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THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS IN GEORGIA

Abstract

The article is dedicated to the first democratic transformations in Georgia. This period covers 1918-1921 years when Georgia not only separated from the Russian Empire and declared independence, but for the first time in its history fully liberated from the feudal system and formed a modern European type legal state. It was in this period that democratic reforms were implemented in the state, economic and social sphere, which is the subject of the article. In the research the author overviews all the important democratic reforms that have become the predecessor of modern Georgia.

Keywords: *Transitions, Zhordania, Social-democracy, Political, Secularism*

Introduction

The present research article is a descriptive work, the subject of which is the first democratic transformations in Georgia. Below we will briefly describe the actuality of this topic, we will formulate the main questions and we will give an answer when and how the first democratic reforms were implemented in Georgia.

We consider that the current issue is relevant in such developing countries as it is Georgia. Civil society, political establishment and ordinary people of this state are equally willing to see their homeland with modern standards and modern European countries. As a result of author's general observations, we can say that reforms and modernization in the media and social networks are almost daily. Political and public debates clearly show how important is the desire to modernize and develop economic, legal, political, cultural and civil spheres. It seems that Georgia is on the way to ultimately become a member of the European Union and the idea of Europe is justification for all reforms and changes. Consequently, the discussion on the results of each new law and reform will continue for a long time. Our main task is to determine the answer to the main question of our survey, which reads as follows: When was Georgia's first democratic transformation, who was its leader and what specific projects were under his leadership? Accordingly, we need to determine what kind of projects has been implemented in political, social and cultural life?

Therefore, most of the basic text of our research will be dedicated to answering these questions, which will help us to understand the democratic transformations in Georgia in a scientific way. All this is related to the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, which took place in 1918-1921. In this period happened exactly the implementation of the first democratic transitions, led by the first elected Social-Democratic Government in the world. This time lasted for a short period, but Georgian political and economic elite under the leadership of Noe Zhordania was full with European ideas and managed to modernize Georgia according to European trends. These transitions affected everyone from the government to a simple social life. It is sad that all this reforms were stopped by the Russian occupation, repression, and killing of thousands of openminded people that made Georgia diverted the way of Western development.

Based on the above, the research article will be based on the example of one country. Within the scope of the research we will review almost all existing literature, research and work, which concern the issue. We will work on them and try to answer our main question.

We will use all relevant books, publications, speeches, statements, articles, interviews and statistical data to study research material. In order to analyze the research, we will also use the scientific literature on the Internet.

We hope that the obtained bibliography and general research will give us an opportunity to be of interest to both Georgian and foreign citizens and not only for the scientific community, but for students and other readers interested in political and historical studies.

The leader of the first democratic transitions

In the first quarter of the 20th century, most of the political activists and elite in Georgia were social democrats. These were Noe Jordania, Noe Ramishvili, Akaki Chkhenkeli, Silibitro (Silva) Jibladze, Isidore Ramishvili, Karlo Chkheidze, Evgeni Gegechkori, Grigol Lortkipanidze, Nikoloz Chkheidze, Noe Khomeriki, Seit Devdariani, Benia Chkhikvishvili and others. Many of them can be subject of an interesting research, but at this time we have identified their leader with practical and intellectual aspects which was the undisputed leader of the Georgian political elite of that time. This is Noe Jordania (1868-1953). He was a theoretician, intellectual, publicist, author and a practicing politician of international level at the same time. He, as a leader, is responsible for uniting the Georgian social democrats, transforming them into a governing political power, declaring independence of Georgia, and subsequent three-year governing, as well as for the defeat during the Russian occupation in 1921. The purpose of the research is to study his work and views as the leader of the social democratic wave - the author of the first democratic transitions in Georgia. Below we will analyze his political views and his specific steps in the state service.

Born in a family of Gurian Aznauri (equivalent to baron) of Italian descent, Noe Jordania received primary education at a school in Lanchkhuti at the beginning, later, he graduated Tbilisi Theological Gymnasium. Despite his parents were hoping that their son would become a priest but Noe, being an atheist sympathizer from the very beginning, read forbidden Russian and Georgian literature at the Seminary. He familiarized himself with Narodniks' views about revolution, which aroused his interest, however, he doubted its probability. Finally, his political views took the final form while he was studying in Warsaw in 1892, when he learned about Marxism on the one hand, and about the movement for autonomy of the Polish people on the other hand. All these determined his final transition from Russian Narodniks' idea to European social democracy, which included nationalist ideas in addition to socialism. In his words, Russian Populism (Narodnichestvo) was of reactionary nature and would bring people to barbarism while European socialism aimed to make the working class politically aware and would lead them to political arena. Noe Zhordania sent every novelty that he came across, including literature, in Georgia. When he returned to Georgia in late 1892, he joined other socialists in political movement, which was concentrated around Egnate Ninoshvili. They organized the first meeting of Marxists in Georgia and because of the differences between them, they entrusted Noe Zhordania to prepare the first programme of action. Zhordania utilized his worldview and education, as a result, the program was as socialist, so nationalist (Zhordania, 1990).

