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Social-Democrats and Anarchists

David Marshall Lang

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Excerpted from *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, pp. 172–173.

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Another interesting political development of the year 1906 was a determined but short-lived attempt by Kropotkinite Anarchists to win control of the revolutionary movement in Georgia. From 25 March to 2 July 1906, there appeared at Tbilisi a 'legal Anarchist' weekly called *Nobati* (*The Tocsin*), edited and in large part written by M. G. (*Mikhako*) Tsereteli (b. 1878), who used the pseudonym Baton. Among the journal's contributors were Prince Kropotkin himself, Kamando Gogelia, and the veteran Georgian revolutionary Varlam Cherkessov (Cherkezishvili). The Georgian Anarchists launched a vigorous critique of Marxism and the ideological basis of Social-Democracy; they declared their opposition to state socialism and government monopoly of the means of production. 'The State and the People,' they wrote, 'are two perpetual and untiring foes.'¹ They assailed the notion of dictatorship of the proletariat. In fact, they would have nothing to do with dictatorship of any political colour, identifying it with slavery. They preached renunciation of private property, and the ideals of Voluntary co-operation' in

¹ *Nobati*, No. 2, 2 April 1906.

both urban industry and rural life. In one of the last numbers of the paper, Mikhako Tsereteli condemned the Marxists in strong terms, saying:

‘For them, the social revolution must be brought about by the agency of the State, within the frontiers of the State and with the aid of the State; but for us, it must be brought about outside the State, in opposition to the State, with the aid of completely new social forces and principles. We shall see which doctrine is the truer and the more effectual.’²

The Georgian Anarchists lacked a broadly based popular organization, and could not compete with the dominant Social-Democrats. Before the Kropotkinite movement faded out, however, leading Georgian Marxists spent much energy in combating the Anarchist ideology, which they considered especially pernicious. Stalin himself wrote at the time:

‘Marxism and Anarchism are built up on entirely different principles, in spite of the fact that both come into the arena of the Struggle under the flag of Socialism. The cornerstone of Anarchism is the *individual*, whose emancipation, according to its tenets, is the principal condition for the emancipation of the masses, the collective body. According to the tenets of Anarchism the emancipation of the masses is impossible until the individual is emancipated. Accordingly its slogan is: “Everything for the individual.” The cornerstone of Marxism, however, is the masses, whose emancipation, according to the Marxist view, is the principal condition for the emancipation of the individual. That is to say, according to the tenets of

² *Nobati*, No. 12, 18 June 1906.

Marxism, the emancipation of the individual is impossible until the masses are emancipated. Accordingly, its slogan is: “Everything for the masses.”³

³ Quoted in Beria, *On the history of the Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia*, pp. 166–67.