolt among the Osian peasantry which again, although fuelled by the agitation of Bolshevik sympathisers, was predominantly a response to economic deprivation.²⁹

However, with the country in a state of perpetual crisis and the government's faith in the Osian peasantry, many of whom lived along the Georgian Military Highway, the strategically important artery that linked Georgia with southern Russia, seriously undermined, the Mensheviks began

increasingly to identify any sign of disaffection as evidence of Bolshevik intrigue.

The uprisings too confirmed Zhordania in his mistrust of the peasantry, which he now declared to be the "single serious threat to the republic and revolution". Wary, however, of undermining the long tradition of peasant support for the Mensheviks in parts of Georgia, he hastened to draw a distinction between those whose level of political consciousness had been raised by regular interaction with urban life - in particular the Gurians - and those like the Osian inhabitants of Dushet'i and Tskhinvali, whose rebellions he described as classic examples of the vendee. It was time, he said, for the Social-Democratic Party to stand firmly for the defence of the revolution against peasant reaction.³⁰

Not everyone in the party, however, was quite as ready as Zhordania to dismiss the unrest as the product of peasant reaction and Bolshevik agitation. The party paper Ert'oba expressed the anxiety of many when it blamed it on the slowness of the land reform:

The bridge of mutual relations between ourselves and the peasants has been destroyed; we cannot give them land and this is why the peasantry is not submitting to the government.³¹

Whatever its cause, the Osian revolts, their vigorous suppression by the Red Guard and the accusations of atrocities levelled by both sides in the conflict created an atmosphere of mutual distrust and antagonism that was to plague the government's relations with the Osian minority throughout its period in office. Within months of the declaration of independence, the Mensheviks' hopes that Georgia could survive through commitment to a policy of

national unity were already beginning to founder against peasant impatience and national resentment.

It was against this background of Turkish invasion, German occupation, economic disorder, food shortages and domestic unrest that the government took its first steps towards consolidating the Georgian national state and welding its population into a unified citizenry. Even in more favourable circumstances it would have been an unenviable task, not least because independence had come so unexpectedly to Georgia and because the Social-Democrats, for the most part, had in the past been so unequivocally opposed to the idea. It was Zhordania, after all, who in 1908 had claimed that the historic path of the Georgian people and the characteristic that distinguished them from all other cultural nations was their rejection of national politics,³² a view he had reiterated still more strongly four years later when he dismissed the possibility of finding a territorial solution to the national question. Nationalities were so intermixed, he had said, that attempts to form national states could only give rise to inter-ethnic conflict. Moreover, as the state was the political organisation of the ruling class, territory had become a means by which the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation could impose its language, culture and goods on minority peoples.³³

While Zhordania might argue that the Mensheviks were trying to create a state which did not subordinate the people through the state apparatus to the bourgeoisie and that the party and the soviets would guard against any such deviations, it also remained the case that the Mensheviks firmly believed that the success of Georgia's socio-economic development was tied to the emergence of an energetic

indigenous bourgeoisie and that the country would have to pass through a long period of capitalist evolution before the conditions would exist for the transition to socialism. Moreover, as Zhordania had argued in 1912, however democratic a state might be, it remained nevertheless the political organisation of the ruling class of the dominant ethnic group. The ironic possibility was thus created that Zhordania's government would fulfil his own judgement.

Alongside its measures for consolidating the power of the state, the government sought also to instil in the population a sense of civic responsibility and secure its active commitment to the new state. In this respect the problem, as Zhordania later expressed it, was that Georgians had no "state traditions or memory of a united, whole national structure",³⁴ and no tradition of democracy. In these circumstances it proved immensely difficult even among party workers, let alone the peasantry, to convince people to subordinate their personal interests to those of the state.

Among the measures taken to counter this and to break down the barriers between state and society, the Social-Democrats on 2nd July nationalised all government institutions and made the use of Georgian by all state officials compulsory, a step which on the one hand had the benefit of making the administration more accessible to the majority of the population, and on the other helped to drive from office many of the Russian survivors of the tsarist civil service who had been in T'bilisi since before the revolution and whose commitment to the aims of the Georgian revolution the Mensheviks seriously doubted. To avoid accusations of

discrimination, however, the government offered those who did not speak Georgian but wished to stay in office the opportunity to learn the language.³⁵

Ozakom paved the way for the introduction of the zemstvo system of local government into the Transcaucasus in 1917, but the revolution and subsequent events prevented it from being put into practice. In the summer of 1918, however, local government elections were held in which the Mensheviks secured a comfortable majority over the SFs, the National-Democrats and the SRs. Encouraged by this success, the government set about the reorganisation of local government, abolishing the gubernii created by the tsarist administration in the 1840s and establishing a network of 21 district local self-governments or erobas, whose task it would be to take over all administration of local affairs from the soviet executive committees and district commissars. Assigned responsibility for all local administrative affairs and for the militia, the erobas were also given the tasks of setting up a network of local courts and creating within their own territories small self-governing units at village and lower level.³⁶

The reform had the benefit on the one hand of reuniting the western and eastern halves of the country into one administrative entity, thus abolishing the artificial division of the country introduced by the Russians and contributing to the unity of the new state, and on the other of bringing the process of government closer to the people and giving everyone, even in the smallest settlements, the opportunity to participate in public affairs. It was hoped too that this would in part bridge the gap between state and society and help inculcate a stronger sense of

identification with the state.

The reorganisation, however, was not completed until 1920, leaving it only one year before the Russian invasion brought its operation to a close, thus making impossible, as with virtually everything else the Georgian Mensheviks did, a fair assessment of how successful it would have been given peacetime conditions and a more conducive economic environment. What can be said though is that the work of local government was seriously impaired throughout by disorganisation, and the irresponsibility, corruption and nepotism of eroba officials.

Continuing the process of Georgianisation, the government in early 1919 issued decrees that made Georgian the official language of all civil and criminal litigation, although the languages of the minorities could also be used provided they were accompanied by translation, and established Georgian as the language of instruction in all state primary and secondary schools.³⁸ The teaching of Georgian language and literature was made compulsory too during the first four years of secondary education, even in the private schools for national minorities set up by their respective national councils. Allied to the foundation of the University of T'bilisi in January 1918 and the government's drive to improve literacy in the villages by building more schools and libraries, these measures demonstrated the importance attached by the Social-Democrats to education both as a means to strengthen loyalty to the new state and shape political culture and to raise the overall educational level of the population. In a report to the government in May 1919 Minister of Education Noe Tsintsadze wrote:

Most of all the Ministry [of Education] has effected a regrouping of pupils on the basis of the national principle and has attempted in every way possible to make education national.³⁹

Despite the Social-Democrats' efforts, however, the economic crisis and the government's costly defence requirements combined with other factors to limit spending on education in its first year in office to 2.73 per cent of the state budget and to 4.7 per cent in its second. Thus while the educational reforms looked good on paper, the reality was that teachers, when they could be found, were often starving, that schools had no or very few textbooks and that in winter they had no heating. Furthermore, the reorganisation of education, its nationalisation and the promotion of Georgian language and literature to a prominent position in the curriculum led initially at least to chaos. Not only were there no textbooks to meet the new requirements, but no syllabus had been designed to reflect the Ministry of Education's intentions.⁴¹ Each school was left much to its own devices.

In another sign that preoccupation with the survival of the state was leading the government to accord rather more prominence to national unity than to ideology, the Georgian Mensheviks adopted a conciliatory approach to the Georgian Orthodox Church, hoping no doubt to exploit the latter's role in the development of a Georgian national consciousness and to avoid alienating those sections of the population, particularly the peasantry, that might have been offended by its repression. Co-opting the Church as a symbol of national unity and at times coming close to breaching the commitment contained in the party's minimum programme to sever the

link between state and church, the government invited members of the Catholicosate to all meetings of the National Assembly and subsequently the Constituent Assembly, and to stand among the dignitaries at national and military parades. In a further demonstration of the party's compromise in this respect, B. Chkhikvishvili, the Menshevik mayor of T'bilisi, delegated by the party organisation to greet the head of the Georgian Church at a religious festival in Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia and a centre of the Georgian Church, praised the historical service it had rendered the nation and hoped that it would continue to point the Georgian people in the right direction.⁴²

But the greatest indication of Zhordania's new-found commitment to the independence he and other leading members of the party had welcomed so unenthusiastically in May came at the 8th Congress of Caucasian Social-Democratic Organisations in November 1918, when he declared:

All socialist parties have a common aim - the realisation of socialism. But every party operates within specific state circumstances created by particular conditions. These differences have provoked the need for a separate workers' party.⁴³

Accepting Zhordania's strictures against "naive cosmopolitans" who could only visualise worldwide changes, the congress voted heavily in favour of a separate Georgian party organisation. Zhordania denied the accusation that this would mean yet another step towards the formation of a bloc with the nationalist parties by arguing that the party was organised on a territorial, not an ethnic basis, and that there was no precedent for two states having a common Social-Democratic Party and central committee. Bringing to

an end what had become in the previous 18 months an increasingly fraught relationship with the Russian Mensheviks, the Georgian party leader stressed that the decision should also be seen to reflect the historical and philosophical differences in the development of their respective societies and party organisations, noting in particular the authoritarianism that characterised the RSDLP.⁴⁴

By the first anniversary of the declaration of independence, the conversion was evidently complete. Making a virtue of what at the time had been considered a regrettable necessity, the government paper Sak'art'velos Respublika (The Republic of Georgia) stated:

The 26th of May is the conclusion of the revolutionary course, 26th May is the logical result of the great struggle. The international situation and the revolution led to glory on that day and that day marks the end of the past and the great day of the start of the future. That day freedom and independence became a fact.⁴⁵

7.2 Inter-Ethnic Conflict and the Rise of Nationalism

While these measures may have appealed to ethnic Georgians and thus achieved in part the unifying effect sought by the government, the latter was sensitive to the possibility that over identification of the state with the interests of the majority nationality ran the risk of alienating the national minorities that made up almost a third of the country's population and whose loyalty to the state it considered crucial to the preservation of stability. However, while the Social-Democrats acknowledged from the outset the principle of national equality and the right of nations to self-determination, it was evident that national state interests would be accorded greater weight in their list of priorities than the democratic right to secede.

Georgia was simply too small and the strategic position of the Ap'khaz and Osian populations, in particular, too vital to its survival for the government seriously or willingly to contemplate putting principle into practice. The party paper Ert'oba accurately expressed the government's feelings on the subject when it wrote in 1918:

In our territory we have small peoples - Osians Ap'khaz, Armenians and others - who wish to secede and form their own states. If that happened, we would all perish... The Osians can have independence in their internal affairs, but may not leave Georgia...⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the government did agree on 8th June 1918 to grant a considerable degree of autonomy to Ap'khazet'i.⁴⁷ In addition to the appointment of a Minister of Ap'khaz Affairs in T'bilisi, and from August the establishment of an Ap'khaz Affairs Department to review all central legislation relating to the region, the Ap'khaz National Council was given control over internal affairs, although control of finance and the local detachments of the Popular Guard remained with the centre.

Despite these concessions, frequent disputes concerning the respective areas of competence of the regional and central administrations and the behaviour of Popular Guard units led to repeated demands for the government precisely to define the status of the region. This, however, it refused to do before the convocation of the Georgian Constituent Assembly, the elections for which were to be held at the beginning of 1919, and the completion of the national constitution.

Following a steady deterioration of relations which was only halted by the election in March 1919 of a new Ap'khaz

National Council, whose views were more attuned to those of the government,⁴⁸ the basis for a more workable relationship was laid by a resolution passed by the council on 28th March in which it first declared the region an autonomous unit of the Republic of Georgia and then called for the appointment of a commission composed equally of members of the Georgian Constituent Assembly (which was elected with a massive Social-Democratic Party majority in February 1919) and the Ap'khaz National Council for the purpose of determining its relationship with the central authority. Both the Constituent Assembly and the government acceded to this request.⁴⁹

The problems posed by the other nationalities, however, proved less amenable to a territorial solution. Thus the Osians, who, historically, had been driven through poverty to seek work as khiznebi throughout East Georgia, had settled in large numbers in Borchalo, Gori, Dushet'i and Java districts, while the position of the Georgian Muslim minority was complicated by the occupation of Bat'umi region by first the Turks and subsequently the British before it finally reverted to Georgian control in 1920.

The situation in South Oset'i had been made still more delicate by the violent clashes in March and June 1918 between the peasantry and the Red Guard, one of the predictable consequences of which had been the addition of a national dimension to a struggle that until then had revolved around the question of land. With mutual trust at a very low ebb, the government rejected the appeals of the South Oset'ian National Council for autonomy on the grounds that there were too few Osians to merit the formation of an autonomous unit and that their population was insufficiently

concentrated.⁵⁰ Adding insult to injury, the government's constitutional commission reported in its examination of the Osian appeal that such a unit would be unnecessarily expensive, while in reply the national council refused to collect taxes, demanded a separate system of courts and threatened to unite with the North Osians. In reflection of an increasingly rancorous relationship Ert'oba in June 1920 contemptuously dismissed the Osian demands in the following terms:

It is nations that have a right to self-determination as far as independence, not the minor survivals of nations who have resettled within the bounds of another nationality... On this basis, the self-determination of Oset'i should happen within so-called North Oset'i, where 91 per cent of Osians live, and not in Java where there are at most a few Osian villages.⁵¹

Nevertheless, while Zhordania's claim in his memoirs that not a single demand made by a nationality in Georgia went unsatisfied is manifestly untrue,⁵² it is equally clear that the Georgian Social-Democrats did try in very difficult circumstances to ensure that national cultural rights were respected. It was, for instance, precisely this consideration that on 15th October 1918 led the National Assembly to introduce a law granting the national minorities a minimum of 26 deputies in the parliament until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, from which point representation was to be based entirely on electoral results.⁵³ It is notable too that the Georgian Social-Democratic Party deputies in the Constituent Assembly included three Armenians, three Ap'khaz, two Osians, two Germans, two Russians, one Greek and a Turk.⁵⁴

The Georgian Constitution, moreover, when finally approved by the Constituent Assembly on 22nd February 1921, formalised the autonomy of Ap'khazet'i, granted identical status to the Georgian Muslim minorities in Bat'umi region and Zak'at'ala on the border with Azerbaijan, and reaffirmed the eroba status reluctantly conceded to South Oset'i in May 1919 with its attendant responsibility for the direction of economic and educational affairs within its territory.⁵⁵ The constitution, too, entitled Osians, like all other national minorities, to a state-funded education in their native languages and obliged the erobas to ensure that the number of minority schools in their respective territories was proportionate to minority representation within the local population.⁵⁶

The crucial issue, however, on which the Georgian Mensheviks were not prepared to compromise was that of Georgia's state integrity, a point strongly underlined by Zhordania in an address to the national minorities on 18th February 1919, immediately prior to the establishment of the Constituent Assembly:

To the Muslims, Ap'khaz, Armenians and other peoples inhabiting the outlying areas, we state that we do not wish their forced annexation but a voluntary union based, however, on recognition from their side of democratic Georgia... We know that the outlying areas differ from the centre culturally. History there has produced quite different customs and inter-relations. We have given this consideration and the government has resolved to grant autonomy over their inner lives on one condition: that they preserve the strategic, historical and economic unity of Georgia. We can accept all their demands on autonomy, however broad, but one thing we cannot accept: their separation from us.⁵⁷

The Social-Democrats' determination to establish the state on firm ground brought it into confrontation not just

with its national minorities but also with its neighbours in Transcaucasia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, an eventuality that ironically had been a major consideration in Zhordania's opposition to the division of the area, for it had consistently been his position that the population of Transcaucasia was so intermingled and its economic life so integrated that attempts to reassert old historical borders would not only impede socio-economic progress but also lead to disputes over territory, a conviction that in 1917 (see above) led him to advocate the formation of national self-governing bodies based on the areas in which the major nationalities predominated and which would be directly subordinate to a central Transcaucasian administration responsible for the overall political and economic life of the area. In this way, he rather optimistically hoped, it would be possible to satisfy national cultural aspirations on the one hand and neutralise territorial rivalries on the other.