This was followed by establishment of 'Mesame Dasi' (the Third Front) and its first appearance on the political arena, because of which, Noe was facing arrest as the author of the program, and hence, he left for Geneva. In Switzerland he developed close relationship with Georgi Plekhanov and theoreticians of socialism. Later, he became friends with Karl Kautsky while living in France and Germany. At the same time, he travelled in Western European villages, studied them (Jordania, 1990).

Noe Zhordania started writing publicist articles about Marxist-socialist ideas during the same period. Before returning to his homeland, he lived in England for a short period too, following which he returned to Georgia in 1897 and became the editor of the newspaper 'Kvali'. (Guruli, Political Portrait of Noe Jordania, 1999). He used his position for printing illegal so-called proclamations and disseminated them. In 1901-1902, Noe was arrested twice because of participating in May 1st demonstrations and his involvement in Guria peasant movement. Later, he was released temporarily, forced in exile in Ganja and because of the warrant for his second arrest, he barely managed to flee to England. While he was in prison, all Georgian and Caucasian social democrat organizations joined RSDLP, which he disapproved. Furthermore, Transcaucasian Committee rejected his program because of his nationalist views (Jordania, 1990). Although, according to Stephen F. Johns, while living in Europe, Zhordania could easily enter into a debate with such theoreticians as Karl Kautsky, Edward Bernstein, George Plekhanov and Vladimir Lenin as their equal. In his works, he expressed his faith in parliamentarianism, legal activism, pluralism and decentralization within the Party, those were not only tactical matters to him but also an ideological course and political belief, through which he saw Georgia co-existing with democratic Europe (Jones, 2007).

After studying the biography of Noe Zhordania, his work, and publications, we see that his life was full with modernization and European ideas. He preached the freedom and the equality of individuals and nations. He was

trying to make progress and struggle against reaction, and pseudo values aimed at ideological ruling of people. His socialist views were motivated by the protection of the rights of the working class, against unfair oppression and the desire to improve the low economic conditions. That's why he preferred the issue of class independence on the first time, and then the national because he believed that the process of national self-determination of the societies without classes would be an inevitable and irreversible bloodless process that would bring the nations independence and equality.

Zhordania returned to Georgia during the 1905 Revolution by using a false passport. This was the time, when Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were split in two different factions. He took part in defeating Bolsheviks in socialist organizations and undertook editorship of the newspapers 'Social Democrat', 'Skhivi' (The Beam), 'Gandiati' (The Dawn) and 'Elva' (The Lightning). He was elected in the first Duma of Russia where he led social democrat faction. The Duma was shortly dissolved but Noe Zhordania managed to put his candidates in future Dumas. He was arrested twice again for a short time because of his political activities and stayed in prison until he was affected by the 1913 general amnesty. Since 1917, Zhordania supported independence of Georgia but in such manner that Russia could not consider it as treason and lacked grounds to start repressions. Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and possible occupation by the Ottoman Empire simplified the matter, making declaration of independence of Georgian on May 26, 1918, practically justified. In the beginning, Zhordania became the leader on provisional parliament, and the chairman of the government later (Jordania, 1990).

During the proportional system based general elections of the Constituent Assembly in 1919, his party received 102 seats out of the total 130. The government managed to receive recognition of independence from Russia and other free states. Zhordania himself remained as the head of the state. Below we will discuss the projects implemented by him as the democratic transitions. However, in the meantime, it should be noted, that Georgian army repulsed military aggression of the Russian army twice, in January 1918 and in April 1920. He waged a defensive war against Armenia in December of 1918. Social Democratic Government of Georgia even dealt with the uprising in Abkhazia provoked by the Bolsheviks, however, they were eventually defeated by the 11th Army of Russia in 1921, following which Noe Zhordania emigrated along with other members of the government (Jordania, 1990) and passed away in Paris, few months prior to Stalin's death.

Preparation of the first democratic transitions

On June 24, 1918, Noe Zhordania left the National Council; Karlo Chkheidze replaced him while he became the head of the government. On October 8, National Council of Georgia was named as Parliament (Guruli, Political Portrait of Noe Jordania, 1999). Noe Zhordania presented the program for organization of political institutes to form statehood of Georgia. At the SDWP congress in August 1918, he declared that they were choosing the model of European socialism and admitted that they could not jump over the capitalism phase; and premature socialist experiment would bring not social liberty but social reaction, destruction of social welfare, disruption of national economy. He acknowledged Georgia as a bourgeois state, where private property had to be incited, and industry had to be developed. Zhordania believed that his party had to establish democracy at least, and socialism in the best case. He realized that introducing socialism through rough methods would destroy the economy; therefore he focused on strengthening democratic institutions (Vashakmadze, 2014).

To see in details how the views of the Georgian Social-Democrats were realized and the types of democratic transitions have been made through them, let's take a look at reforms in political and social spheres.

