

prior to 2000, to become the leader of a unified Belarusian-Russian state *and* to ensure that Belarus, despite the notable size differential, would enter into this arrangement as an equal partner to Russia.

Parts of this book are clearly dated as it was published in 2002 and only vaguely touches on several recent developments in international politics, i.e. the election of Vladimir Putin as Russian President, his subsequent crackdown on Russian oligarchs and tight control of the Russia media. It moreover predates the security-dominated political environment that emerged in reaction to international events of terrorism following September 11<sup>th</sup>, as well as the enlargement of the EU in 2004 to include ten new members, with eight of these from the CEE region.

The contributors nevertheless challenge the world to avoid treating Belarus as a ‘curious sideshow’ that is already annexed to Russia and has no value to the West. Further to this, it entreats the West to support the youth of Belarus, who want more out of life than collective farms can offer in the longer-term. Considering the protest movement that emerged against Lukashenka’s recent election, as well as the slow, tempered response from the security forces, democratic change may yet be demanded.

Balmaceda *et al*’s book provides valuable insight into how the current political and economic environment developed in Belarus during the 1990s, highlights the challenges facing those who currently desire democratic change in this environment and provides an explanation into why Lukashenka retains popularity despite his dictatorial leadership style and repressive economic policies.

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Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917*, Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2005, 384 pp.

Two things distinguish Georgian Social Democracy from the greater socialist movement in late tsarist Russia. First, the Georgian Social Democrats envisioned an alliance between peasantry, proletariat, and bourgeoisie. Second, they strove to reconcile socialist ideology with the exigencies of the ‘national

question'. By looking for a solution acceptable to *all* Georgians, whether landowner or petty bourgeois, Georgian peasant or Armenian trader, Georgian Social Democrats implicitly challenged Marx's dogma of the proletarian-led revolution. As Stephen F. Jones, a specialist in Russian and Caucasian studies at Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts, reveals in *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, their temporary success throws a new light on the larger question of revolutions in a backward context. In tracing the rise of 'the most successful Social Democratic movement in the Russian Empire before 1917' (p. xi), the author attempts to fill a gap in revolutionary historiography, which has largely neglected to deal with the Georgian phenomenon. (The obvious exceptions to this tendency are the works of Ronald Suny.) His ability to read Georgian has allowed him to consult many hitherto ignored sources, such as a host of local newspapers (*kvali*, *akhali gza*, *ertoba*, etc.) and diverse other primary materials located in Georgian and Russian archives. These are supplemented with the collected works and memoirs of all major protagonists including the ubiquitous Noe Zhordania, Akaki Tsereteli, and Niko Nikoladze, to mention but a few. Within the space of ten chapters Jones explores such topics as the historical background to the movement; its specifically national roots; the split in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and the Georgians' decision to support the Menshevik platform; the impact of the revolution of 1905 on tactics; and the party's ultimate success in 1917.

From the movement's inception Georgian Social Democrats endeavored to harmonize socialism and nationalism (two ideologies conventionally deemed irreconcilable) and to show that 'national rights were integral to democratic socialism', as Jones points out (p. 29). Put differently, what Georgian Social Democrats fought for was not political independence but a form of cultural self-determination. In other words, they strove for a harmonization of class interests that cut across ethnic divisions. In so doing, they were able to build on a distinctly Caucasian tradition of 'coexistence and cooperation'. The pull of tradition should not be underestimated in a society that was still predominantly proto-capitalist and socially and ethnically heterogeneous. To gather Armenian bourgeois, Russian bureaucrats, and Georgian workers and peasants behind a common goal was no small feat. The person that may be credited with this achievement is the much beloved 'tribal prophet' Noe Zhordania, the intellectual father of the pluralistic SD party in Georgia. Though officially aligned with the Mensheviks, the Georgian Social

Democrats under Zhordania's leadership charted new territory in their struggle for a just society. While they shared the Menshevik advocacy of a bourgeois revolution, they insisted on the need to discard this cherished staple of Marxist ideology, the hegemonic role of the proletariat. Instead, they acknowledged the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. In addition, they were always conscious of the magnitude of the 'national question'. As Jones shows, these differing emphases were partly the result of the experience of the 'Gurian Republic', a fascinating four-year-long experiment in local self-government, partly the testimony of the Central European intellectual impact. Zhordania in particular was inspired by Austrian Marxists who insisted on the compatibility of nationalism and socialism and sought to solve the 'problem' of multinationality by socialist means. Whether brief comparisons such as these warrant the labeling of Georgian Social Democracy as essentially 'European', however, is open to doubt.

The equation of Georgian with European seems to downplay the unique historical, cultural, and geopolitical conditions that gave rise to the movement's emergence and distinct shape in the Caucasus. To make the connection between Western and Central European Social Democracy and its Georgian variant more explicit, additional discussion on individual national movements in the West would have been helpful. This the author fails to provide. Sporadic allusions to the Austrian and German experience notwithstanding, Jones does not sufficiently stress the distinct 'Europeanness' of the Georgian trajectory to lend credence to his argument. In the final reckoning, the subtitle's allusion to the 'European' path to Social Democracy that Georgians pursued is more puzzling than convincing. Nonetheless, when one takes the book for what it is rather than for what it purports to be, one need not be disappointed. Despite minor shortcomings such as an excessive use of Georgian terms where English equivalents would have sufficed, *Socialism in Georgian Colors* powerfully illustrates the importance of Georgian Social Democracy not only to the Menshevik movement but to the history of the Russian Revolution as a whole.

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