From the summer of 1918, however, Zhordania faced entirely different circumstances. In the absence of an overall Transcaucasian administration, he now gave priority to factors such as national economic unity and defence. While in 1917 he had been prepared to envisage the possibility of parts of the old southern Georgian provinces of Lower K'art'li (Lore in Borchalo district) and Meskhet'i (Akhalk'alak'i district) coming under an Armenian administration on the grounds that these areas were predominantly populated by Armenians, he now argued that they formed an integral part of the Georgian economy, that geographically they were naturally divided from Armenia by mountain ranges, that historically they had belonged to Georgia and that strategically they occupied a crucial place in Georgia's southern

and eastern defences.⁵⁸ Similarly, he rejected Azeri claims to Zak'at'ala and parts of Signaghi district in East Georgia,⁵⁹ but whereas the dispute with Azerbaijan was settled relatively amicably at the negotiating table, the dispute with Armenia became the focal point of an animosity that had been breeding throughout the previous year.

Although the roots of the conflict have to be sought in Russian settlement policy in the 19th century, the growing social struggle between the Armenian commercial bourgeoisie and the Georgian nobility and peasantry, and the aspiration of Armenian nationalists to incorporate south-east Georgia, including T'bilisi, into a Greater Armenia stretching from the southern Caucasus to the Mediterranean, its more recent deterioration was traceable to the resentment and frustration of the Armenian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia as the realisation dawned that not only had the 1917 T'bilisi municipal elections brought their domination of the city to an end, but that the collapse of the Transcaucasian Federation had effectively isolated them from the administrative, commercial and intellectual centre of the Transcaucasus, for while T'bilisi was reestablished as the political centre of Georgia, the Armenian government had to retire to the provincial setting of Erevan.

Resentment too was further fuelled by the belief that the Georgians had betrayed Armenia over the loss of Kars (see above), and the not-unfounded suspicion that the Georgian government's desire to promote the emergence of a strong indigenous bourgeoisie would be achieved at Armenian expense.

With both sides still smarting at the mutual recriminations that followed the Georgian declaration of independence, relations entered another downward spiral in June when the Georgians occupied north Lore, ostensibly to block the path of the Turkish forces in south Lore to T'bilisi, but no doubt also to preempt the Armenians, who also had a claim to the area. It was left to Irakli Dseret'eli to inform a delegation from the Armenian National Council that the break-up of the Transcaucasian Federation had compelled the Georgian Social-Democrats to abandon their previous readiness to abide by the ethnic principle in disputed territories. Georgia, he said, now laid claim to every district in T'bilisi Gubernia.⁶⁰

The Armenian government, insisting on the continuing relevance of the ethnic principle, responded by laying claim to Akhalk'alak'i district and all of Lore, the importance of which for both sides had been raised out of all proportion by national chauvinism and the state of their respective economies. Armenia, whose losses to Turkey included the fertile Araxes valley and had virtually deprived it of the means to exist, was desperately in need of arable land,⁶¹ while the Georgian government, mindful of its promises to the peasantry and acutely aware that not even the total redistribution of the t'avadaznauroba's estates was likely to satisfy its needs, was loathe to cede any territory, and least of all Akhalk'alak'i and Borchalo (of which Lore was the southernmost part) districts, which were among the most fertile and least populated in Georgia(see Fig. 6a).⁶²

While the Turkish occupation of most of the disputed areas in the summer and early autumn prevented direct confrontation, relations nevertheless continued to deteriorate

with the Armenians accusing the Georgian Mensheviks of colluding with the t'avadaznauroba to oppress the Armenian population of T'bilisi and the Georgians complaining that the Dashnaktsutiun Party in Armenia was souring inter-ethnic relations and undermining mutual trust by inciting Armenian organisations and private citizens in Georgia against the government. The Armenian National Council too was accused of acting as a recruiting agent for the Armenian army.⁶³

Against this background, Armenian and Georgian troops in October came face to face for the first time when the Armenians, forewarned by the Turks, occupied the latter's positions in south Lore following the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire.

Allied victory now radically transformed the situation in Transcaucasia. By the Treaty of Mudros, signed on 30th October, Turkey conceded to the British occupation of Bat'umi and Baku, together with its interlinking railway system, and acknowledged the Allies' right to occupy the six Armenian villayets in eastern Turkey in the event of "disorder",⁶⁴ while quite suddenly the humiliating terms and the suffering endured by Armenia since its declaration of independence were turned to its advantage. Whereas the Allies, however unjustly, took a jaundiced view of Georgia's recent relations with Germany, they saw Armenia as the innocent victim of Turkish barbarism, one of the immediate practical consequences of which was their recognition at the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919 that the Armenians, together with the other communities formerly under Turkish rule, had reached a point in their development where "their existence as independent states can be provisionally

recognised".⁶⁵ It was an approach, however, that they did not extend to either Georgia or Azerbaijan, whose territories the Allies continued to regard as belonging to the former Russian Empire, hope for the restoration of which they placed on General Denikin's White Army.

On 27th October the Georgian government tried to break the deadlock over territory by inviting Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Mountaineers' Republic to send delegates to a conference in T'bilisi to discuss the issue of mutual recognition, the resolution of outstanding problems, and mutual support at the Paris Peace Conference for de jure recognition of their respective states.⁶⁶ In the event of failure to reach agreement on common borders it was proposed that international arbitrators be appointed to review the situation. The Armenian government, however, believing that it stood to gain more from Allied support than Transcaucasian unity and fearing that in a multilateral conference Georgia and Azerbaijan might cooperate to its disadvantage, chose to take offence at the peremptory tone of the invitation as an excuse for turning it down.⁶⁷ The representatives of Azerbaijan and the Mountaineers' Republic, who received the same invitation, both appeared at the start of talks on 10th November.

Following repeated attempts to satisfy its objections, Armenia on 17th November communicated its readiness to participate so long as the border issue was not raised, a condition to which the others conceded, postponing the start of the conference to the 30th so as to allow the Armenians to attend. By 2nd December, however, the Erevan government had still not sent its delegates.⁶⁸

With the path to negotiations blocked and the situation along the border degenerating into violence, the Armenian Premier, Hovhannes Kachaznuni, on 14th December authorised military units to advance into Borchalo district on the pretext of protecting Armenian citizens from the violence and lawlessness of Georgian troops, while Foreign Minister Tigranian informed his Georgian counterpart, Gegetchkori, that Armenia's decision could not be construed as interference in Georgian internal affairs as the district rightfully belonged to Armenia.⁶⁹

The Georgians, predictably, took a different view, but although Gegetchkori struck an indignant note on 15th December when he declared that Georgia protested before the entire world the treachery of the Armenian government, Zhordania, speaking to the Georgian parliament two days later, was more moderate and appeared deliberately to avoid appealing to national chauvinism. Instead, he presented the conflict as a tragedy brought on Transcaucasia by the folly of the Armenian government:

Citizens! What should not have happened has happened. At a time when the fires of world war have been extinguished, when the major states are returning their swords to their scabbards and resuming a peaceful existence, the government of Armenia is secretly attacking the republic of Georgia... We call the Georgian democracy to a struggle not against the Armenian people...but against that government and that militarist party responsible for undertaking this terrible crime.⁷⁰

The brief conflict brought neither side significant material gain, but lost both a great deal of world sympathy at a time when their representatives in Paris were struggling to convince the state leaders assembled for the Peace Conference of their readiness for statehood. Initially the

Armenians, with the advantage of surprise on their side, made rapid advances into Borchalo, coming within 50 miles of T'bilisi, but within a week the Georgians had turned the tide and gone onto the counter-offensive, recapturing much of the lost territory and advancing into Armenia before Anglo-French mediation brought the hostilities to a halt on 30th December. A conference of Georgian, Armenian and Allied officials in early January agreed provisionally that Georgia should retain Akhalk'alak'i district, on condition that it be placed under Allied supervision, and that a neutral zone be established in North Lore, leaving the south to Armenia.⁷¹

Though short-lived and inconclusive, the Georgian-Armenian conflict had a considerable impact both on interstate relations in Transcaucasia, driving Armenia further into isolation, and on the Georgian government's internal policies, leading it to lay still greater emphasis on loyalty to the state. Undoubtedly, the real victim of the affair was the large Armenian community in Georgia which now became the target of indiscriminate government suspicion and a new mood of national chauvinism which derived in part from the belief that the national minorities were undermining the state.

Although it is clear from the constant distinction drawn by the Georgian leaders between the "militarist clique" in Erevan and the Armenian people that the Social-Democrats were anxious to avoid stimulating a wave of jingoism - not least because the SFs and National-Democrats might have benefited on the eve of the elections to the Constituent Assembly - they were nevertheless propelled by their demand for undivided loyalty and the obvious potential

danger constituted by the Armenian community, particularly in T'bilisi, where they formed a third of the population,⁷² to instigate a series of measures directed specifically at any threat it might pose to state security. The possibility cannot be discounted either that the long-standing ideological prejudice of the Georgian Mensheviks against the Armenian bourgeoisie concealed a more nationalist hostility towards an ethnic group that had dominated the Georgian capital for the last 50 years. It was also apparent that the government found it difficult to fit the Armenian bourgeoisie into its image of Georgia's future, for whilst the Mensheviks were adamant that Georgia's path to socialism would take it first through a period of capitalist development, there were many in the party, adopting the argument put forward by Sergi Meskhi in the 1870s, who also felt that it was crucial to Georgia's national development that a major part in this process be played by the native bourgeoisie.

The government declared its intentions to the Armenian community within days of the invasion by issuing a decree ordering all Armenians from Lore resident in T'bilisi to register within 24 hours or face the possibility of being charged with treason, an offence which on 24th December the Georgian Parliament resolved should be punishable by death.⁷³ Several papers, including the Dashnak Ashkhataavor (Labourer) and Nor Orizon (New Horizon) and the Kadet and SR papers Kavkavskoe Slovo and Trudovoye Znamya were closed, the latter two on account of their pro-Armenian sympathies, while the Dashnak deputies in the city дума were arrested and the Armenian National Council offices boarded up.

Explaining the decision temporarily to suspend the activities of the Council, Noe Ramishvili, the Minister of the Interior, stated in parliament that although most Armenians were loyal (a claim treated with derision by the nationalist deputies), some members of the council were known to be acting directly on behalf of the Erevan government.⁷⁴

Although Ramishvili proclaimed the government's opposition to nationalism in all its guises, the war and the official reaction to it nevertheless created a climate in which nationalism could thrive. Thus for all the government's assurances that it regarded the majority of Armenians as loyal citizens, these measures inevitably placed them collectively under a cloud of suspicion and contributed to the mood of chauvinist hysteria being whipped up by the nationalist parties.

Despite the many protestations of loyalty to the Georgian state published in the press by Armenian communities from all over the republic, popular opinion, outraged by the invasion and stories of Georgian Armenians organising peasant rebellions behind the Georgian lines, remained hostile. For the many who had suffered in the past at the hands of Armenian money-lenders, moreover, the war offered the prospect of exacting revenge. Armenian workers who expressed anti-government views found themselves out of work, businessmen were arrested and their property expropriated, civic officials and militia officers were sacked, and in K'ut'aisi, although this decision was quickly reversed by the government, an order was issued that all Armenians working for Georgian railways should be dismissed.⁷⁵

Under criticism from the National-Democrats for ending the hostilities when Georgia was on the offensive, the government itself succumbed to the pressure to be seen to be taking action against the enemy, whether mythical or otherwise, by arresting scores of Armenians in T'bilisi in early January, a gesture which led to their further isolation and intimidation. Against this background there could be little surprise that in the T'bilisi municipal elections held later in the month that the Georgians further consolidated their hold over the city administration. Many Armenians and Russians either abstained or were denied a vote by the new law limiting the franchise to Georgian citizens.

In February, the country's first national elections presented the government with a major test of its popularity. With the franchise extended to all Georgian citizens aged over 20, it was important to the Social-Democrats not only that they win, but that the electorate also demonstrate its commitment to the state and democracy by polling in large numbers. In the event, whilst just over 70 per cent of the rural population voted (433,000 out of 614,000) only 52 per cent (81,000 out of 156,000 registered voters) of the urban electorate did so, a fact which can largely be attributed to the heavy concentration of Russians and Armenians in the towns.⁷⁶

Those that did vote, however, voted massively in favour of the Social-Democrats, giving them 109 of the 130 deputies in the Constituent Assembly.⁷⁷ The elections in the border districts of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalk'alak'i, too, which were held over till August because of continuing tension in the area, provided the government with a propaganda coup in its territorial dispute with Armenia. In the former, 24,000 of

the 35,000 electorate voted for the Social-Democrats, while in the latter 13,000 from an electorate of 25,000 voted for the Social-Democrats and only 7,000 for the Dashnaktsutiun Party.⁷⁸ The result, Sak'art'velos Respublika wrote, was a victory not just for the Social-Democrats but also for the state:

The Georgian state idea has achieved a brilliant victory in Meskhet'-Javakhet'i, a victory that is made still more beautiful by the victory of democracy. This last triumph will forever consolidate the democratic culture of Georgia in Akhaltsikhe-Akhalk'alak'i.⁷⁹

Following the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly on 12th March and a debate on the form of government on the 14th, the new legislature on 21st March elected Noe Zhordania Prime Minister and head of state.⁸⁰ But despite the occasion and the sense of achievement that pervaded the event, cracks were already apparent in the previous year's facade of unity. Zhordania, who had earlier expressed a preference for multi-party representation in the government, chose to select his cabinet entirely from within the Social-Democratic Party, while the SFs and National-Democrats, frustrated by their exclusion, as well as their repeated failure to win significant support outside the intelligentsia, broke the closed ranks of the previous year by refusing to support the government's policy statement promising to elaborate a republican constitution and establish an independent democratic state, the SFs on the grounds that it paid inadequate attention to social change in the world and was therefore insufficiently socialist, and the National-Democrats because the Mensheviks' past views on the national question made them psychologically ill-suited to

independence and the task of building a national state. The government, National-Democratic deputy S. Kedia accused, was guilty of wavering to Georgia's cost between internationalism and a real national-state policy.⁸¹

In reply, the Social-Democrat Razhden Arsenidze, on behalf of the government, reiterated the latter's commitment to socialism as an aim and to its construction through democracy, arguing that Georgia's weak industrial development precluded the possibility of its early attainment. In the meantime, encouragement would be given to private incentive, just as it would also be given to the collective endeavours of the municipal governments, erobas and cooperatives.⁸²

The readiness of the opposition parties to confront the government demonstrated both their conviction that their electoral failure was attributable to the public's lack of familiarity with their policies, and a feeling that with the war now over Georgia had survived its toughest hurdles. That Zhordania also shared this view is evident from his assertion to the Assembly on 14th March:

The world war has ended in such a way that Georgia has emerged almost unscathed, while the Great February revolution ended in a way that saved Georgia from anarchy and preserved all its achievements. Consequently, our benefits today are threefold: external and internal calm and the achievements of the revolution. No Constituent Assembly has ever met in such auspicious social circumstances.⁸³

Whatever the basis for his extraordinary optimism, it was quick to disappear. The opening of the Constituent Assembly was to prove among the last occasions the Social-Democrats would have for self-congratulation. Against a background of conflict with the Muslim population of Akhaltsikhe district, Denikin's Volunteer Army in April

invaded north-west Georgia, bringing to a head a dispute that had threatened to degenerate into violence since its beginning in September 1918. Ostensibly, the cause of the clash was the Georgian occupation of Sochi during the Red Guard's March campaign to drive a Kuban-based Bolshevik force out of Ap'khazet'i and the government's subsequent agreement to a request from the local soviet to establish a temporary protectorate over the area. In September, however, a successful Volunteer Army offensive against the Bolsheviks brought it into direct contact with the Georgians south of Tuapse and into dispute over the ownership of Sochi.⁸⁴

An attempt by both sides on 25th-26th September to resolve their differences in talks in Ekaterinodar was undermined by mutual intransigence over an area that was of no strategic or economic benefit to either and General Alekseev's chauvinistic and hectoring arrogance. Reluctant to recognise the independence of what he considered an integral part of the Russian empire and antipathetic to the ideological persuasion of the Menshevik government, Alekseev not only demanded Georgia's unconditional withdrawal from Sochi but accused it of maltreating Russian officials and officers, warning that failure to correct the situation would lead the Volunteer Army to halt grain supplies from North Caucasia,⁸⁵ a threat that he repeated when the leader of the Georgian delegation, Foreign Minister Evgeni Gegetchkori, refused even to discuss the border issue, reminding Alekseev that he was the representative not of a state but a private organisation.⁸⁶ While this was true, it was scarcely wise for Georgia needlessly to antagonise a

potentially dangerous opponent over a strip of land to which it had no permanent pretensions. In closing the meeting, Alekseev was quick to remind Gegetchkori of Georgia's vulnerability, pointing out its dependence on Southern Russia for grain and numerous other products. The Germans might be able to give Georgia a little, but its permanent source, he warned was in North Caucasia.⁸⁷

Germany's defeat shortly afterwards and British support for Denikin underlined Alekseev's threat. Moreover, as the Georgians were to learn to their cost, the Volunteer Army representatives in Paris were able considerably to damage their government's reputation among the major powers and seriously to undermine Georgia's immediate prospects of securing broad recognition for its independence.⁸⁸

Emboldened by the apparent backing of the British military in the Caucasus and irritated by Georgian support for the Greens and Chechens in North Caucasia, Denikin stepped up the pressure on Georgia in February 1919 by claiming that it was oppressing the Ap'khaz population and that Prince Shervashidze, the most prominent member of the Ap'khaz aristocracy, whose estates had recently been considerably reduced by the land reform, had appealed on Ap'khazet'i's behalf for help.⁸⁹ On 6th February Denikin's forces attacked Sochi.