Democratic transitions in the political system

Noe Zhordania prepared the program 'Social Democracy and Political Organization of Georgia' which intended the modernization of political system. The program was based on the analysis of the experience of the Western European democratic states. He was looking for an experience appropriate for Georgia and acceptable for Georgian reality. Noe Zhordania thought about a new political system a long time prior to the independence of Georgia, and considered democratic republic the most adequate one. The Act of Independence defined Georgia as a democratic republic, and therefore, type of the organization of the state government was determined accordingly. Though Georgian social democrats were united with the Russian Mensheviks for some time, platform of the Georgian leaders was based on the European ideals. On Noe Zhordania's initiative, National Congress of Georgia was convened, which determined the fate of Georgia. At the same time, he was the chair of the regional center of the Council of

the Deputies of the Workers, Soldiers and Peasants of Georgia and he could declare independence of Georgia, or determine the county's fate by convening their Congress; however, it would be the Bolsheviks that split the nation into classes. Therefore, he invited the intelligentsia, nobility, bourgeoisie and other political parties, even the ones with radically different views, to the Congress. 324 delegates with decisive vote and 19 delegates with advisory vote attended the Congress. 67 delegates represented political parties, 15 – councils of workers and soldiers, 33 – municipal governments, 89 - executive committees of governorate, districts and communes, 20 – Georgian army, 8 – cooperatives, 9 - teachers union,* press, 35 – cultural-educational institutions, 26 – industry and trade sector and banks, 20 - nobility, 6 - migrants, 1 – the Church of Georgia, 7 – Catholics and Muslims, 3 – Jews, 2 – Abkhazian delegation and 8 – various institutions. Despite the fact that the Congress was convened after the February Revolution in Russia, as we see, the working class did not have majority and each social class of Georgia was represented at the Congress to some extent. This eliminated any confrontation between the classes and the Congress represented all Georgian people. Members of the Congress unanimously agreed on the type of future government - democratic republic, key principles of which would be based on political self-governance of people. Hence, power would be distributed between the center and peripheries, where people would elect deputies, executive bodies, governors, judges etc.(Guruli, Political Portrait of Noe Jordania, 1999).

The Congress passed the resolution, according to which a legislative body would be created that would compose the government. This would be a unicameral parliament for effective legislative operation and it would be elected for a two-year term. For this reason, election system was determined, which would be general, equal, direct voting through secret ballot. Every adult citizen (individual, who had attained the age of 20) was granted the right to vote, despite of its sex, ethnicity and religious beliefs (Arsenidze, 2014). Pursuant to this law, parliamentary election, i.e. election of the Constituent Assembly was held on February 14-16, 1919. This was an unprecedented event in the history of Georgia. Georgian people were granted opportunity to participate in legislative elections of their own democratic state for the first time. A wide range of parties participated in pre-election campaign. Even Bolshevik Party was allowed to take part in the elections, however, they boycotted the elections (Chumburidze, 2011). Fifteen political parties were registered in total while the number of voters reached 1,024,682. Voter turnout was 60%, i.e. 618,675 voters casted their votes, which is really good result considering the political culture at that time. Social-Democratic Party of Workers of Georgia claimed the victory and received 102 seats out of 130, collecting 473,638 votes in total. Social-Federalist Party of Georgia was the second, with 9 seats and 43,649 votes. The third was the Social-Revolutionary Party of Georgia. Next was Dashnaktsutyun with 3 seats, and the last was the National Party of Georgia with 2 seats (National Archives of Georgia, 2014). During its two-year history, the Assembly adopted Constitution and 126 laws, notably on citizenship, local elections, the country's defense, agriculture, legal system, political and administrative arrangements for ethnic minorities, a national system of public education, and some other laws and regulations on fiscal/monetary policy, the Georgian railways, trade and domestic production, etc. (Losaberidze, 1998).

The crown of democratic transitions represents the **Constitution** of the Democratic Republic of Georgia adopted by the Constituent Assembly of Georgia, which came into force 4 days prior to the Russian occupation on February 21, 1921. It expressed the essence of the structure of the state that functioned under social democracy and demonstrated its nature. Despite Georgian states had existed through three millennia, they were all ruled under absolute monarchy and republic was established for the first time, the power was perfectly divided between the three branches. Those were **legislative, executive and judicial** ones (Inasaridze, 1984). It is worth noting that, Constitution of Georgia represented mixed, compromised form of democratic republic “combining and intertwining” the French type of Parliamentary democracy and the principles of Swiss type direct democracy (Matsaberidze, 2008). Constituent Assembly started developing the draft of the constitution, debated it on regular basis and eventually ratified it on February 21, 1921. This process was complicated. Firstly, there was no previous precedent, and the second, there was no relevant terminology in Georgian language. Constitution was practically written from an empty page (Vadachkoria, *Georgian Social-Democracy in 1917-1921*, 2001). In Noe Zhordania's words, these were three branches, through which people would govern. He believed that, the **legislative body** had to be limited by such mechanism as referendum. This could bring one risk. It was possible that people's choice would hinder progressive laws drafted by the parliament. Therefore, referendums were to be held only on such matters, which concerned their pockets. Those are taxes, monetary system, trade agreements, etc. As for the **executive body**, Noe Zhordania considered them administrators. They were to be servants of their people, not masters, and they had to execute even such orders, which they might disapprove. They were not supposed to have any prerogatives and they had to obey common criminal and civil laws. Lastly, Noe Zhordania deemed judiciary a somewhat institution for