In April, by which time it was clear that they were not going to achieve a rapid victory, the British intervened and persuaded the Georgians to evacuate Sochi on the understanding that Denikin would not occupy it. Denikin, however, not only reneged on this agreement but advanced beyond Sochi to attack and capture Gagra. Almost immediately the Georgians counter-attacked and recaptured the town, establishing a new

line along the River Mekhadir, between Sochi and Gagra (see fig. 6b).⁹⁰

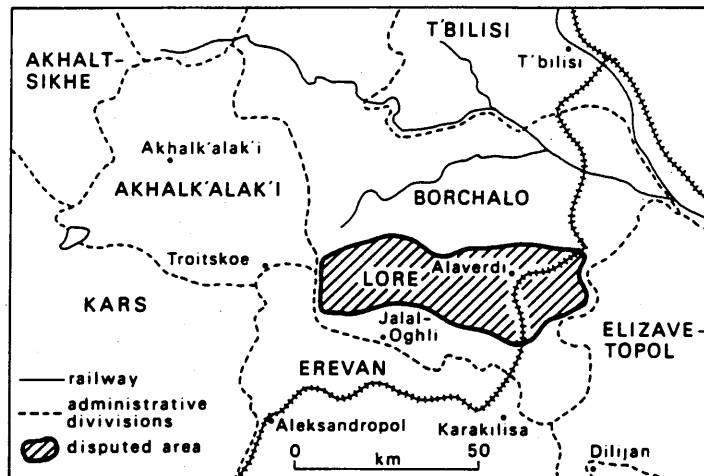
Despite the evidently defensive nature of the Georgian operations, the British military staff revealed its hostility towards the Social-Democratic government when Maj-General W.M. Thompson, C.O. North Persian Forces in Baku, warned that this might undermine Georgia in the eyes of the Paris Peace Conference and that further attacks on Denikin's forces would be construed as unfriendly acts against Britain itself.⁹¹

Georgian distrust of the British was further confirmed in talks on 23rd May, when Lt-General Briggs, allegedly acting not in his capacity as a British officer but as an envoy for Denikin, reiterated the latter's demand that the Georgians withdraw beyond the River Bzip'i, just to the north of Bitchvint'a, and guarantee the protection of Russian citizens in Georgia. Apparently abusive throughout the meeting, Briggs informed the Georgian Foreign Minister that "small peoples like the Georgians should not aspire to independence".⁹²

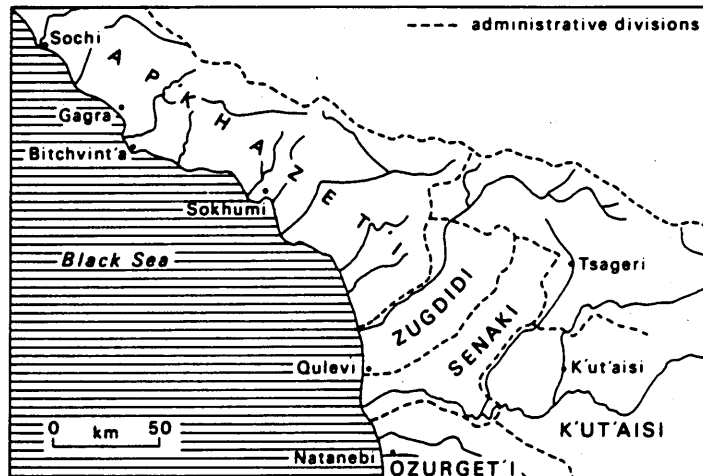
On 11th June, the new British C.O. in the Caucasus, Maj-General Corey, informed Zhordania that a decision had been reached - clearly without Georgian participation - granting Sochi and Gagra to Denikin and establishing a new demarcation line along the Bzip'i. Well aware that Denikin's ambitions extended beyond Gagra and no doubt irritated by the unilateral nature of the decision, Zhordania refused to comply, reasserting Georgia's determination to remain in Gagra pending a final decision on border demarcation by the Paris Peace Conference. Denikin, however, encouraged by his

Fig. 6

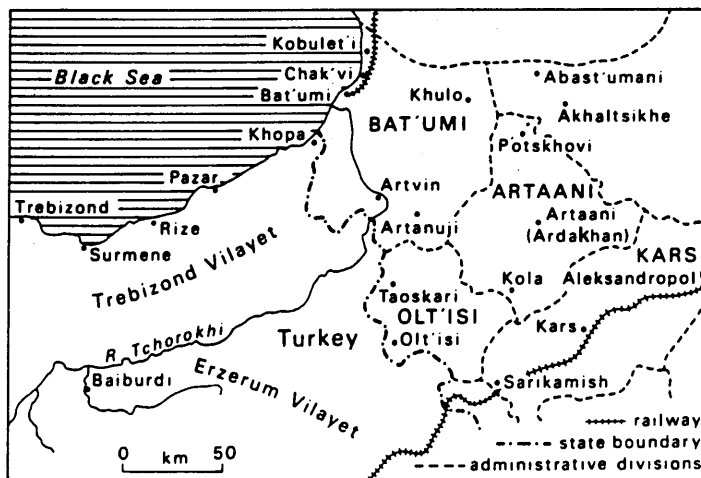
A Disputed territory in 1918-19 Armeno-Georgian conflict



B Ap'khazet'i: Scene of Georgian conflict with Volunteer Army 1918-19



C South-west Georgia: Border with Turkey prior to Brest-Litovsk Treaty



successes in the Russian Civil War, was adamant. At talks arranged by General Thompson on 23rd June he refused to recognise Georgia's independence and demanded that it submit to his authority.⁹³ Undismayed by Georgia's predictable response, Denikin shortly afterwards despatched General Baratov to T'bilisi to prepare the ground for Transcaucasia's reincorporation into Russia and to demand that Georgia recognise itself as part of Russia or face the consequences. In November Baratov left Georgia his mission unfulfilled. Under British pressure, however, the Georgians, still anxious to secure Allied recognition and aid, agreed to permit the Volunteer Army to recruit Russian officers in T'bilisi and gave unimpeded passage to "White" soldiers fleeing south across the Caucasus.⁹⁴

The need for constant vigilance against Denikin made the government, in the absence of reliable allies, still more inward-looking and defensive. Feeling besieged from all sides, it proved hard not to regard any sign of opposition, particularly among the non-Georgian peoples populating the border areas, as evidence of a conspiracy to undermine the state. Moreover, while the party leadership may have understood the need for caution in dealing with minorities, the need to recruit government personnel from the urban intelligentsia, which formed the basis of the National-Democrats' support, brought into office a stratum of Georgian society that regarded failure to give absolute support to the Georgian national idea, particularly in the prevailing conditions, as tantamount to treachery.

A similar attitude appears too to have prevailed among the Popular Guard, which, although formed predominantly from the working class and Gurian peasantry and dominated by the

Social-Democrats, had made the greatest sacrifices during the previous year and had little sympathy for those whose enthusiasm for Georgian independence did not match their own.

In early 1919, a combination of these factors and corruption among government officials led to conflict in Akhaltsikhe district, much of which was contested by the South-West Caucasian Republic, set up with encouragement from Constantinople when the Turks were forced out of Bat'umi in October 1918, and supported by Azerbaijan. Particularly galling from a Georgian point of view was the fact that many Georgian Muslims had joined the Tatars and Azeris in supporting the republic and had too supplied its leader, Jihangiradze Ibrahim Bey.⁹⁵ While initially this could be attributed to the success of Turkish agents and Muslim clergy in convincing them that they could expect nothing but repression from Georgian Christians, the heavy-handed behaviour of the Popular Guard when sent to assert Georgian control over the area undoubtedly contributed to their alienation. In March and April 1919, Valiko Jugheli, the commander of the Guard, reported villages "destroyed and burnt" and accused his own troops of "marauding",⁹⁶ while a British officer stationed in the district in March observed that the Muslim population was "bitterly incensed against the Georgian government" and that it was accusing Georgian troops of atrocities.⁹⁷ Valiko Chubinidze, who had been with the Guard since its inception, recalled the concern at its T'bilisi headquarters in May that the Akhaltsikhe eroba was responsible for driving the local population into armed resistance, and noted too Silbistro Jibladze's reminder when

sending him to restore order in the area that the party's strength lay not in its ability to coerce, but in its work among the people and the fact that it was built from the roots.⁹⁸

Ironically, in view of the fact that the British controlled the area in 1919, the position in Bat'umi region was rather more favourable to the T'bilisi government. Despite the obstacles put in the way of a Georgian National Front, the latter, arguing in favour of reunification with Georgia, won a clear majority in the February election to the city дума despite a strong anti-Georgian campaign by Denikin supporters and Pan-Islamists.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the efforts of the Turkish Muslim clergy and the legacy of Russian oppression of Muslim Georgians had made many of the 70,000 Georgian Muslims in the region wary of separation from Turkey. Evidently, despite a general awareness of shared cultural attributes with their Christian kinsmen, religious affiliation remained for many the prime determinant of political loyalty.¹⁰⁰ A Georgian Foreign Ministry report pessimistically observed that they considered themselves Turkish, wanted nothing to do with Christian Georgians and had been hostile to the Georgian government since the Turks had occupied Bat'umi.¹⁰¹

While the Social-Democrats could not actively intervene in Atchara (Bat'umi region), they nevertheless sought to win the support of its Muslim population. A Georgian Muslim Liberation Committee was able in January 1919 to promise the creation of a free, autonomous Muslim Georgian region with complete control over religious affairs,¹⁰² a promise upheld within days, moreover, by the government.¹⁰³ By August the committee was claiming to have the support of the majority

of the Muslim population.¹⁰⁴ In September, too, Niko Nikoladze, the last survivor of the t'ergdaleulni, felt justified in claiming at a meeting with a delegation from the Atchara Mejlis that whereas in 1878, when he had attended a similar occasion, Russia had stood between Christian and Muslim Georgia, no power now existed to prevent unification.¹⁰⁵

While there was no doubt some basis for Nikoladze's optimism, it nevertheless became increasingly apparent through 1919 and 1920 that the government's retreat into a siege mentality was destroying its faith in the minorities. In July 1920 when Bat'umi returned to Georgian control, no attempt was made to recruit native Muslims and relations with the Atcharan population quickly deteriorated. General Kvinitadze's proclamation promising execution for all those who resisted Georgian troops contrasted starkly with the previous year's expressions of good will and reconciliation.¹⁰⁶

Threatened by Denikin in Ap'khazet'i, opposed by Azeri and Georgian Muslims in Atchara and Akhaltsikhe, in dispute with Armenia over Akhalk'alak'i and threatened constantly by Bolshevik agitation among the Osian peasantry in the north, the government turned gradually to rely for its support on the ethnic Georgian population. Thus on 1st June 1919 at an emergency session of the Constituent Assembly to discuss the threat posed by the Volunteer Army, the Assembly issued a statement appealing not to the people of Georgia, or to the workers and peasants, but to the nation (eri) to stand by the government and army at its moment of crisis.¹⁰⁷

The course of the conflict with Denikin lent conviction to the Georgian and Azeri suspicion that the Armenian government was acting in collusion with the "Whites", a view Zhordania and others had expressed in January following the hostilities in Borchalo, and in February when the Georgians had accused the Armenian population of Sokhumi region of helping the Volunteer Army against Georgia.¹⁰⁸ In April this appeared to be confirmed when at a second Transcaucasian Conference in T'bilisi, again at the initiative of the Georgians,¹⁰⁹ the Armenians both resisted all attempts to draw them into multilateral negotiations over territory and refused to join a regional defence pact against Denikin.¹¹⁰ Coming just as the Volunteer Army was stepping up its operations against Georgia and the Republic of North Caucasian Mountaineers, the decision clearly demonstrated the Dashnak government's disregard for Caucasian unity. Feeling itself protected by the Allies, it now, short-sightedly as it turned out, imagined that with European and American support it could gain possession of the six Turkish vilayets most populated by Armenians and establish a Greater Armenia stretching to the Mediterranean. With such aspirations there was little to be gained from antagonising the Allies by uniting against Denikin.

In June, following the defeat of the Mountaineers' Republic, Georgia and Azerbaijan again called on Armenia to join them, but in vain, leaving the former to sign a defence pact on 16th June committing them to defend each other in the event of attack and to refrain from concluding military conventions with other governments or initiating military action without the knowledge or consent of their partner.¹¹¹ Armenia had not only earned the resentment of its

neighbours, it had also confirmed its isolation in Transcaucasia.

As in the preceding December and January, the real victims were the many Armenians still living in Georgia, most notably the 150,000 refugees (of whom 100,000 were concentrated in and around T'bilisi), who became the subject of renewed Georgian hostility and suspicion.¹¹² The activities of the Armenian National Council, in particular, even though restricted now to cultural and educational matters, came under close scrutiny and in August it was banned at the last moment from holding elections on the spurious grounds that these would interfere with the collection of grain.¹¹³

In July, the Armenian paper Ashkhataavor was again banned following a series of articles in which it had accused the Georgians of forcibly resettling Armenians outside T'bilisi and encouraging the local authorities' persecution of refugees in Akhalk'alak'i district, accusations which the government vigorously denied, claiming in reply that they were intended to undermine its attempts to improve national relations. The paper had also provocatively described the Georgian-Azeri defence pact as a coalition directed at the destruction of Armenia.¹¹⁴ In the tense conditions of 1919 it was no longer enough to appear neutral, let alone write with such undisguised hostility against the government; increasingly one had to demonstrate one's support for the state.¹¹⁵ As Zhordania expressed it himself:

I have to declare that no paper, be it in Russian, Armenian or any other language, will be published within Georgia which does not stand decisively on the grounds of Georgian independence.¹¹⁶

7.3 Social and Economic Crisis

The need to be on a constant state of military alert and the incessant fighting in first one and then another part of the country proved an enormous drain on Georgia's meagre material and human resources. Military spending, which in 1918-19 had been 201,021,373 Georgian rubles (manet'i) or 30.8 per cent of the state budget,¹¹⁷ rose the following year to 1,196,511,000 rubles, or 36.56 per cent of the total budget,¹¹⁸ while the drain on manpower from Georgia's small working class was almost as great a problem, particularly as the Popular Guard, which drew heavily from the T'bilisi proletariat and was regarded as the best trained and most committed section of the armed forces, bore a disproportionately large share of the fighting.¹¹⁹ Valiko Chubinidze recalled that during the Armenian confrontation the Guard operated a shift system in T'bilisi's factories that enabled workers to fight at the front:

...when one shift of workers was working in the factories and printing presses, the other was hurrying, rifle in hand, to the field of battle and defence of the republic...every worker rotated in this way throughout the country in defence of the republic and production.¹²⁰

On 19th November, with General Baratov's abortive mission to T'bilisi now at an end, Denikin added to the country's difficulties by imposing an economic blockade of both Georgia and Azerbaijan.

I cannot allow the self-styled formations of Georgia and Azerbaijan [he wrote], which have sprung up to the detriment of Russian state interests and which are clearly hostile to the idea of the Russian state, to receive food supplies at the expense of the areas of Russia being liberated from the Bolsheviks.¹²¹

In March 1919, at one of the first sessions of the Constituent Assembly, Foreign Minister Gegetchkori, acknowledging the dire state of Georgia's finances, stressed the importance attached by the government to restoring normality to its foreign trade relations. In large part, however, as Denikin's blockade underlined, this was something that lay outwith Georgia's control. Economic recovery continued to be impeded by the closure of the Dardanelles (which were only opened by the Treaty of Sevres in August 1920), the British occupation until 8th July of Bat'umi, the depressed state of trade throughout Europe, and Georgia's lack of a merchant fleet of its own.

The virtual cessation of trade with the rest of the world brought about by the war and the closure of the Dardanelles had a devastating effect too on the Georgian manganese industry, the country's main source of foreign currency. Denied access to world trade, companies were forced to close down and stockpile vast quantities of the mineral. Between 1913 and 1920 the number of workers employed in the Tchiat'ura mines fell from 3,500 to 250, while output, which in 1913 had reached 59,100,000 puds (about 970,000 tonnes), declined in 1918 to 1,600,000 puds (about 26,200 tonnes). Moreover, while output doubled in 1919, exports actually fell again despite the government's decision that year to impose a state monopoly on the export of manganese. Only in 1920, when Denikin's blockade had ended and the Dardanelles opened, did both production and export figures show signs of recovery. By then, however, the government had very little time left. A similar situation prevailed in the mining and

export of coal, copper, zinc, gold and barite.¹²²

Denikin's blockade of North Caucasian grain and the collapse of Georgia's fragile manufacturing industry forced the government to import an enormous variety of goods, ranging from food (37.2 per cent of the total) to clothing, thread, shoes, rope, matches, medicines, chemicals, petrol, nails, machinery and farm implements, a circumstance that had a progressively negative effect on the country's balance of trade, which in 1920 recorded a deficit of over 1,259 million Georgian rubles.¹²³

Table 19:

	Imports (in millions of rubles)	Exports (in millions of rubles)
1918 (7 months)	140.9	153.0
1919	962.8	383.0
1920 (11 months)	2,592.2	1,332.7 ¹²⁴

Forced to spend heavily on defence and the upkeep of the road and railway network, the government found itself in constant deficit. Thus while in 1918-19 revenue, which came mainly from state property (50 per cent) and indirect taxation (33.06 per cent), totalled 174.25 million rubles, expenditure exceeding 663.5 million.¹²⁵ It had been hoped that in 1920 the sale of state land to the peasantry would help offset government spending, but of the 252 million rubles envisaged from this source, only 2.45 million materialised, with the consequence that expenditure (3,252,813,000 Georgian rubles) exceeded revenue (771,059,021 Georgian rubles) by approximately 400 per cent.¹²⁶

The growth of spending and the foreign trade deficit led the government to begin printing more money in what it hoped would be a short-term measure, quickly to be abandoned once the fiscal system was operating properly and regular trading contacts had been established with the rest of the world. However, this and the decision in July 1919 to begin issuing bonds led to a dramatic fall in the value of the Georgian ruble and a rise in prices. Thus whereas at the beginning of 1920 there had been an exchange rate of 900 rubles to the pound, and in June of 1,474, in the latter half of the year inflation spiralled so far out of control that by mid-December the rate had risen to 18,000 rubles to the pound.¹²⁷

Inflation quickly pushed up the cost of living. A kilogram of meat that in 1914 had cost 14 kopecks in 1920 cost 15.5 rubles, while the cost of the same amount of bread rose from 8 kopecks to 10.58 rubles.¹²⁸ Moreover, according to the Minister of Finance, K. Kandelaki, while the average daily wage increased by 48.7 per cent, the cost of living in the same period increased by 154.9 percent. Whereas in 1914 the average daily wage of a worker would have bought 1.5 lbs each of meat, bread, beans, cabbage, cheese, onions, potatoes, rice, salt, cooking oil, coal and oil, in 1920 it could only buy 0.44 lbs.¹²⁹

Despite the hardships it had to endure, including unemployment of 9,000 in T'bilisi, almost 25 per cent of the capital's workforce,¹³⁰ the highly organised Georgian working class¹³¹ remained remarkably loyal to the government throughout its period in office, a fact which in part can be attributed to the strong ties retained by most workers with the villages, which shielded them from the worst effects of

the food shortages and price rises, and the so-called "workers' table", a system operated by the Ministry of Supplies for selling food and imported clothing to the workers at subsidised rates,¹³² but which equally reflected the lasting identification of Georgian workers with the Social-Democratic Party and, not least, the personal authority of its leader, Noe Zhordania.¹³³ While strikes did take place, they were infrequent, short-lived and never acquired a mass character.¹³⁴ As Zhordania was later to write, the T'bilisi working class formed the "main basis of the Georgian Republic from the beginning to the end".¹³⁵

The success or failure of the new state, however, as Zhordania acknowledged, depended on the extent to which the peasantry could be induced to overcome its suspicion of government and identify its interests with those of the state. But convincing Georgia's peasants that independence and the new administrative structure were of relevance to their existence, let alone in their best interests, particularly while the country remained beset by war and economic disruption, was in much of Georgia, and most notably in the non-Georgian areas, to prove an intractable problem.

Nevertheless, it was the Social-Democrats' awareness of the peasantry's importance and the need to overcome its alienation from the state that underpinned the government's decision on 23rd January 1919 to authorise the sale of land to the peasantry as private property. Although Zhordania still professed "in principle" to be in favour of municipalisation of the land, he and the party as a whole had laid the basis for the shift to support for private property at the 8th Congress of Caucasian Social-Democratic

Organisations the previous November. In making the decision, Zhordania claimed that the party had sought a solution that would gain the interest of the peasantry in the new order and provide resources for the treasury at a time when the country's financial situation was critical.¹³⁶

Financial considerations aside, a major factor in the government's decision was its conviction that the desire for private property was so well established among the Georgian peasantry that it would have rejected any other solution. More positively, the Social-Democrats also sought to overcome the indifference of the rural population and to convince it that it had a stake in the preservation of Georgian independence.

Our guiding principle [Zhordania wrote] was that the great majority of the population of Georgia - the peasantry - should see that Georgian independence had given them their land, that it had given them new means for life. The agrarian reform acquired therefore an exceptionally national form in our country.¹³⁷

The decision to sell the land, however, was more controversial, particularly in view of the Social-Democrats' repeated assertion in the past that the land belonged to the people, as was Zhordania's spurious claim that the psychology of the peasant was such that unless he bought his land he would doubt the validity of his claim to it.¹³⁸ Not only condescending, it also ignored the fact that those whom the reform purported to benefit most - peasants who either had no land at all or very little - were the least able to pay. Those who were likely to benefit from the government's low prices, in fact, were the peasants who already owned a certain amount of land and were not ensnared in an endless cycle of debt.

The greatest failing of the reform, however, and one it was beyond the powers of the government to correct, was the overall shortage of land. Of the 5,537,207 desyaty of productive land in Georgia in 1918, 2,020,212 desyaty were owned by the treasury and only 621,695 by the t'avada-znauroba, whose estates had been whittled away since the 19th century by land reform and bankruptcy to a third of their area in the 1860s, while the remainder belonged to peasants and peasant societies.¹³⁹

Based on the norms established by the agrarian reforms of March 1918 (see above), a total of 610,553 desyaty were confiscated during that year, of which forests, rivers, lakes, pastures, mineral deposits and large-scale modern farms were declared state property.¹⁴⁰ The remaining 247,203 desyaty were made available for sale to 317,633 peasant families.¹⁴¹ According to Minister of Agriculture Noe Khomeriki, this meant that in East Georgia each peasant household received on average only 1.16 desyaty and in West Georgia 0.16 desyaty,¹⁴² which, combined with the indifference, corruption and inexperience of the land commissions responsible for effecting the reform, as well as the delays caused by a multitude of conflicting local laws and boundary disputes, formed the basis for a fresh wave of peasant unrest in 1919.

Yet there were very few alternatives available to the government beyond breaking up the profitable large-scale estates and operating land reclamation schemes, although it did attempt to encourage ethnic Georgians to settle in the relatively sparsely populated border districts of Akhalk'alak'i and Akhaltsikhe. Notably, it also sought to

prevent Georgians from moving either from these districts, which were heavily populated by Armenians, or from Gori and Dushet'i, both of which had a large Osian population.¹⁴⁸

Although the reform demonstrably did very little to assuage the peasantry's land hunger and therefore failed to achieve the pupose intended of it by Zhordania of winning peasant support for the state, it did finally break the power of the t'avadaznauroba and, in combination with the decision of the Constituent Assembly in February 1920 to annul the Transcaucasian's Seim's law of February 1918 banning the sale and purchase of land,¹⁴⁴ paved the way for the bourgeois revolution in the countryside. According to Noe Khomeriki, the estates of the t'avadaznauroba in East Georgia were reduced to only 5.1 per cent of their former size, and in West Georgia to 6.1 per cent.¹⁴⁵

The extent of peasant disaffectation quickly became clear in 1919 when instead of reacting patriotically to Denikin's economic squeeze and the difficulties and high cost of importing grain by supplying more to the towns to ensure that the urban population did not starve, the peasantry chose instead to hoard its grain and force the market price to soar. For the latter the situation was aggravated by the fact that the collapse of Georgian industry, inflation and the difficulties of establishing normal trade links with the rest of the world had combined to ensure that there was virtually nothing for it to buy in the towns and that what was available was on sale at highly inflated prices.¹⁴⁶

Matters became still worse, moreover, when the peasantry, in order to take advantage of the high price of grain, began to move away from the cultivation of intensive

export crops like tobacco and silk.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately for the government, while this meant that more grain was grown, the loss of these crops deprived it of an important source of foreign currency, thus reducing its capacity either to buy grain abroad or import the manufactured goods required to induce the peasantry to part with its surplus production.

Despite severe food shortages in the towns, and T'bilisi in particular, caused by the economic blockade, war and the constant influx of refugees, the peasantry continued throughout 1919 to withhold its grain, thus throwing into jeopardy the relationship between town and country and Zhordania's hopes of maintaining national unity.

Despite its well-grounded fear that requisitioning would seriously undermine the prospect of winning active support in the countryside for the new order and, equally seriously, further exacerbate relations with the almost exclusively rural Osian population of Gori and Dushet'i districts, the government concluded in the spring of 1919 that there was no alternative. Hoarding became a serious crime.

Requisitioning [Zhordania wrote] spread like a disease. The government was overloaded by complaints. I fought fiercely against this disease and frequently achieved my aim. This was difficult because the majority of the government, or at least half of it, supported the disease. In this respect, the leadership of the T'bilisi Soviet stood out in particular; it occupied first place in the initiation of requisitioning.¹⁴⁸

Forced to use the Popular Guard to help enforce the collection of a tax in kind, the government's relations with the peasantry, as feared, deteriorated rapidly. By the summer, Valiko Jugheli, the leader of the Guard, was calling

for "heroic measures" to overcome its resistance and for a "tour" of Kakhet'i and Gori districts in order forcibly to gather the grain being concealed from the local tax-collecting bodies.

By the end of 1919 the situation had deteriorated to the extent that Noe Ramishvili, the Minister of the Interior, was forced to acknowledge on 12th November that there was now serious disorder even in Guria, which together with T'bilisi had formed the backbone of support for the Georgian Mensheviks since 1905.¹⁴⁹ On 19th November, peasants, labelled indiscriminately as Bolsheviks by the government, seized all state and social institutions in Mejvriskhevi, cut the telegraph wires and took hostage the village's elected representative. Uprisings broke out the same day in Supsa and Chokhatauri.

While the government put down these and other revolts elsewhere in the country, it was by now clear that it was losing the battle to overcome the peasantry's indifference and engage it actively in the new order. In October, just four months before the Soviet army's invasion brought Georgia's independence to an end, Zhordania lamented to the Second Congress of the Popular Guard that Georgian democracy had yet to bridge the gulf between the government and people, that the population's continued resistance to paying tax was undermining the viability of the state and that the persistent refusal of the peasantry to sell its produce to the town reflected its narrow interest in immediate gain. It was essential, he concluded, that the party carry out ideological work in the villages to convince the peasantry of the identity of its interests with those of the state. On that, as Zhordania clearly understood, rested the

prospects for survival of Georgia's independence.¹⁵⁰

But while the difficult conditions and the government's measures for overcoming them engendered a mood of sceptical indifference among much of the ethnic Georgian peasantry, the reaction of the non-Georgian population, and in particular of the Osians, was more hostile. At a time when the memory of the previous year's clashes was still fresh, the refusal of the Constituent Assembly to grant South Oset'i autonomy, disappointment at the land reform and the government's resort to requisitioning brought new tension to relations between the province and T'bilisi, while the appearance of military detachments in Osian villages to enforce the sale of grain and counter a spate of armed robbery in the area awakened fears of more government reprisals, thus greatly reducing the Social-Democrats' prospects of convincing the Osians that they had their interests at heart, a point reflected in the complaint by the government paper Sak'art'velos Respublika that rumours were being spread in Gori district that the government's measures were directed specifically against the Osian population.¹⁵¹ While the paper dismissed these as provocations designed to sow antagonism between the nationalities, it was a view that was gaining wide acceptance among the peasantry.

Relations between the South Osian National Council and the government deteriorated still further in May when the council fled the provincial capital, Tskhinvali, suspecting that military forces in the area had been given orders for its arrest. From its place of hiding, the rebel council began to spread the word that the Georgian army was intent upon the extermination of the Osian people, and urged

the population to refuse to pay tax and to evade conscription.¹⁵²

Although the national council did not in itself pose a serious danger to the Georgian Republic, its position on the Russian border and Bolshevik support for Osian unity within the Russian Federation made the Georgians wary of the possibility of Bolshevik infiltration into the area and accounts in part for the Social-Democrats' heavy-handed response to unrest. Far from eradicating the problem, however, the government's measures stimulated the emergence of an Osian national movement that wanted nothing to do with Georgia and, perhaps more ominously, paved the way for the re-emergence from "oblivion" in early 1919 of the Caucasian Bolshevik Party organisation, if only in South Oset'i.¹⁵³

Emboldened by the evidence of disenchantment among the peasantry, the Caucasian Regional Committee in September laid the first of its plans for a general uprising in Georgia. Intended for late October, the uprising was, however, pre-empted on the 22nd by the arrest in T'bilisi of its organisers. But in November the Bolsheviks enjoyed greater success in Gori district and although their expectations that this would prove the catalyst for nationwide rebellion came to nothing, the severity of the Popular Guard's reprisals further fuelled the antagonism between the Osian population and the Georgians.¹⁵⁴

Increasingly distrustful of the Osians, as of its Ap'khaz, Armenian and Russian minorities, the government's reliance on the ethnic Georgian population became still more pronounced, a consequence of which was to exclude the national minorities from active involvement in the life of the state and deepen their mutual estrangement. Faced with

a struggle for survival, the Georgian Social-Democratic Party edged closer to the unashamedly nationalist position of the National-Democratic Party. Valiko Jugheli, who was concerned by this tendency within the party, accused the government at a meeting in January 1920 of

devoting all its attention to the construction of national form, to the neglect of international socialism,

and called on the Popular Guard to "put a more proletarian policy into action",¹⁵⁵ a position shared by the Menshevik Avshetrov at the same meeting, who observed,

...in our party national tendencies are growing stronger and stronger and international tendencies moving further and further away...¹⁵⁶

In June 1920 rebellion broke out again in South Oset'i, aided on this occasion by a force of 1,000 organised by the Bolsheviks in Vladikavkaz. The Osians quickly captured Tskhinvali, but Georgian reaction was swift and uncompromising. No longer distracted by the threat of invasion by the Volunteer Army, the government resolved to mete out what it hoped would be a decisive lesson to the province. An appeal by Minister of Defence G. Lort'k'ip'anidze to the army, published in Ert'oba, not only left no room for doubt as to the government's intentions but also gave clear indication of the extent of Georgian frustration with Osian behaviour. The happiness of the Georgian people, he said, demanded that traitors and the offspring of poisonous snakes be crushed, that the traitors' nests be swept away with an iron broom and that burning irons be used to eradicate the "pustulent spots and sores which threaten to poison and destroy the

On 12th June Georgian army and Popular Guard units counter-attacked, quickly regaining Tskhinvali before turning their attention on the population centres suspected of harbouring rebels. The interests of the working class and socialism, Jugheli wrote in his diary as the Popular Guard razed villages to the ground, demanded that they be cruel.¹⁵⁸ Thousands were forced to flee northwards or seek refuge in the forests in a campaign whose indiscriminate violence not only brought into question the moral standing of the government, but greatly exacerbated the burgeoning animosity between the two nationalities. By 1920 both national and class antagonism were already threatening the unity of the state.