the oppressed. It necessarily had to be separated from executive bodies. The only way was for people introducing election system for judges, which would be elected for certain terms. People would reserve the right to recall the judge. If court proceedings were administered by them with money before, from now on court proceedings would be funded in that way, which would enable the poor to file lawsuits (Jordania, Social-Democracy and the State Organization of Georgia, 1918). Therefore, by reforming the **judiciary**, the question of bringing judicial system in compliance with international standards was raised for the first time in the history of Georgia. Georgian social democrats were inspired by the 1893 constitution of one of the Swiss Cantons – Bern. Pursuant to this constitution, people elected judges of civil and criminal systems through delegates for certain terms, and the judges examined cases in the presence of jury. In addition to this, there was to be a supreme court, which would supervise all other courts and discuss special cases and appeals. The actual problem was that there were no competent and qualified cadres, and such system had to be created from nothing, since judicial system of the Russian empire was far from that of modernist free states. Therefore, to accomplish this objective, the Assembly adopted a law, pursuant to which positions of arbiters, rules to elect them by cities and districts, as well as their rights and obligations were determined. In 1919, a law was developed, which introduced the right to legal counsel (attorney) and defined procedures for election of the council of sworn advocates; and in the same year, the ‘Senate’ was formed, which was considered an institution regulating operation of courts and observance of law. In its essence, it was an analogue of Supreme Court. Constituent Assembly designated sworn advocate Davit Kheltuplishvili as its first chair; while management of organizational affairs was assigned to the Ministry of Justice, which would be separated from the Senate after the reform was completed (Vadachkoria, Georgian Social-Democracy in 1917-1921, 2001). As for the institute of jury, it could be composed by any adult citizen despite of their education or profession, and they established if defendant was guilty or not; and judge would pass on relevant sentence considering their verdict. Detention, imprisonment of a citizen or imposing fine on him/her without court was prohibited, as an instrument of subduing and enslaving (Arsenidze, 2014). As we can see, despite the absence of judiciary and legislative basis and lack of human capital, social democrats managed to take a solid step toward modernization of state judicial system.

Noe Zhordania’s report ‘Social Democracy and Political Organization of State’ answers the question on development of constitution and the essence of governance. According to him, every state represents the interest of the class that leads the government. It could be nobility, bourgeoisie, or other. In this instance, we have social democracy, which had to protect the interests of the poor not on the expense of confrontation of other classes but by coexisting with them. To be more specific, peasantry, workers and petty bourgeoisie constituted the foundation of Georgia. Therefore, Zhordania argues that, only republican governance could ensure this coexistence peacefully. On his part, he distinguished three types of republic. Those were **parliamentarian, social and democratic**. By parliamentarian republic he meant **constitutional monarchy**, where the king has only a decorative role. This formation generally represents the interests of the bourgeoisie and the will of people is ignored. Practically, it means that strong parliament and bureaucracy assume the role of absolute monarch, which ensures power of the bureaucrats to be prolonged. As for **social republic**, it excludes private property. Since Georgian democrats would never take such a radical step, they believed that **democratic republic** was the only one, which would be compatible with socialism in such way, that private property would remain untouched. Under this system, power would be distributed between the center and peripheries. People choose not only the parliament but also executives, administrators and even judges too. As a result, people are directly involved in government. Such system enjoys one more advantage too – since regions of state are not depended on central government in everything, coup d’état in the capital (center) does not affect the entire formation of the state and it remains a local event; while under constitutional monarchy, coup d’état in the center automatically affects peripheries because they are not governed by strong local self-governments. In Noe Zhordania’s words, ‘we prefer such republic, which will ensure democratic rule in such way, that prevents central bodies from becoming a hub of provincial reactionarism (Jordania, Social-Democracy and the State Organization of Georgia, 1918).

A good example of democratic transitions is the law approved in August 1918, the law on state agencies, which regulated establishment of the administrative institutions of governorates, regions, and districts. However, governorate system was abolished and **local self-government** system was created in the form of multi-party advisory bodies and municipalities in districts and cities (Vashakmadze, 2014). This turned out to be the most successful project. Socialist and theoretician Karl Kautsky wrote about the local self-governments in Georgia: ‘Revolution gave Georgia complete self-government of provinces and villages. Such self-governments replaced pro-center bureaucratic systems’ (Inasaridze, 1984). The self-governing units, such as Mazra and Temi, became the undivided part of

the state-governing machine. The central government transferred some functions of the local government to the local structures. Competencies were divided effectively and rationally. Constitution definitively determined that local self-government is a body of local-self-governance, which managed local cultural-educational and economic affairs; local self-government was subordinated to the central bodies of the government, which had the right to suspend the orders of self-government that did not comply to law. However, their annulment was within court's authority. Local self-government was granted the right to its own budget according to a special law (Bendianishvili, *The Role of the Self-Governing Bodies in the State Structure of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia*, 2008).