7.4 The search for International Recognition

Although internal relations remained tense, international developments and, in particular, the defeat of Denikin in the Russian Civil War, gave the Georgian government hope that its position might improve. The collapse of the Volunteer Army, it was believed, would remove a major obstacle to recognition of the Transcaucasian republics and thus enhance their prospects of securing international acceptance, a conviction borne out by the decision of the Allied Supreme Council on 12th January 1920 to grant Georgia de facto recognition.¹⁵⁹ It also removed a major obstacle to economic recovery, although the continued closure of the Dardanelles and the Allied occupation of Bat'umi remained impediments.

Encouraged nevertheless by the decision of the Supreme Council, Georgia pressed now for de jure recognition and

permission to join the League of Nations, in the belief that this would consolidate its international standing, improve the prospect of attracting foreign credit, which was essential to economic expansion and a vital factor in ensuring stable economic and social relations within Georgia, and deter both Russia and Turkey from armed aggression. Thus on 8th July the Georgians sent a note to the Treaty Council stating that de facto recognition did not meet the expectations of the Georgian people.¹⁶⁰

The delegation in Paris responsible for putting the Georgian case, led by Irakli Dseret'eli and Karlo Chkheidze, felt that its case was strengthened by the treaty then being drawn up by the Allies to settle the fate of the former Turkish empire which, among other things, involved determining Armenia's borders with both Turkey and Georgia, a circumstance which, in the delegation's opinion, required first of all that international recognition be accorded to Georgia. On the negative side, however, the USA continued to oppose the fragmentation of the former Russian empire, maintaining that it should be reconstituted as before, with the exceptions of Finland, Poland and Armenia, which, quite arbitrarily, it argued merited special consideration because of their particularly strong desire for independence.¹⁶¹

Georgia's hopes of the treaty, however, proved misplaced. When it was signed in the French town of Sevres on 10th August, it not only failed to extend de jure recognition but declared Bat'umi a free port and excluded Georgia from the international commission to control the

Dardanelles.¹⁶² Undeterred by this setback, the government continued to press the League of Nations to accept its application for membership. In November, the League recommended that its Assembly inform Georgia that its application had been treated with sympathy and that, pending a final decision, it could participate in the League's technical organisations.¹⁶³ On 16th December, however, swayed by the continuing resistance of the major powers to grant de jure recognition, the League, by 13 votes to 10 and with 19 abstentions, turned down Georgia's request.¹⁶⁴ Only when the Allies finally granted de jure recognition on 26th January 1921 was the way opened for its inclusion in the League. By then, however, Georgia's independence had only one month to run.

The impending defeat of the Volunteer Army and the growing need for the Allies to come to terms with the Bolsheviks gave rise to the hope in T'bilisi that Georgia would now be able to abandon the delicate role of neutrality in the Civil War and normalise its relations with Russia. To this end it sought the assistance of Britain. The head of the Georgian delegation in Paris on 6th March wrote to Lloyd George that although Georgia and Azerbaijan had been forced onto the defensive in their relations with Russia, it nevertheless remained the case that the main aim of their political activity was to secure Russia's recognition of their independence.

We hope [he wrote] that you will help our republics to secure de jure recognition and that you will play the role of arbiter in the reconciliation of the Transcaucasian republics with Russia, which will probably lead to the recognition of our independence by our northern neighbour.¹⁶⁵

Georgia's relations with Britain, however, remained cool, constrained by their dispute over the occupation of Bat'umi, which in Georgian eyes was rapidly becoming a symbol of national territorial integrity, and the growing conviction of the British cabinet, confirmed by the Red Army's occupation of Baku in April, that a sympathetic Georgia would not contribute significantly to British strategic or economic interests in the Middle East.

No doubt aware of British reservations, the Georgians on 14th April took the initiative themselves by appealing directly to Moscow for treaty negotiations, a gesture which reflected both anxiety that Bolshevik victory in the Civil War might lead Moscow to concentrate greater effort on destabilising Transcaucasia and the understanding of the Georgian leadership that normalisation of its relations with Russia was crucial to Georgia's future economic viability. It doubtless hoped too that better relations with Russia would have a marked effect on the situation in South Oset'i, much of the blame for which it attributed to Bolshevik agitation.¹⁶⁶

The Bolshevik leadership had cause for considering the Georgian approach favourably, not least because outside Oset'i, where Bolshevik activities were facilitated by the proximity of Vladikavkaz, the inability of the party organisation to win significant support among either the peasantry or the working class in Georgia had already caused the Politburo to reconsider the form of party organisation in the area. At a meeting on 3rd January it concluded that it was crucial to the success of the struggle against "local chauvinism" and for the creation of conditions conducive to the propagation of socialist revolution that the communist

organisations in Transcaucasia operate as separate national parties, a decision which in spite of vehement opposition from the kavkraikom (Caucasian Regional Committee), the Politburo succeeded in enforcing by the spring.¹⁶⁷ In May, perhaps because its resistance had been deemed too vigorous, the kavkraikom was disbanded and replaced by the kavburo (Caucasian Bureau), which was directly subordinate to Moscow and led by Orjonikidze and Kirov.¹⁶⁸ The notional independence of the Armenian, Azeri and Georgian parties was emphasised by their dual subordination to the kavburo and the RCP Central Committee.

That these changes had had little bearing on the party's fortunes in Georgia, aside perhaps from undermining its sagging morale, was demonstrated on May Day when an attempt by members of the Georgian CP to exploit the uncertainty and anxiety caused by the almost unimpeded annexation of Azerbaijan by the Red Army to stage an uprising in T'bilisi ended in ignominy. The Bolsheviks were surrounded by a crowd of hostile workers and handed over to the authorities.¹⁶⁹ A similarly ill-advised attempt to stage a coup d'etat the following day and to attack the military school ended in disaster and further demoralisation, while an attempted invasion via Dsit'eli Khidi on the Georgian-Azeri border by the Red Army, timed to coincide with the events in T'bilisi, was repulsed.¹⁷⁰ Despite the privations endured by the Georgian population and its waning enthusiasm for the national revolution, it was evident that dissatisfaction did not yet extend as far as support for the Bolshevik alternative or the overthrow of the government.

There were other reasons too for the Bolshevik leadership to look favourably on an agreement with Georgia. A peace treaty could neutralise the area while the Red Army focused its attention on driving Wrangel out of the Crimea and might ease the conditions under which the Communist Party operated in Georgia. Furthermore, by regaining Baku the Bolsheviks now had control over Georgia's oil supplies and were in a position to dictate terms without having to resort to force.¹⁷¹

Secret negotiations between the Georgians and Russians, conducted even while the Red Army was attempting to cross Georgia's south-eastern border, led on 7th May 1920 to the signing of a treaty in Moscow by which the Bolsheviks recognised Georgia's independence, renounced all claim to the territory of Georgia and its people, renounced all intervention in the internal affairs of Georgia and agreed, in Article Six, not to permit on their territory

...the sojourn and activity of any groups or organisations pretending to the role of Government of Georgia, or any part thereof, nor of any group or organisation seeking to overthrow the Government of Georgia.¹⁷²

In return, however, Georgia not only agreed both to deny access to its territory of troops and organisations hostile to the Russian government, and to refuse them transport facilities across Georgia but, in Article 10, conceded, in effect, to the negation of the agreement by Russia not to interfere in Georgia's internal affairs, by agreeing to release all those it had imprisoned for acts committed in the interest of the RSFSR or the Communist Party, regardless of whether or not such activities had

endangered the interests of Georgia.

At no cost to itself Russia thus forced Georgia to apply more pressure for British withdrawal from Bat'umi at a time when a British military presence, however galling it might have been to national pride, might have acted as a deterrent to Bolshevik military incursion, deprived stragglers from the Volunteer Army of a safe haven, and, in a supplement to the treaty, induced the Georgians to legalise the activity of the Communist Party even though it remained committed to the exploitation of socio-economic tensions within the country and the overthrow, by force if necessary, of the government.¹⁷⁴

Despite the protestations of Foreign Minister Gegetchkori that the treaty violated Georgian sovereignty, the majority of the government, including Zhordania, took the view that Russia's de jure recognition of Georgian independence outweighed all other considerations. The way was now open, they believed, for recognition by the major powers.

The treaty did little in fact for the fortunes of the Georgian CP, for although the government released 900 people from prison shortly after the treaty and legalised the party, it did not tolerate further activity by Bolsheviks that it felt jeopardised state interests. Legalisation, moreover, brought the underground cells to the surface and facilitated the task of identification of party members by Georgian intelligence, while no sooner had Bolshevik papers begun to reappear than steps were taken to enforce their closure again for violating state interests. Between July and October 1920, 1500 party members were expelled from Georgia, while morale among those left behind was very low. As one member of the T'bilisi Committee described it,

...our organisation was almost destroyed at its roots. Cells survived only in a few places. The comrades released from prison were not given back their work...so it was impossible to re-establish cells. The mass of the party was in low spirits. The treaty, which left the Mensheviks at the head of the government, angered our comrades. There was a strong desire to leave for Soviet Azerbaijan and Russia...¹⁷⁵

But for the Russians, the low morale of the local Bolshevik organisation, however, was a small sacrifice for the gains made from the treaty, particularly as the former had proved so ineffectual in the past. Moscow was now able to exploit the terms of the treaty to increase the pressure on and undermine the morale of the Georgian government. Thus while the kavburo organised the Osian force that entered Georgia in June and played a major part in planning and fomenting the uprising, and while the Georgian CP was encouraged to agitate against the government and encourage revolutionary change, Moscow cited Georgian counter-measures as evidence of the Zhordania government's failure to abide by the terms of the treaty.

Among a series of incidents that at the least suggest an absence of good will on the part of Moscow, the Bolsheviks in October accused the Georgians first of connivance with Wrangel following an incident in which 5,000 Cossacks interned near the Black Sea coast were freed by a Volunteer Army raid,¹⁷⁶ and then, in early November, of planning to lease Bat'umi to Britain, an accusation which, whatever its basis in truth, kept the Georgian government on the defensive in its dealings with Russia.¹⁷⁷ Throughout this period too evidence was gathering that the Bolsheviks, sceptical of the likelihood of being able to overthrow the

government from within Georgia, were contemplating a military solution to the problem. In the light of information received from Baku, the cabinet met in T'bilisi in early November to set up a secret defence council and initiate measures to counter the threat of invasion. In an internal report, Evgeni Gegetchkori drew a distinction, shared it seems by Zhordania, between the "cautious and loyal" attitude of Moscow and the more belligerent kavburo, and claimed to have intelligence reports stating that the Soviet Army Command in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the latter of which came under Soviet authority on 2nd December,¹⁷⁸ was planning to invade Georgia on the pretext of a territorial dispute and peasant revolt in Borchalo, precisely the grounds used by the Bolsheviks to justify the Red Army's invasion in February 1921.

Orjonikidze, who had been urging Moscow to invade since May 1920, in December began a campaign of misinformation to persuade the Politburo to act. The Georgians learnt, for instance, that Moscow had been wrongly informed that Sheinman, the head of the Soviet mission in T'bilisi, had been arrested, and that Georgia was colluding with the Allies to declare war on Russia. Unimpressed by Orjonikidze's claims, however, the Politburo on 12th January 1921 resisted another appeal from the head of the kavburo for invasion.¹⁷⁹

The escalation of clandestine military pressure and the more overt use of economic and political means against Georgia forced the government into still heavier expenditure on defence at a time when inflation was already out of control and when food shortages had brought some areas to the brink of famine. Many industries had stopped work altogether because of the absence of fuel and raw materials.

Such was the state of the economy, in fact, that on 13th October Zhordania declared to a meeting of the Economic Council:

We said that from an economic point of view we were heading for catastrophe...today we all feel, all suffer bitterly in the knowledge that we are no longer heading for catastrophe, but have already arrived.¹⁸⁰

Matters became still worse at the end of 1920 when the Bolsheviks used a dispute over the ownership of ships left by Wrangel in Georgian ports as an excuse to cease oil supplies from Baku and to seize Georgian trains carrying oil in Azerbaijan, an action which had a devastating effect on the economy and further sapped popular morale at the approach of winter. The Georgians gave way over the ships on 16th December, but although agreement was reached over the resumption of supplies the Russians continued to prevaricate and the trains were never returned.¹⁸¹

On 27th January 1921 the Georgian government's struggle for international acceptance was at last rewarded with de jure recognition by the Allied Council in Paris.¹⁸² The celebrations that greeted the announcement in Georgia were, however, to prove short-lived. On 11th February, just four days after Sheinman had congratulated Zhordania and spoken of their countries' common aims at a banquet to celebrate Georgia's new status, the Red Army invaded, just as Gegetch-kori had predicted, on the pretext of a peasant uprising in Borchalo.¹⁸³

The Georgian Army, deprived of the weapons it had pleaded for in vain from the Allies, lacked the manpower, the morale, the experience and the equipment to contain a

force twice its size. On 17th March the government capitulated and left Bat'umi on an Italian boat for Constantinople.

It is doubtful that any Georgian government, however popular and however strong its economy, could, without international support, have withstood for long a determined Russian invasion, particularly as Moscow had control of Georgia's oil supplies. Nevertheless, it is evident that the lethargy of the response to the attack, while due in part to the inadequacy of the Georgian Army's leadership, reflected too the low morale of the population and the gradual withdrawal of committed support for the "Georgian revolution" of the peasantry during the preceding year. Zhordania himself was aware of the importance of this descent into indifference of the peasantry:

This attitude of mind had already appeared during the weeks of our defeat when the view was heard among the people: 'The Mensheviks have been ruling for all this time and now the Bolsheviki will take over - what's the big difference?'¹⁸⁴

Throughout the years of independence, the government had sought to convince the population that its interests would necessarily best be served within a national Georgian state. That this should have been an onerous task, however, could scarcely have been surprising in view of the clear reservations about independence expressed by the Mensheviks themselves and their long history of opposition to separation from Russia, a position, moreover, which they had vigorously defended in frequent polemics with the National-Democrats and Socialist-Federalists since before the 1905 revolution.

While it welcomed the Georgianisation of local government, education and justice, the peasantry ultimately proved more concerned with its immediate standard of living than the defence of such an abstract concept as the national idea. For many in the countryside, too, the Bolsheviks were not enemies but fellow Georgians, often even fellow villagers who lived and worked alongside them. It was not easy in such circumstances, particularly as the Bolsheviks were promising to give away land free of charge, to convince the peasantry that the worst of Georgia's economic difficulties were over, that things would be worse under Bolshevik rule and that their future would best be served by Georgian independence.

Recalling a visit to his home in Lanchkhut'i in 1920, Zhordania commented on the general disbelief of the Gurian peasantry, for the past 20 years the backbone of Menshevik support in the country, when told of the situation in Russia and the policies of the Bolsheviks. For the first time, he wrote, he realised that the party's cause was lost and that the ideological conviction of the people was wavering.¹⁸⁵

1. K. Tsintsadze, "Chemi mogonebani" in Revolutsiis Matiane no. 4-5, 1924, p. 236.
2. Constantin Kandelaki, The Georgian Question before the Free World (Acts-Documents-Evidence) (Paris, 1953), p. 180.
3. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 130.
4. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 110.
5. F. Makharadze, Sovety i borba za sovetskuyu vlast' v Gruzii (T'bilisi, 1928), p. 144.
6. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba (The Georgian National Economy) Dsigni meore (Vol. 2) (Paris, 1960), p. 47.
7. W. Woytinskiy, La Democratie Georgienne (Paris, 1921), p. 76.
8. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba (Memoires) (Paris, 1953), p. 79.
9. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 132.
10. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 132.
11. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 58.
12. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 172, pp. 343-49 and no. 176, pp. 357-60. In addition to the free transit of troops and materiel, the Georgians undertook to grant quarters to Turkish officers at railway stations so that, among other things, they could organise the purchase of provisions for their troops, and to permit the Turkish Army the right to defend the railway if Georgian troops proved unable to do so.
13. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba 1905 dslidan, op.cit., pp. 60-61.
14. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 98.
15. K. Kautsky, Georgia: A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic (London, 1921), p. 89.
16. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 191. General von Kreiss attempted to intercede with the government on behalf of the nobility of Gori district which was claiming that it was owed rent by the peasantry. He also queried the arrest of two leading members of the aristocracy for attempting to set up groups similar to the Black Hundreds of 1905.
17. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya, op.cit., p. 82.

18. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 87.
19. Ibid., p. 50.
20. Ibid., p. 171.
21. Ibid., p. 171.
22. I. Mirtskhulava, Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros, op.cit., p. 290.
23. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 66.
24. I. Mirtskhulava, Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros, op.cit., pp. 294-99; K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., pp. 152-55.
25. I. Mirtskhulava, Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros, op.cit., p. 300.
26. The Bolsheviks' isolation in Georgia was seriously exacerbated by the treaty, which had been opposed by many in the regional party organisation. Soon afterwards the kavkraikom was forced to flee to Vladivavkaz, where it was cut off both from Transcaucasia and, because of the civil war, Moscow. In January 1919 it was forced to flee again, this time under pressure from the Volunteer army. Although it played a part in encouraging the Dushet'i uprising in June 1918, its isolation prevented it from significantly aiding the rebellion once it had started. See K. Tsintsadze's Chemi mogonebani, op.cit., p. 236.
27. K. Tsintsadze, Chemi mogonebani, op.cit., p. 236. Writing in 1927 P'ilipe Makharadze described the 1918 uprising as spontaneous and elemental. Sovety i bor'ba za sovetскую vlast', op.cit., p. 147.
28. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba, op.cit., p. 66.
29. Ibid., pp. 70-71. Valiko Chubinidze, who was himself a Red Guard officer, recalled that the behaviour of some members of the Guard gave substance to Bolshevik propaganda about the violent behaviour of the Georgian forces and their intention to confiscate the Osian peasantry's lands. Nevertheless, although he acknowledges the brutality of the methods of one officer in particular and concedes the poverty of the Osian population, he still labels the rebels indiscriminately as Bolsheviks, robbers and bandits. Georgian reprisals included destroying the property of those involved in the rebellion.
30. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., pp. 116-19.
31. Ert'oba (Unity) 28.6.1918.
32. Noe Zhordania, K'art'veli khalkhi da natsionalizmi, op.cit., p. 6.

33. Noe Zhordania, Natsional'yivopros, op.cit., in Bor'ba nos. 2,3,5, 1914.
34. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 143.
35. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 82.
36. Sak'art'velos Respublika (The Republic of Georgia) 26.5.1919. See also A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakitkhi, op.cit., p. 222 and W. Woytinskiy, La Democratie Georgienne, op.cit., p. 200 for details of their work.
37. Even Zhordania alluded to this in his memoirs. See Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 143.
38. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 85.
39. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 9.5.1919.
40. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 172.
41. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 9.7.1919.
42. F. Makharadze, Diktatura men'shevistskoi partii v Gruzii (Moskva, 1921), p. 86.
43. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 166.
44. Ibid., pp. 166-75.
45. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 26.5.1919.
46. U. Bakhtadze, Samkhret' Oset'is avtonomiuri olk'is shek'mna da misi samart'lebrivi mdgomareoba (The Creation of the Autonomous Region of South Oset'i and its Legal Position) (T'bilisi, 1968), p. 45.
47. I. Javakhishvili, Sak'art'velos sazghvreb, op.cit., p. 6. The author claimed that, according to the census carried out in 1916, the population of Sokhumi and Sochi regions, which together formed the territory traditionally occupied by Ap'khazet'i, was 141,000, of whom 71,000 were Georgians, 43,000 Ap'khaz, 6,000 Armenians and 21,000 various others.
48. The elections on 12th March produced a 40-man council consisting of 27 Mensheviks, 9 independent socialists, three SRs, one SF and one National Democrat. See Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya, op.cit., p. 91.
49. Ibid., p. 91.
50. S. Robak'idze, Samshoblos aghdsera (A Census of the Homeland) (K'ut'aisi, 1918), pp. 59-60. The author notes that the poverty of the Osians, most of whom lived from sheep farming, had driven them to move all over Georgia in search of land and work and explained their predominance among the khiznebi. There was a

high concentration of Osians in the Georgian province of N. K'art'li. G.A. Galoyan, Oktyabr'skaya revoliutsiya i vozrozhdenie narodov Zakavkaz'ya (Moskva, 1977), p. 68, claims that there were 58,000 Osians throughout Georgia.

51. V. Janjghava, Glekht'a revoliutsiuri modzraoba, op.cit., pp. 197-98.
52. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 151.
53. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya, op.cit., p. 85.
54. W. Woytinskiy, La Democratie Georgienne, op.cit., p. 195.
55. Constantin Kandelaki, The Georgian Question before the Free World, op.cit., p. 204.
56. Ibid., pp. 207-8.
57. F. Makharadze, Diktatura men'shevistskoi partii, op.cit., p. 69.
58. Armenians only occupied Lower K'art'li (Borchalo and Lore districts) and Samtskhe-Javakhet'i (Akhalk'alak'i and Akhaltsikhe districts) in significant numbers after the 1827-29 Russo-Turkish war when many settled in the area as refugees. Georgian historian Ivane Javakhishvili - Sak'art'velos sazghvrebi, op.cit., p. 32, estimates that 100,000 Armenians settled in Lower K'art'li from Turkey and 30,000 from Persia in the 1830s. A similar process took place in Samtskhe-Javakhet'i after this and the 1877-79 Russo-Turkish war. In the latter area in particular the tsarist authorities compelled many of the indigenous Georgian population, most of whom were Muslim, to leave for Turkey, thus effecting a dramatic change in the ethnic composition of southern Georgia. The Georgians' rejection of Armenian pretensions to these areas in 1918 were thus in large part based on the fact that the latter's numerical predominance was the consequence of recent tsarist policy. Javakhishvili also points out that the economies of both areas were closely linked to T'bilisi, that because of topographical conditions all roads headed towards the Georgian capital, and that Georgian herdsmen from North K'art'li had used the summer pastures of south K'art'li for centuries.
59. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., nos. 221-23, pp. 436-38.
60. R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia Vol. 1 The First Year, 1918-1919 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1971), p. 72.
61. R.G. Hovannisian, Caucasian Armenia between Imperial and Soviet rule; the interlude of national independence, in Transcaucasia, op.cit., p. 261.

62. It is notable that the government's resettlement schemes, intended to ease the pressure on land in West Georgia, did not extend to the Georgian populations of either Akhalk'alak'i or Borchalo districts, or those areas contested with the Osians. Georgians living in these areas were under considerable pressure not to move.
63. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 3.1.1919. The Armenians' insistence on recognition of the ethnic principle was having the unfortunate consequence of jaundicing the Georgian government's approach to Armenian refugees, of which there were a great many, both from Turkey and Armenia, on the grounds that their presence in the country could form the basis for future territorial claims by the Erevan government.
64. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p 139.
65. R.G. Hovannisian, Caucasian Armenia, op.cit., p. 263.
66. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 211, pp. 428-29.
67. Ibid., no 211, pp. 428-29.
68. Ibid., no. 219, p. 235.
69. Ibid., no. 244, pp. 467-68.
70. Ibid., no. 248, pp. 473-76.
71. R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia, op.cit., p. 115.
72. R. Klimiashvili, K'alak' t'bilisis demograp'iuli prot-sesebis sotsialuri p'ak'torebi, op.cit., p. 38. There were 42,200 Georgians living in T'bilisi in 1897 and 47,133 Armenians out of a total population of 159,590. By 1922 the Georgian population of the city had risen to 86,519, and the Armenian to 85,616 out of a total of 245,461.
73. R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia, op.cit., p. 122.
74. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 3.1.1919.
75. Ibid.
76. W. Woytinskiy, La Democratie Georgienne, op.cit., p. 193. G. Uratadze claims (p. 88) that 80 per cent of the electorate voted. Official statistics, however, which probably include the subsequent elections in Akhalk'alak'i, Akhaltsikhe and Borchalo districts, show that 616,142 out of total of 1,024,682 registered voters cast their votes (Georgian Archive Box 4, Book 4).
77. G. Uratadze recalls (p. 88) that 15 parties took part in the elections ranging from the established Social Democrats, SFs, National Democrats, Dashnaks and SRs to

the more esoteric Shot'a Rust'aveli Party and the Aesthetic League. Subsequent adjustments, additional elections and disaffection reduced the number of Social Democratic deputies from 109 to 102, although it is probably the case that had it not been for the system of proportional representation used in the election, the Social Democrats' majority in the Assembly would have been even greater. The national composition of the party was predominantly Georgian (predominantly West Georgian in fact), but in keeping with its claim to represent all nationalities in the country, included 3 Armenians, 3 Ap'khaz, 2 Osians, 2 Germans, at least 2 Russians, a Greek and a Turk. Most of the deputies were from a professional background and five of the deputies in the Assembly were women.

78. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 22.8.1919.
79. Ibid. The surprisingly low support for the Dashnaks reflects the fact that many Armenians living in this area had not registered as Georgian citizens and were therefore not enfranchised. The Dashnaks also complained of intimidation.
80. In accordance with the Constitution (Ch. 5, Articles 66-70), the Assembly elected a head of state on an annual basis. The head of state, who also performed the role of Prime Minister, was responsible for appointing a cabinet. The same individual could only be re-elected once.
81. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op. cit., pp. 52-28.
82. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 237.
83. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya, op.cit., p. 90.
84. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 245.
85. Dokumenty i materialy, op.cit., no. 196, pp. 393-400.
86. Ibid., no. 197, p. 410.
87. Ibid., no. 197, p.414.
88. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., pp. 176-83.
89. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 15.7.1919.
90. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya, op.cit., p. 97.
91. Georgian Archive Box 20, Bk 2, p. 33. See S. Jones, op.cit., p. 452.
92. Ibid., Bx 20, Bk. 7, p. 71. See S. Jones, op.cit., p. 452.

93. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., pp. 245-46.
94. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 241.
95. According to Hovannisian (The Republic of Armenia, op.cit., pp. 67-70), 70,000 of the population of Bat'umi region in 1916 were Georgian Muslims out of a total population of 123,000. Samson P'irtskhalava (Samahmadiano Sak'art'velo an dzveli Meskhet'i - Muslim Georgian or Ancient Meskhet'i -, Tp'ilisi, 1915) commented on the indifference of much of the Muslim population to the idea of the Georgian nation and blamed this primarily on the oppressive policies of the tsarist authorities since the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish war and their opposition to the opening of Georgian-language schools. The Russians, he accused, had deliberately sought to prevent the inculcation of a Georgian national consciousness among the Muslim population of South-West Georgia. But although his criticism was mostly directed against the Russian government, P'irtskhalava was also scathing of what he saw as the failure of Georgian society to take any initiative to encourage the Muslim population to identify its interests and future with that of their Christian compatriots (pp. 69-70). In fact, he said, the distance between Christian and Muslim Georgians had grown wider since reunification. Georgian society had done nothing for its Muslims: it had provided no schools, no books, no libraries, no reading rooms and not even words of comfort (p. 72). No attempt had even been made to learn about the different parts of the area or to engage its leaders in discussion.
96. Georgian Archive, Bx 16, Bk. 9, p. 15. See S. Jones, op.cit., p. 415.
97. Ibid., Bx. 21, Bk. 28, p. 33.
98. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba, op.cit., p. 118.
99. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsiya, op.cit., p. 92. The Georgians won 20 of the 36 seats, the Russians 2, the Greeks 8, the Armenians 4, and the Jews 2.
100. S. P'irtskhalava, Samahmadiano Sak'art'velo, op.cit., pp. 52-54.
101. Georgian Archive, Bx. 21, Bk. 25, p. 234. See S. Jones, op.cit., p. 415.
102. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 1.1.1919.
103. Ibid., 5.1.1919.
104. Ibid., 2.8.1919.
105. Ibid., 16.9.1919.
106. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., pp. 202-03.

107. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 3.6.1919.
108. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba 1905 dslidan, op.cit., p. 78. Zhordania had accused that Armenia's invasion had been timed to coincide with the redeployment of Georgian troops in the Sochi area against the Volunteer Army.
109. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., pp. 189-90; R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia, op.cit., pp. 355-83; Ert'oba, 26.9.1919. Speech by Foreign Minister Evgeni Gegetchkori to the First Popular Guard Congress; A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., pp. 243-44. The declaration on 28th May by the Republic of Armenia of the unification into one whole of its Transcaucasian and Turkish territories, while meaningless until international agreement had been reached, further antagonised Georgia and Azerbaijan which could see little justification for Armenia's claims in Transcaucasia if it was to receive six villayets in Turkey. The Georgians were quick to point out too that Armenia's enthusiasm for applying the ethnic principle to Transcaucasia did not extend to the Turkish provinces where Armenians were in a minority. The suspected sympathy of much of the Armenian military for the Volunteers, General Alekseev's authorisation for Russian officers to join the Armenian army, the appointment of an Armenian envoy to the Volunteers, and Denikin's decision to grant permission to Armenian communities in Russia to gather supplies and equipment for men leaving to join the Armenian army strengthened Azeri and Georgian antipathy towards the Erevan government.
110. Ert'oba, 26.9.1919. The Armenians may also have feared that the Azeris and Georgians would unite to impose a territorial settlement on Armenia. Given the outstanding territorial disputes between the Baku and T'bilisi governments, however, and the former's continuing support for the South-West Caucasian Republic, then in conflict with Georgia, this would have been unlikely to have happened.
111. R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia, op.cit., p. 383.
112. In addition to its concern at the health hazard caused by the massive influx of Armenian refugees and the problem of feeding the urban population, the Georgian government was understandably perturbed that by swelling the size of the Armenian population in Georgia, the refugees were providing the Erevan government with more ammunition for its territorial claim. The suspicion too that the latter's ultimate ambition was to take over T'bilisi was, for the Georgians, confirmed by the Dashnaks' argument that the Georgian capital should move to K'ut'aisi and that T'bilisi should be administered by a mixed-nationality government. Ivane Javakhishvili also observed (Sak'art'velos sazghvrebi, op.cit., pp. 50-51) that articles in the Rostov Armenian press during the Armeno-Georgian conflict predicting that T'bilisi would soon fall into Armenian hands, and

Armenian maps published in Istanbul which included T'bilisi, Mtskheta, Gori and Bat'umi within Armenian state boundaries, further confirmed this conviction and did nothing to ease the tension between the two countries.

113. R.G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia Vol.2 . From Versailles to London 1919-1920 (London, 1982), p. 149; Sak'art'velos Respublika, 7.6.1919.
114. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 7.6.1919.
115. Despite this and the domination of the Social-Democratic Party, the Constituent Assembly remained a forum in which the opposition parties could express sharp criticism of the government right up to the Russian invasion.
116. Noe Zhordania, Za dva goda, op.cit., p. 197.
117. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 171.
118. Ibid., p. 180.
119. Ibid., p. 137. The Minister of Finance recalls that though the main cause of the decline in productivity was the need for all men of working age to defend the country, other factors such as indiscipline and the surge of public enthusiasm engendered by the revolution and independence were also to blame. Too much time was spent at political meetings and demonstrations.
120. V. Chubinidze, Mogoneba 1905 dslidan, op.cit., p. 60.
121. A.I. Denikin, Ocherki russkoi cmuty, T.4 (Berlin, 1924-26), p. 177. Cited in F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 247.
122. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., pp. 88-94.
123. Ibid., p. 115.
124. Ibid., p. 115.
125. Ibid., p. 171.
126. Ibid., p. 178. To put matters in perspective, Kandela-ki claims that although Georgia's national income in 1919-20 covered only 23.6 per cent of government spending, the corresponding figure in Estonia in the same year was 21.7 per cent, in Poland 22 per cent, in Italy 29.8 per cent, in Belgium 35 per cent, in Romania 27.6 per cent and in Germany (West) 11.7 per cent.
127. Ibid., p. 72.
128. Ibid., p. 139.
129. Ibid., pp. 139-40.