In terms of democratic transitions of the political system, social democrats have taken political and civil cases to the highest level. Social democrats took political and civil affairs of individual to the highest level in terms of modernization of political system and cemented it by constitution. The supreme law of the country defined the **rights of citizens** in the third chapter as liberty of **opinion, printing, i.e. press, and expression**. Article 31 stated: 'every citizen enjoys full liberty of conscience. Citizen cannot be persecuted nor have his/her rights restricted because of his/her religion or personal beliefs.' This revolutionary accomplishment was a result of tens of years of struggle of people for freedom and against autocracy. As we mentioned earlier, there were about 15 political parties and movements in Georgia at the time. They had their own newspapers, journals, and openly expressed their opinions about political, economic, cultural and social situation in the country since for the first time in a very long time, nobody would persecute them for their beliefs (Inasaridze, 1984).

One more right the Georgian social democrats granted to their citizens was **freedom of gathering**. Article 33 of the Constitution states that, 'the citizens of Georgia have the right of public assembly without arms, either indoors or in the open air' (Inasaridze, 1984). Even modern Constitution of Georgia does not contain such provision. Although free gathering is not restricted today but citizens are obliged to notify relevant state agencies about time and place of gathering, in order to hold manifestations (Law of Georgia on Assemblage and Manifestations, 2013). In addition, under Article 37 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, citizens were granted the right to submit their critical views to the government through individual or collective petition, whereas under Article 64, if citizens found any regulation unacceptable, parliament was obliged to submit it to a popular referendum in case 30.000 electors required it in writing (Inasaridze, 1984).

Moreover, Constitution determined the right of **free moving**. As Article 31 states, 'every citizen has the right of moving and selecting his own residence; there is no restriction of this right except by order of the court of justice' (Inasaridze, 1984). This may sound like an axiom for modern free states, however, people under feudalism and monarchy were deprived this right, as well as in the Soviet Union, where freedom of dwelling was extremely restricted. Therefore, democratic transitions of 1918-1921 were unarguably revolutionary and large-scale novelty for the Georgia of those times that laid foundation of the modern developed state.

Democratic transitions in civil and cultural spheres

Secularism

It is interesting what democratic transitions have been going on in national life towards national, ethnic and religious minorities. These processes were preceded by Georgian liberals, especially Ilia Chavchavadze's views before Georgia's independence, which changed the attitude toward religious minorities, and if earlier religion determined Georgian nationality, in his time this was changed. Religion, Christianity in our case, was not the decisive factor in defining one's nationality any more. This was significantly caused by re-uniting Adjarian Muslim population with the rest of Georgia (but under the rule of the Russian Empire). In Ilia's words, Adjarian Muslims were Georgians as much as the rest of the nation. Attached, more importance to one's dignity, not to his/her ancestry or religion. However, all of this was prepared during the Russian Empire, and in the conditions of Independent Georgia this issue was no longer under question. In this period secularism, freedom of religion, or ethnicity was not barrier for individuals from exercising their democratic rights.

Some of the scholars relate such attitude of the Georgian social democrats to atheistic beliefs of their leaders. For instance, Prof. V. Guruli labels the secular policy of the 1918-1921 Democratic Republic of Georgia as the atheistic one. He argues that, since the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church was re-established in the aftermath the February Revolution on March 12, 1917, the Church was unable to regain its traditional place in state affairs (Guruli, *National Consciousness, Statehood, Political Orientation*, 2008). For example, Noe Zhordania openly discusses his religious beliefs in his memoirs. As it turns out, he was brought up as an orthodox Christian, used to

fast and receive the Eucharist in his childhood. First time he doubted God's existence was after he read (*The Door to the Nature*) at school. According to him, he discovered that there was nothing supernatural in natural phenomena and there were scientific explanation for each of them. It turned out that rain was not the tears of God and thunder was not sound of Saint George's horse galloping. Therefore, he also questioned legitimacy of the king's rule, since according to the popular belief of that time, king was appointed by God. While studying at the Seminary, he developed a strong belief that king was as fictitious authority as God was. He put these two concepts on the same level while associated atheism with republicanism. He realized that, republic had to be for everybody and not for them who constituted majority. Thus, when the coat of arms of Georgia with the image of St. George was adopted, on Zhordania's initiative, they removed all religious attributes from it in order to avoid clericalism (Jordania, *My Past*, 1990). Moreover, Isidore Ramishvili recalls that, at Batumi Sunday school, which was filled with workers every day and where literacy, history, geography, and natural science were taught, Karlo Chkheidze headed teaching of Darwinism, which was widely promoted (Ramishvili, 2012). According to Prof. Guruli, secularization policy was taken to the level of high government officials. They did not take part in important religious celebrations. In addition, even Noe Zhordania forbade Catholicos-Patriarch Leonid to mention his name in his prayers, and only decided to give his consent, after the latter had already left his room (Guruli, *National Consciousness, Statehood, Political Orientation*, 2008).

In our opinion, this was the result of internalization of the secular policy and not a demonstration of one's religious beliefs. Especially, re-establishment of autocephaly of the Georgia Apostolic Church had political importance too, and social democrats considered this circumstance as a very important step toward re-establishment of independence. For this reason, Georgian Mensheviks operating in Russia, such as K. Chkheidze, I. Tsereteli, and Z. Avalishvili, provided the Georgian Church with significant support (Gegenava, 2013). In spite of this, the fact is that the leader of the church was not an important political figure during the existence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. According to Guruli's conclusion, highest legislative body of the country and the government did not consider his opinion. Church's role in educating pupils and students, as well as in the Georgian army, was diminished. Teaching the Bible in public schools was prohibited since its essence was religious, not scientific or theological. Moreover, church hierarchs were prohibited from holding liturgies in military units (Guruli, *National Consciousness, Statehood, Political Orientation*, 2008). The number of holidays in a calendar year was decreased by eight at the expense of church holidays (Gegenava, 2013). We believe that, all this was the result of rational comprehension of reality, and a huge leap forward in terms of democratic values, since Georgian schools, troops, and other public institutions did not represent only believer orthodox Christians and they included people of various ethnicity, religion and ideologies, therefore, their discrimination was impermissible. This was exactly the result of the birth of comprehended nationalism, not of some tribal union in the Middle Ages. Noe Ramishvili believed that people manage their own self-determination, and 'will and blessing of God' is absent in this process; deciding the fate of people from above was rejected and its (people's) sovereignty is recognized universally (Ramishvili N. , 1931).

Knowledge and values of the Georgian social democrats were manifested in the first constitution and in the policy pursued by the government that was significant part of the democratic transitions. In 1920, they drafted a law, which separated church from state. Pursuant to it, state would not fund the Church anymore; on the contrary, the church was obliged to pay a special tax. Constitutional committee discussed the matters of religion based on secularist principles. Article 31 of the Constitution guaranteed full liberty of conscience and prohibited persecution, and restriction of civil and political rights on religious basis. However, no person was allowed to evade his/her political or civil obligations on religious reasons, except for the cases prescribed by the law. Article 143 acknowledged equality of all religions and granted special privileges to none; and under Article 144, local self-governments were forbidden to pay for the needs of any religious order (Gegenava, 2013).

Meanwhile, Clergy and the politicians supporting them actively opposed the social democrats. They protested against financial restrictions of the Church, however, supported separation of church from state, freedom of religion, and demonstrated tolerant policy toward the followers of other religions (Gegenava, 2013). They even declared in 1917, that 'according to Holy Writ and early ecclesiastical teachings, the best form of government is democratic republic, not monarchy or rule of king' (Papuashvili, N.). Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Kirion II stated: 'bouquet is more wonderful as it contains flowers of various colours. Our ancestors understood it completely and the history of Georgia does not show us any example of persecution of the people of other ethnicities, or the followers of other religions. On the contrary, significant freedom is noteworthy as well as in public so in religious affairs' (Gamakharia, 2006).

National minorities

A clear example of democratic transitions is the policy of Georgian Social Democrats towards national minorities. Georgian nationalist movements supported them in this matter too. One of the reasons of Noe Zhordania taking the matter of ethnic minorities was that he grasped ethnic diversity in Georgia. He favoured pragmatic policy over the pseudo-patriotic one and offered social equality and freedom to each of them. Such approach of his and his party paid off. Ethnic minorities did not feel being treated discriminated either. For this reason, social democrats won elections in Akhalkalaki, where population was mostly Armenian, while Armenian nationalist Dashnak lost. The result was the same in Tbilisi despite the Georgians were in minority there by then. Noe Zhordania explained these facts with the ideology of their party: 'our national policy toward ethnic minorities was founded on our political doctrine and on our previous political activity. Influence of the Social Democratic Party was based on that we defended the interests of every ethnicity; for us there were no Hellenes and barbarians, we considered everyone as Hellenes. However, this theory and past would have been hollow words and activities, if the objective reality in our country had not forced us to realize them. A domestic peace treaty between the ethnic minorities and the mother-nation, Georgians was needed, which would guarantee their solidarity and unity in times of joy and sorrow, which was released not by empty propaganda but by granting appropriate rights' (Jordania, *My Past*, 1990).

On such important day, when independence of Georgia was declared, Noe Zhordania emphasized ethnic minorities in his speech. In his words, throughout its history, Georgia only fought to defend its own interest, not against anyone. 'In addition, it fought not only for Georgians but also for all the nations that lived in Georgian state... no nation living in our country, or outside its borders, should feel uneasy, hurt, or offended because of us... I would like to have friendly relations with the nations living in Georgia and abroad. We will pay special attention to the tragedy of the nation, one part of which lives here, with us, and the other does not. Those are the Armenians. Modern Georgian will remember the testament of our ancestors and the Armenian nation will be granted the same protection they enjoyed under the rule of Georgian kings. We are willing to be on good terms with the majority of the Transcaucasian population – Muslims. We would like them to follow our example, establish a state like ours and extend their hand to us as a sign of unity... there are minorities of various ethnicity living in our state. We declare that national minorities will enjoy the same rights as well as the national majority of our state – Georgians' (Guruli, 26 May of 1918, 2011).