130. Georgian Archive, Bx. 3, Bk. 24, cited in S. Jones, op.cit., p. 491.
131. W. Woytinskiy, op.cit., p. 228, notes that nearly all workers and industrial employees were unionised. The country's 113 unions had 64,000 members. The largest was the railwaymen's union which had 15,000 members.
132. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 140.
133. K. Kautsky, op.cit., p. 34. Kautsky claims that 95 per cent of union members belonged to the Georgian Social-Democratic Party.
134. W. Woytinskiy, op.cit., p. 229. In 1919 the Ministry of Labour registered 9 strikes involving 2,427 workers and lasting on average six days.
135. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., pp. 148-49.
136. I.I. Mirtskhulava, Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros, op.cit., pp. 331-32.
137. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 148.
138. I.I. Mirtskhulava, Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros, op.cit., p. 332.
139. Ibid., p. 325; K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 147.
140. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 152. The Georgian Minister of Agriculture, N. Khomeriki, Agraruli rep'orma da chveni sasop'lo meurneoba (The Agrarian Reform and Our Agriculture) (Tp'ilisi, 1920), p. 12, put the figure slightly higher at 621,697 desyatiny.
141. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., p. 153.
142. N. Khomeriki, Agraruli rep'orma, op.cit., p. 14.
143. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., pp. 158-59.
144. I.I. Mitskhulava, Agrarno-krest'yanskii vopros, op.cit., p. 304.
145. N. Khomeriki, Agraruli rep'orma, op.cit., p. 12.
146. K. Kandelaki, Sak'art'velos erovnuli meurneoba, op.cit., pp. 110-12.
147. Ibid., p. 113.
148. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 168.
149. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 13.11. 1919.

150. V. Janjghava, op.cit., p. 157.
151. Sak'art'velos Respublika, 3.5.1919.
152. Ibid., 24.5.1919.
153. P'. Makharadze, Mogonebani (Memoirs) Revolutsiis Matiane, No. 2, 1923, p. 62.
154. V. Janjghava, op.cit., pp. 170-74.
155. Georgian Archive, Bx. 16, Bk. 41, no. 18, cited in S. Jones, op.cit., p. 428.
156. Ibid., p. 428.
157. V. Janjghava, op.cit., p. 198.
158. N. Meshcheriakov, V men'shevistskom rae. Iz vpechatlenii poezdki v Gruzii (Moskva, 1921), p. 29.
159. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 219.
160. A. Bendianishvili, op.cit., p. 261.
161. Ibid., p. 262.
162. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., pp. 264-65.
163. Ibid., pp. 269-80.
164. Ibid.
165. A. Bendianishvili, op.cit., pp. 256-57.
166. Ibid., p. 259.
167. D. Ogden, National Communism in Georgia (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1977), p. 39.
168. Ibid., p. 40.
169. F. Makharadze, Sovety i bor'ba, op.cit., p. 214.
170. V. Chubinidze, Mogonebani 1905 dslidan, op.cit., pp. 79-80.
171. G. Uratadze, Obrazovanie i konsolidatsia, op.cit., p. 107. Uratadze wrote on the fall of Azerbaijan: "It was clear that with the subjugation of Azerbaijan the fate of Georgia was decided too".
172. C. Kandelaki, The Georgian Question before the Free World, op.cit., p. 186.
173. Ibid., p. 188.
174. A. Manvelishvili, Ruset'i da Sak'art'velos damoukidebloba (Russia and the Independence of Georgia) (San Francisco, 1984), p. 275.

175. S. Jones, op.cit., p. 534.
176. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 303; L. Trotsky, Social-Democracy and the Wars of Intervention (Between Red and White) (London, 1975), p. 56.
177. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 303.
178. In September, Turkey's new nationalist leadership declared war against Armenia. By November Turkish troops had occupied Kars and Alexandropol and forced the Armenians to accept a truce based on the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Out of desperation to preserve the existence of Armenia the government on 2nd December conceded to the creation of an independent Soviet socialist republic.
179. Georgian Archive, Bx. 37, Bk. 27, p. 18. Cited in S. Jones, op.cit., p. 543.
180. Ibid., Bx. 37, Bk. 8, p. 33.
181. A. Bendianishvili, Erovnuli sakit'khi, op.cit., p. 239.
182. F. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., p. 310.
183. Z. Avalishvili, op.cit., p. 284.
184. V. Chubinidze, Mogonebani 1905 dslidan, op.cit., pp. 86-87.
185. Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, op.cit., p. 157.
186. Ibid., p. 157.

The focus of this study has been on the emergence in the 19th and early 20th centuries of a new stage in Georgians' perception of their collective identity. This is not to suggest, however, that hitherto Georgians had been unaware of their communal existence or that it had never been a matter of any consequence to them. On the contrary, given the relatively small size of Georgia, the growth of social and geographical mobility during the 11th-13th centuries, the assertive role of the central state, the extension of a common religion, Christianity, to all parts of the country, and the need for almost constant military alert against neighbouring states and peoples, it seems highly probable that Georgians had developed a strong sense of ethnic community by the 13th century. It is notable that Georgians came to use the term Sak'art'velo (Georgia) for the first time in this period to refer to the whole of the area occupied by the Georgian people.¹

Even Soviet Georgian historians, despite the Marxist emphasis on the nation as a product of the capitalist epoch and Stalin's assertion that "Georgia came on the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the 19th century",² have sought to locate the formation of the Georgian nation in this period. Professor Ap'ak'idze, for instance, while agreeing with Stalin that a unity of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up are the prerequisites of nationhood, rejected the view that the nation is exclusively a phenomenon of the capitalist stage of development and argued that the Georgian nation already existed by

the end of the 12th century.³ Other historians, like Professor Katcharava, have also stressed the existence of national consciousness in this period, although they distinguish between the feudal nation that they claim existed in the Middle Ages and the bourgeois nation that emerged in the 19th century.⁴ The difference between them, they argued, was not one of kind, however, but of degree. Others, like S. Janashia, have argued that the linguistic, territorial and cultural unity of Georgia lacked only solidity, the internal economic relationships which consolidate the nation's separate parts into one whole,⁵ while G. Bregadze has stressed the importance of the communications network stretching across the whole country to the process of national integration in the Middle Ages. It was indicative of the high level of internal communications, he noted, that it took only 10 days for the mobilisation of the entire Georgian army.⁶

However, while Georgians were undoubtedly aware of their shared ethnic, cultural and linguistic traits, for no section of the population did national identity assume the all-embracing importance that it was to acquire for the intelligentsia in the late 19th century. Ethnicity, in fact, was but one of a number of factors that made demands on the individual's loyalty, and was by no means always the most powerful. Religion frequently cut across ethnic boundaries, and service to provincial lords could still be placed before service to the monarchy. The Georgian crown too frequently used non-Georgians both in its external campaigns and in its struggle to overcome the resistance of the Georgian nobility. Moreover, whatever the level of ethnic consciousness attained there can be no doubt that

much of that sense of community was eroded in the 14th-18th centuries by the successive invasions of the Mongols, Tamurlane, Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

Georgia's "golden age" was nevertheless to prove of considerable significance to the re-emergence of ethnic consciousness in the 19th century and the attempts of the intelligentsia to rediscover Georgia's past and instil in contemporary Georgians a sense of pride in their history and nation. For not only did awareness of the unity achieved in the Middle Ages not entirely disappear, but the intelligentsia was able to use the surviving histories of the "golden age", the folk memories of that and earlier periods preserved in the oral tradition of the Georgian peasantry, and the persistent unifying influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church to remind Georgians of what they had once attained and inspire them to fresh ambition. The "golden age" was proof that Georgia was an "historical nation", fit to join the emerging world of nations. It was the task of the intelligentsia to unravel its laws of growth and reveal the key to its future development.

The political and economic reunification of Georgia, brought about by its forced incorporation into the Russian Empire and the reforms of the 19th century, had an enormous impact on the country, leading to increased spacial and social mobility, economic integration, the emergence of new classes and class alliances, the fall of the t'avadzanauroba, and the rise of national tension, particularly in the towns, where a coincidence of class and ethnicity brought a predominantly Armenian bourgeoisie into conflict with the predominantly Georgian workers.

For the Georgians, the cost of stability and national security was the loss of control of their own affairs, the gradual replacement of Georgian practice and law with Russian methods, the Russification of all administrative affairs, the denigration of their language and customs, and the domination of their capital city by Armenians and Russians. Their lowly status within T'bilisi reflected indeed their subjugation within Georgia as a whole.

Nobody felt this more than the intelligentsia, whose numbers and radicalism considerably increased in the 1860s with the expansion of higher education in Russia and the spread of the "student movement" through its universities. Angered and embittered by the fact that just as Georgia had regained its unity that its ethnographic existence should be threatened by the assimilationist intentions of tsarist policy, and humiliated by the knowledge that their opportunities for advancement within the Russian Empire were conditional upon their assimilation to Russian culture, it is scarcely surprising that its members should have been influenced by the spread of nationalism throughout Europe. Identifying themselves with the nationalist argument that the uniqueness of every ethnic community demanded political separatism in order for it to run its affairs in accordance with its inner laws, the Georgians came to regard the demand for national self-determination as a natural extension of the demand for recognition of the individual's democratic rights.

Self-determination, moreover, held out to the intelligentsia the prospect of a platform from which to effect its ambitions for the transformation of society. Very conscious of Georgia's backwardness, the intelligentsia was greatly

impressed by the achievements of science and technology in Europe and America and the enormous advances in the productive capacity of the major Western states. Determined that Georgia should follow the same path, though without losing its specific national features, the t'ergdaleulni of the 1860s and 1870s saw the key to national regeneration in science and education, without which Georgia would be consigned to backwardness and ignorance. It was to this end that they undertook their campaign for the standardisation of the Georgian language and the spread of literacy.

Despite its evident desire for greater control over its own destiny and a controlling influence over the future of the nation, there was nevertheless an ambivalence about the intelligentsia's attitude to self-determination that was later to convey itself to the Social-Democrats, and which undoubtedly affected the manner in which the mass of the Georgian people came to perceive the issue. All Georgians were acutely conscious of the danger still constituted by Persia and, in particular, the Ottoman Empire, and equally aware not only that Russian protection had been the essential condition of Georgia's reunification and limited economic recovery (within the limits permitted by the autocracy), but that the union with Russia provided the country with its only direct access to European culture. To abandon the union, therefore, would be to expose Georgia again to the risk of invasion and to consign to oblivion the intelligentsia's ambition for Georgia to aspire to the cultural and scientific standards of the most advanced nations in Europe.

Confronted by this dilemma, the t'ergdaleulni acknowledged that the future national enlightenment of Georgia was not entirely in its own hands, but was largely dependent on

the ability of the Russian radical intelligentsia to shake off the autocracy and institute democratic reforms throughout the empire. Identifying the interests of Georgia closely with that of what they referred to as "young Russia", the t'ergdaleulni were confident that such reforms would both provide Georgia with control over its internal affairs and preserve the union with Russia.

In spite of this ambivalence at the core of their approach to the national question, they were undoubtedly successful, particularly among the urban classes and among the t'avadaznauroba, of generating a concern for and interest in Georgian national culture. At a time when the Georgian intelligentsia and working class were prejudiced against within their own capital city, when Georgians could even be persecuted for speaking their own language and when, particularly during the 1880s, assimilation became the publicly avowed aim of the administration, the work of the t'ergdaleulni to open native-language schools, write Georgian textbooks, research Georgian history, customs and folklore became a source of inspiration and national pride. Akaki Dseret'eli and Ilia Tchavtchavadze became the acknowledged leaders of the campaign for national enlightenment and the nationalist poetry of the former became as popular among the workers of T'bilisi at the turn of the century as among the intelligentsia. For the uprooted peasantry who made up the majority of the working population of the capital, the stress by the t'ergdaleulni on their shared language, religion, ethnic origin, customs and history provided a substitute for the loss of their traditional communities.

sentiment into a national movement, already complicated by the t'ergdaleulni's ambivalence on the national question, was set back still further in the 1870s and 1880s by divisions within the nationalist intelligentsia itself about the future of the Georgian nation. Thus whereas Ilia Tchavtchavadze regarded an idyllic variant of the relationship between the nobility and peasantry, in which the former would act as the fount of the nation's wisdom while the latter performed its traditional function of working the land, albeit using scientific methods of production, as the definitive characteristic of the nation (see Chapter 4), Sergi Meskhi and others disagreed, arguing, among other things, that the nobility was a spent force. While sharing the concern that lay at the heart of Tchavtchavadze's approach, that Georgia's national revival should avoid the pain of Europe's industrialisation, Meskhi maintained that industrialisation, the emergence of an indigenous bourgeoisie and the accumulation of national capital represented Georgia's only route to progress.

Even had the intelligentsia been united behind one strategy, however, the obstacles to achieving a mass-based national movement would have been formidable, for while the t'ergdaleulni were beginning to enjoy some success in their efforts to generate an interest in the fate of the nation, relations between the t'avadaznauroba and the peasantry, the two classes that made up the majority of the Georgian population were becoming increasingly antagonistic. Ilia Tchavtchavadze's appeal for national unity in such circumstances demonstrated his failure to appreciate the depth of the social divisions that already fissured the

country.

A major difficulty facing the t'ergdaleulni was the need to overcome their isolation in society, a problem that the nationalist intelligentsia elsewhere in Europe most successfully overcame in alliance with the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. The latter's willingness to propagandise on behalf of the nation and mobilise the population had played a crucial role in politicising ethnic consciousness, an essential task if the t'ergdaleulni were to convert national sentiment into a political movement for some form of self-determination.

Such an option did not really exist in Georgia, however, where the tendency for social class to coincide with ethnic divisions rendered such an alliance extremely unlikely. The bourgeoisie was predominantly Armenian and particularly hostile to the nationalist intelligentsia's ambitions to re-establish Georgian hegemony over T'bilisi, the industrial and commercial centre of Transcaucasia. Deprived of the support of the bourgeoisie and opposed to the conservative social attitudes of the t'avadznauroba, the intelligentsia had no immediate ally in its struggle to disseminate its ideas among the peasantry. Both the indigenous bourgeoisie and the working class were as yet too small to make a significant contribution.

Although the economic and political reintegration of the country, the growth of mobility, particularly since the peasant reforms of 1864-71, improved communications, greater contact with the towns, and the endeavours of the intelligentsia to spread literacy and awaken a sense of pride in Georgia's history and culture had done much to

strengthen the ethnic awareness of the peasantry, the latter remained largely indifferent to appeals for national unity. Its most pressing concern was the acquisition of land and the abolition of all further dependence on the nobility.

Moreover, while peasants from Guria, Svanet'i, Khevsuret'i and Kakhet'i were more aware now of their shared attributes, they continued to regard themselves primarily as Gurians, Svans, Khevsurs and Kakhians, a point stressed by Noe Zhordania in 1894 when he argued that although the raw material of nationhood existed in Georgia, the differences dividing the peasants in the various parts of the country were still far greater than their similarities.⁷ The role of nationalism in emphasising the primacy of the shared interests of the wider ethnic group by breaking down loyalties to provincial and other sub-groups and replacing them by loyalty to the nation was far from complete in Georgia by the turn of the century, and in many parts of the country was yet to be completed even by the declaration of independence in 1918.

Why then did socialism succeed in Georgia, providing the basis for the emergence of a mass-based social-democratic party, where nationalism had failed?

Although the Georgian Social-Democrats were scornful of the t'ergdaleulni'a appeal for national unity, they both shared the latter's concern for the defence of language and culture and recognised the popularity of this aspect of the nationalist intelligentsia's work. Incorporating the latter's demand for national cultural rights into the party programme, they also added the political right to national self-determination, confident firstly that the Georgian people's requirements were more modest, and secondly that to

concede the right considerably reduced the likelihood of the people ever insisting on it.