Attitude toward the ethnic minorities was demonstrated in the first constitution of Georgia. The 14th chapter and 9 articles were completely dedicated to this issue. Pursuant to it, every ethnic minority in Georgia was granted the right to free social, economic and cultural development, especially the right to teaching in their mother tongue and interior management of the matters of their ethno-culture. They also were granted rights to printing and writing in their mother tongue (Article 129). We must bear in mind that we are not talking about the Georgia of the 21st century, where all of this is natural but we are dealing with the beginning of the 20th century, when Georgia had been freed from the empire for only two years, where ethnic minorities paid in blood for fighting for their rights. Moreover, ethnic minorities were allowed to create self-governing units (commune, collective, or municipality) through their representative and establish ethnic union, in order to direct and organize their cultural educational activities in a better manner, including them, who did not have such self-governing agencies (Article 130). In addition to granting civil, political and cultural rights, constitution of Georgia paid close attention to their education. This meant establishing schools in accordance with proportion of the ethnical composition (Article 134); in such schools, pupils would be taught in the language they spoke (Article 135). Further, in terms of local government, where the proportion of ethnical minority exceeded 20%, the official language of sessions and proceedings would be the language of the minority, along with Georgian, should the said minority demanded so (Article 136). As for any deputy of non-Georgian origin, who did not know the official language sufficiently to express his opinions, was enabled to give his speech in his own language provided that he would submitted to the Bureau of the Parliament an exact translation of his speech before delivering it (Article 137) (Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, 1921).

As we see in the period of democratic transitions, since the declaration of independence of Georgia, Georgian social democrats considered equality among ethnicities and such opportunity for ethnic minorities to integrate with the rest of the nation, which would ensure realization of their cultural, economic, civil and political rights, as the fundamental principle of the country.

Women's rights

Just as the democratic transitions towards religious and national minorities was preceded by ideological preparation, women's first emancipation movement was still in the second half of the 19th century. Struggle for women's rights was intensified at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, which was facilitated by the spread of social democratic ideas. We learned that the constitution of Georgia, which fully demonstrated the social democratic views of that time, ignores sex in civil and political affairs. In this regard, they advocated complete equality.

Scholar of women's emancipation, L. Gapridashvili indicates that, Georgian women started to actively engage in politics since the beginning of the 20th century. She argues that a phenomenon of Georgian feminism was not based on just imported ideas but was adapted to the basic needs. It was not forced or artificial. Kato Mikeladze (1878-1942) led the movement fighting for women's civil and political rights (Gaprindashvili, 2008). **In the beginning of the 20th century**, she developed close ties with the members of 'Mesame Dasi' and engaged into revolutionary movement. With help of the 'Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians' she went to Moscow to study pedagogics, and later travelled to Europe. She studied on the faculty of social and political sciences in Brussels, and settled in Paris after graduation. There she thoroughly studied the European experience of women's movements, and when she returned to her motherland in 1916, started to gather like-minded people around her and fighting for women's rights. In 1917-18, she established a regional network 'League of Women', which united the women of all districts of Western Georgia. During the same period, she edited and published the newspaper ' (Voice of Georgian Woman), which laid out the western experience necessary for women's liberation movement and a whole range of Georgian problems (Gaprindashvili, feminism-boell, 2014).

In her view, fundamental criticism of the existing culture was necessary to improve the political status of women. She called the Consecutive Assembly for equality of rights based on law; insisted complete individual and political freedom in the first place; for women, to have the right to vote, as well as to be elected. She also demanded equal labor rights, eradication of sex-based differences in punishments, to abrogate men's privileges in family and in inheritance law (Gaprindashvili, 2008). Interestingly, she demanded to prohibit prostitution, perhaps based on the argument that woman must not be a subject of exploitation for men.

Although women's movement in Georgia were not as wide as in the places of their origin but Georgian feminist protests, which were demonstrated through publicist essays, was not futile and played a significant role in Georgia's democratic transitions. More specifically, result of their struggle reflected during the elections of the Constituent Assembly of the first Democratic Republic of 1918-1921 when women participated in elections which previously represented an unprecedented phenomenon in Georgia. Moreover, 5 from 130 deputies were women (Anna Sologhashvili, Liza-Nakashidze-Bolkvadze, Minadora Toroshelidze, Kristine (Chito) Sharashidze, Eleonora Te-Parsegova-Makhviladze), which was a significant success in the democratization of Georgia and in terms of equality between women and men (Gamtenadze, 2016).

Conclusion

In 1920 was organized the visit of the delegation of social-democrat members of the Second International in Georgia, led by K. Kautsky (Zhvania, 1998). One of them, the future prime minister of England Ramsay MacDonald wrote that, "Georgian social democrats managed to achieve such things that the socialists leading the European governments have been unable to do; namely, they established complete harmony between village and city; painlessly and peacefully implemented agricultural reform. They made labour the foundation of the existence of the Republic. They gave lands to the landless. They adopted socialist legislation... Individual initiative was welcomed... An entirely democratic state is being built under the leadership of the socialist government... If freedom of nation is not a hollow concept, the Georgian nation is the one that deserved freedom, and proved its high culture and political maturity to the whole humankind. I familiarized myself with its constitution and social and economic development, and I would like to see life in our country organized like this' (Inasaridze, 1984). 'There was no proletarian dictatorship here, no one abetted one class against another... freedom, honesty, respect of the rights of minorities – these are the principles of the government of Georgia. Georgia is a wonderful country, so is its nation' (Shubitidze, Political Views of Noe Jordania, 2003).

Foreign politicians returned to their homelands widely presented their impressions of the first social democratic republic and its democratic transitions through the press. This was promoted by De-facto and De-jure recognition

of Georgia by Russia on May 7, 1920. 25 states in total recognized the Democratic Republic of Georgia during its lifespan. Turkey was the first (in 1918), then Germany, Austria, Argentina, Italy, France, the UK, Japan, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Poland, Switzerland, Romania, Haiti, Liberia, Mexico, Panama, Siam, Luxemburg and others (Kirtadze, 1997).

It is sad that Georgia was in almost permanent state of war in 1918-1921. Since the day independence was declared, Georgian politicians realized that this independence could be temporary. Moreover, since 1920, there were aware that the Soviet Russia was planning to occupy Georgia by any means necessary. Despite of this, Georgian politicians continuously implemented modernist reforms. They adopted the constitution practically during the occupation (Jordania, 1990). All this indicates that they worked hard for the future of Georgia, not for only present. They wanted to lay foundations to a democratic republic, which would be a legitimate predecessor of the future Georgia. In this case, de-occupation of Georgia and re-establishment of its independence would have more legitimate grounds than it would have had in the 18th century, if the descendants of a disintegrated feudal country demanded independence. They created the democratic state that became a political and legal basis of the 21th century Georgia.

After his visit in Georgia in 1920, Karl Kautsky wrote as follows: 'representatives of Georgia had a proof that the Russian government was taking preliminary military measures to attack Georgia in December 1920, which it did in February. As a result of this attack, they made this country a Russian province again, under the flag of an independent soviet republic. This small country is restrained by the Russian Red Army with the strength of 120,000, which is robbing it without showing any mercy. As a conquered country, Georgia endures far more suffering from the Bolshevik dominance, than the ignorant Russia. The process of ravaging and bringing the country on the brink of starvation, which took four years in Russia, was concluded in Georgia only in a few months brought the same horrific results' (Kautsky, 1921).

Consequently, we see that our research article was based on a research report, relied on a number of relevant books, publications, speeches, statements, and we came to the conclusion that the first democratic transitions in Georgia were carried out in 1918-1921. **It was the epoch of social democrats, where the social democratization of the European direction took place in Georgia and concrete reforms were implemented in this regard.** During this period Georgian political and economic elite led by Noe Zhordania, was able to follow European trends and to some extent Georgia's democratic transition. These transformations touched upon everyone from the government to the ordinary public life. The survey revealed that reforms were implemented in the political and social sphere. Power was distributed in three branches. A democratic electoral system, which was supposed to be universal, equal, direct and secret ballot, was allowed to participate in elections for all aged (20 years) citizens regardless of gender, nationality and religion. The jury system of the court was developed, local self-government was created, the rights of citizens, including freedom of speech, printing or press, freedom of expression, freedom of movement and freedom of meeting was guaranteed. In parallel to the restoration of Autocephaly of the Apostolic Church of Georgia secular policy has been taken. The state and the church became completely separated from each other. The constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and prohibition of persecution of citizens and restrictions on political and legal rights due to the religion. At the same time, it was inadmissible to refuse to perform civil and political duties on religious grounds, except for the cases prescribed by law. Equality was recognized and nobody was given the advantage. Democratic approaches were also applied to national minorities. According to the constitution, all national minorities of the Republic of Georgia were granted free social-economic and cultural development. All ethnic groups have been granted the right to education, and national-cultural, political affairs and governance in their own language. With the announcement of Georgia's independence, women have also won full political and civil liberties. The Constitution of Georgia did not grant sex any importance. Moreover, they not only were allowed to vote in the first Democratic Republic, but five MPs were elected to the parliament.

As the researcher of the Georgian Social-Democrats R. Kalandadze notes the concept of 'Democracy, as only the form of political organization of state, incorporated the meanings of the idea and political worldview. To some extent, it also had an ideological nature, which was clearly demonstrated during the first republic of Georgia, when the government ideologized democracy (Kalandadze, 2000). Many people did not comprehend the importance of democratic reforms and considered it a utopia, unfitting phenomenon. For instance, General Maghlakelidze recalls in his memoirs that, they were unable to implement real policy since Zhordania's government pursued such ideals

that exist only in theory and cannot be realized in practice (Maghlakelidze, Memories, 2012). It is a fact that the reforms of the Georgian social democrats and political, civil and cultural modernization were the achievement that **transformed Georgian people into the nation**, which was a part of the free civilized world. Despite the fact that the first democratic transitions were violently interrupted by the Soviet occupation, it left significant and necessary achievements as a legacy to the future free and democratic Georgia.

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