Social-democracy also benefited from the close relationship between class and nationality, particularly in T'bilisi, where the concentration of Georgians in the most disadvantaged strata of the city population - the petit-bourgeoisie and the working class - and the prevalence of Armenians and Russians in the more privileged strata exacerbated the increasingly fraught social tensions within the capital. An ideology that called not just for political and economic emancipation, but which also predicted the inevitable expropriation of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat had an obvious appeal to a Georgian population that had been excluded from participation in municipal affairs, had the worst jobs and lived in the poorest districts.

Although the Georgian Social-Democrats frequently spoke out against all forms of nationalism, encouraged members of all nationalities to join the party and opposed the formation of separate national organisations on the grounds that these would undermine the unity of the social-democratic movement in Transcaucasia and impede the ultimate victory of the proletariat, there can be little doubt that their success in Georgia was in part at least due to the national animosity felt by the urban workers and much of the intelligentsia towards the Armenians and Russians.

Social-democracy, with its emphasis on proletarian solidarity, was able to provide Georgian workers with a sense of identity and belonging that may in some measure, like their heightened awareness of shared ethnic, linguistic and cultural traits, have compensated for the loss of the

support of their traditional communities. Unlike nationalism, however, which awakened fears among all Georgians of isolation and renewed hostilities with the Ottoman Empire, the Marxist ideology of the Social-Democrats called for unity with the international proletariat and co-operation with the oppressed classes and peoples of the Russian Empire.

For the new generation of the Georgian intelligentsia with its vision - not dissimilar to that of the t'ergdaleul-ni - of a rationally organised and democratic Georgia whose scientific and cultural standards would be those of the advanced states of Europe, Marxism provided a theory of revolution based on scientific laws that promised the early attainment of those goals. It was an ideology too which both addressed the question of social inequality, an issue which, like the national question, had been at the centre of intellectual debate in Georgia since the 1860s, and, through its theory of class struggle, pointed the way to its solution.

Conscious of the failure of the preceding generation of the intelligentsia to win the support of the peasantry, the Social-Democrats, many of whose leaders were from aznauri families and familiar with the concerns and aspirations of the rural population, campaigned for the redistribution of land in the peasants' favour. Of crucial importance to their success in winning the latter's support, the Georgian Mensheviks conceded not only that nationalisation of the land was ill-suited to Georgian conditions, but that the municipalisation advocated by their Russian counterparts, unless accompanied by considerable privatisation, would

ownership had long been the established practice. It should be emphasised too that the failure of the Socialist-Federalists to win the support of the peasantry can in large part be attributed to the insistence that all confiscated land be transformed into communal property. In addition, the SFs overt nationalism, despite reassurances that they sought to maintain the link with Russia, reawakened the fears of the peasantry, especially in West Georgia where there were recent memories of Turkish occupation.

A number of other factors contributed to the success of Georgian Social-Democracy, among them the nature of the party organisation. Eschewing the Leninist idea of small, tightly-knit party cells dominated by professional revolutionaries, social-democracy in Georgia became a mass movement that championed all oppressed social strata and whose party organisations emphasised democratic control from below, rank and file decision-making, genuine involvement by the working class, and the use of all forms of legal, as well as underground, activities. The openness of the party organisation and the high proportion of workers in its membership greatly facilitated the party's task of expanding to meet the surge of support for social-democracy in 1903-05. The high profile of Georgian Social-Democracy, the nature of the party organisation and the encouragement given by the Georgian Mensheviks to worker participation in its leadership also help to explain their success in the struggle for control of the party organisation with the Bolsheviks. The idea that the central committee of a party of professional revolutionaries drawn primarily from the intelligentsia and based in Russia could, entirely on its

own initiative, appoint and disband local committees and co-opt and dismiss members, was entirely at odds with the methods developed in Transcaucasia.

Social-democracy was aided too by the heavy turnover of labour in the towns, a circumstance that was encouraged both by the practice of employing staff on a short-term basis and the tendency of many workers to return to their rural communities whenever seasonal work was needed, and by the policy adopted by the administration in the early 20th century of expelling recalcitrant workers to the countryside. As a consequence of the constant flow of labour back and forth between the towns and villages, aided by the relatively small size of the country and improved communications, social-democracy was able to extend its influence into the rural areas. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Guria, which provided much of the workforce for the rapid industrial expansion of Bat'umi at the turn of the century. It should be added too that it was the ideological flexibility of the Georgian Mensheviks that enabled them to tap the unrest among the peasantry and facilitated the transformation of the party into a mass-based organisation.

The sensitivity of Georgian Social-Democracy, and perhaps of Noe Zhordania in particular, to the shifting moods of the population played an important part in its success, a point made by W. Woytinskiy in his book La Democratie Georgienne, in which he described Zhordania's greatest strength as his ability to understand the thoughts and wishes of the people:

To explain the place which he occupies in Georgia, it would also be appropriate to highlight another of Zhordania's characteristics: he is the most national of the country's politicians in the sense of his psychological affinity with the popular masses.⁸

This aspect of the party leadership was particularly evident in the difficult years of 1906-17. Responding to the growth in national consciousness that accompanied the revolution in 1905 and the subsequent intensification of reaction and Russian chauvinism, the Georgian Mensheviks revised their approach to the national question and, at odds with the current Menshevik position on the issue, began to advocate national cultural autonomy. The change in Zhordania's approach was already evident by 1908 in his pamphlet on the national question K'art'veli khalkhi da nationalizmi (The Georgian People and Nationalism), although it was not until 1912 that national cultural autonomy became a demand of the Caucasian Social-Democratic Party programme.

Despite this shift, however, Zhordania remained adamant on the issue of territorial autonomy, arguing that it was the "historic path" of the Georgian people to reject national politics and that what they wanted was cultural not political autonomy. In this conviction, he not only insisted on the need for close unity with democratic Russia, but also maintained that so intermingled were the peoples of Transcaucasia and such was the level of integration of their economic life that their separation into national units was almost impossible. Any administrative division along national lines would, moreover, retard economic progress, set back the ultimate victory of socialism and facilitate the triumph of nationalism.

Zhordania's solution - the establishment of a limited form of self-government for Transcaucasia within a centralised Russian state and the devolution of control of national cultural affairs to bodies specially designated for the purpose - provided the Georgian people with a programme which both took into account their psychological and physical need for security against attack from their Muslim neighbours, and their desire for greater national freedom.

Despite a shift towards a more federalist approach in the autumn of 1917, the emphasis in Georgian Social-Democracy on the union with Russia and its perception of the national question as primarily a cultural issue go a long way to explaining the confusion within the party leadership in the aftermath of the October Revolution. All its plans for Georgia's future had been posited on the belief that the Russian Revolution would go through a period of bourgeois democracy, during which the political and economic conditions for the socialist transformation of society would gradually ripen. Quite suddenly, however, the coup d'etat in Petrograd had placed in power a party whose ideas on the future course of the revolution and on the organisation of the state were radically at odds with their own.

Prevented from recognising the legitimacy of the October Revolution by their long-standing disagreement with the Bolsheviks on the possibility, or even the desirability, of socialist revolution in Russia in the immediate term, and their distaste for the latter's views on inner-party democracy and organisation, yet unwilling to abandon the union with Russia, the Georgian Mensheviks stumbled reluctantly towards independence.

There is no doubt some truth in the claim made by nationalist politicians that the Social-Democrats' position on the national question made them psychologically ill-suited to independence, though to be fair to the latter, hardly anyone can seriously have anticipated, even in the autumn of 1917, that it would be achieved so soon. Moreover, once independence had been declared, the Mensheviks, perhaps less out of conviction than necessity, abandoned their former reservations to devote themselves to the task of building the state. In his instructions on the drafting of the declaration of independence, Zhordania was insistent that its emphasis should be on national unity rather than social reform.

Whether or not independence changed the theoretical convictions of the Georgian Mensheviks on the national question is almost impossible to assess, as most of their decisions in this, as in almost every other sphere in 1918-21, were determined by events beyond their control, responses to the exigencies of the moment rather than the consequence of a deliberate scheme for social change. Thus the decision to emphasise national unity in 1918 and play down social revolution not only reflected the party's view that Georgia would have to pass through a relatively protracted period of capitalist development before conditions would be ready for socialism, but the party's need, especially now that it was cut off from the Russian movement, in the middle of an economic crisis, and threatened by attack on several fronts, to avoid civil war and achieve a national consensus for its policies.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that in their endeavours to hold the state together that the Social-

Democrats' stress on national unity came to be seen by the national minorities as a demand not so much for absolute loyalty to the state as to the Georgian nation, in which view they were confirmed by the intolerance with which the government reacted to any sign of unrest in the minority areas, its manipulation of the symbols of Georgian nationhood to secure the emotional commitment of the Georgian people, its appointment of Georgians to key posts in South Oset'i and its policy of settling Georgians in strategic areas populated by national minorities. It was against this background that the Osians, unmoved by the government's appeals on behalf of national unity and the national interest, demanded the right to autonomy.

Conversely, such disloyalty to the state at a time of acute crisis played a part in stimulating the xenophobic nationalism which showed signs of appearing towards the end of Georgia's independence and to which not even leading members of the Social-Democratic Party were immune. Such developments have to be set, however, into the context in which the government was forced to operate, and are balanced too by its considerable efforts to meet the national cultural needs of the minority nationalities. These included the granting of autonomy to Ap'khazet'i, Bat'umi region and Zak'at'ala, the right to an education in one's own language and the right of all ethnic minorities to form national unions to organise and direct their cultural affairs.

Despite the mobilisation of national sentiment in 1917 in favour of something more than just national cultural autonomy, the antagonism between the t'avadaznauroba and

peasantry, the absence of a strong Georgian bourgeoisie to propagandise on behalf of the nation, the fears of exposure to invasion and, not least, the success of Georgian Social-Democracy's opposition to nationalism ensured that the national idea never acquired an all-consuming importance among the mass of the population in Georgia. This became particularly evident during 1918-21 when the government's pleas for national unity in the face of the enormous difficulties confronting the country foundered on the indifference of the peasantry. This, the problem of constructing a new state at time of war, the multi-ethnic composition of the population, the depth of the economic crisis, the absence of sufficient international support, and the unequal nature of the struggle for survival against Soviet Russia ultimately contrived to deny Georgian Social-Democracy the conditions it needed properly to apply its policies.

1. K'art'lis tskhovreba, T2 (The Life of K'art'li, Vol. 2) (T'bilisi, 1959). In this collection of manuscripts from the 12th-16th century, put together by S. Qaukhchishvili, there are numerous references to Sak'art'velo. In Istoriani da azmani sharavandedt'ani (History and Eulogy of the Monarchs), written by the historian of Queen T'amar in approximately 1195, for instance, the term is used on at least 12 occasions to refer to the territory occupied by the Georgian people.
2. J. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question (Calcutta, 1976), p. 12.
3. A. Ap'ak'idze, Tezisebi midzghvnili Iv. Javakhishvilis dabadebis dslist'avisadmi (Theses Dedicated to the Centenary of the Birth of Iv. Javakhishvili) (T'bilisi, 1966), p. 12.
4. I. Katcharava, K'art'veli khalkhis erovnuli konsolidatsiis etapebi (Stages in the National Consolidation of the Georgian People) (T'bilisi, 1966), pp. 10-14.
5. S. Janashia, "K'art'veli eris dsarmoshoba J.B. Stalinis modzghvrebis sinat'leze" (The origins of the Georgian nation in light of J.B. Stalin's teaching on the nation) in Literatura da khelovneba (Literature and Art), 22 March 1945.
6. G. Bregadze, "Eris dsneba da erebis tipebi" (The concept of the nation and types of nations), in Matsne (The Herald), no. 5, 1967, p. 392.
7. N. Zhordania, Ekonomiuri dsarmateba, op.cit., pp. 15-17.
8. W. Woytinskiy, La Democratie Georgienne, op.cit., p. 77.

The following is a list of Georgian and Russian terms and abbreviations that appear frequently in the text. Plural forms are, where appropriate, given in brackets.

Georgian:

amk'ari (amk'rebi) - guild.

aznauri (aznaurebi/aznaurni) - lower tier of the Georgian nobility.

batongmoba - Georgian variant of serfdom.

begara - corvee.

chalandari - West Georgian wine trader.

didi ojakhi - extended family.

eri - nation.

eroba - unit of local government, initially modelled on the zemstvo system introduced in the European gubernii of Russia in 1864 (but not in Georgia until 1918), but then devolved greater powers in 1918-21.

ghala - grain tax paid to landlords by peasants for use of land.

karmidamo - farmstead.

khalkhi - people.

khalkhosani - populist.

khizani (khiznebi) - a category of peasant in Georgia, of which there were two main types: those who rented land, but had the right to its use in perpetuity, so long as they paid rent and dues; and the so-called qma-khizani, who belonged to one landlord but was compelled to seek land on another's estate, often many miles away.

khutsuri - Georgian ecclesiastical script.

kodi - Georgian unit of measure equal to between four and five puds depending on the part of the country.

kodis puri - a form of grain tax.

komli - household.

k'tseva - old Georgian land measure. One k'tseva = approximately 1.3 acres.

kulukhi - wine tax paid by peasants to landlords for use of land.

Lek - or Lezghin: a member of a mountain people in Daghestan.

mamasakhlisi - village headman.

mazra - an administrative unit equivalent to a district.

mejlisi - assembly or council of Georgian Muslims.

mesame dasi - an informal grouping of Georgian intellectuals, set up in 1893, which was to provide the nucleus of the future leadership of the Social-Democratic Party organization in Transcaucasia.

mevakhshe - money-lender.

moijaradre - tenant.

mouravi - an official.

mok'alak'e (mok'alak'eebi) - merchants and artisans of T'bilisi who, prior to the 19th century belonged to the crown or church.

ostati - master craftsman.

gazarmelebi - those imprisoned in the army barracks after the abortive attempt to restore Georgian independence in 1832.

qma (qmebi/qmani) - serf.

saadgilmamulo banki - land bank set up by the nobility for the nobility.

sabatono - adjective used to describe those peasants owned by nobility.

sakhazino - treasury (adjectival form).

sat'emo - communal.

SFs - Socialist-Federalists.

shedsqaloba - feudal practice of bestowing privileges.

siraji - East Georgian wine merchant.

sursat'i - main state grain tax.

t'avadaznauroba - collective term for nobility.

t'avadi - upper tier of Georgian nobility.

t'emi - commune.

t'ergdaleulni - members of the radical intelligentsia of the 1860s and 1870s. The term literally means "those who have drunk from the T'ergi", the river demarcating the northern border between Georgia and Russia, and referred to the new generation of Georgian intellectuals who had received a

higher education in Russia.

ustabashi - head of guild.

vatchari - merchant.

Russian:

Bund - Jewish General Workers' Union.

chetvert - a unit of measure equal to approximately 3 litres; also used as a measure of distance, in which case it is equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ of an arshin (0.71 metres).

chinovnik - official or functionary in tsarist Russia.

desyatina (desyatiny) - unit of measure equal to approximately 2.7 acres.

duma - (i) the elected parliament first introduced in tsarist Russia in 1906; (ii) name of municipal governments.

dvoryanstvo - Russian service nobility; the dvoryanstvo was relieved of the need to perform obligatory state service by Catherine II in 1785.

Greens - A pro-peasant group formed in the autumn of 1919 and based in the Black Sea coastal area. Its name emphasised the rural sympathies of its members and distinguished them from the "Reds" and "Whites".

gubernia - largest administrative-territorial unit in Russian Empire.

kavkraikom - Caucasian Regional Committee of Bolshevik party organisation.

kulak - rich peasant.

mir - village commune.

mirovoy posrednik - arbitrator.

okhrana - tsarist secret police.

Ozakom - Special Transcaucasian Committee appointed to administer Transcaucasia by the Provisional Government in 1917.

pud - unit of measure equal to approximately 16.3 kg.

RSDLP - Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

Revkom - Caucasian Revolutionary Committee set up by the T'bilisi Soviet in 1917 from all parties and soviets.

SRS - members of Social-Revolutionary Party.

zemstvo - units of rural self-government introduced in the European gubernii of Russia in 1864.

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