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Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy 1883-1917

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tury he covers and the events of 1917 were the product of the interplay of reform and counter-reform. Associated with this view is an emphasis on the significance of wars. He argues that the War of 1812 was the “shock” that made the abolition of serfdom “irreversible” (p. 27), while defeat in the Crimean War “largely determined [the] direction and character” of the reforms of the 1860s (p. 87). “The event that tipped the scales to the side of revolution was Russia’s entry into World War I” (p. 239). All of this is coherent and persuasive, but the exclusive focus on politics sometimes may, paradoxically, impede the reader’s understanding of political matters. *Sosloviia*, which Polunov calls “social estates,” figure in his narrative from time to time, but he does not address them directly or explain the estate system. His account of the peasant commune, three-field agriculture, and related matters is sketchy and fragmentary, so that some readers will be puzzled by aspects of his treatment of the abolition of serfdom or the Stolypin reforms.

Polunov’s analysis is fresh and incisive. Notable are his treatment of K. P. Pobedonostsev, supreme procurator of the Holy Synod, and of the abolition of serfdom. His chapter on the reign of Nicholas I is balanced and discerning. Only occasionally does he pass along the conventional errors that are common in survey works. Like other historians, he holds that in a speech of March 30, 1856, Alexander [II] “openly proclaimed the inevitability of the abolition of serfdom.” But the emperor opened the speech with “It is rumored that I want to give liberty to the peasants; this rumor is unjust, and you can say this to everyone.” And Polunov passes on the textbook commonplace that, during the “Movement to the People” of 1874, peasants often handed propagandists over to the police (p. 148), citing an article (by this reviewer) that demonstrates that the commonplace is false.

If ever a book cried out for a second edition, it is Polunov’s, for he has been badly served by his publisher. The lack of a glossary is a shortcoming. In covering a century in 250 pages of text, Polunov struggled with limitations of space, yet almost one-tenth of these pages are given over to muddy and unedifying illustrations. Most important, it appears from marked changes of style, tone, and coverage that Polunov faced arbitrary constraints of time. In the early chapters, the style is agreeably discursive. Polunov makes effective use of extracts from primary sources. He likes, as in his other writing, to begin paragraphs with rhetorical questions. In the latter chapters, the writing is increasingly telegraphic. Extracts from sources and rhetorical questions disappear. Worse still, there are striking imbalances of coverage. The Slavophiles of the 1840s get three pages, and the radicals of the 1860s–1870s get a whole chapter, while the Socialist Revolutionaries, the largest political party in Russia in the early twentieth century, are treated in one page. V. M. Chernov is the only Socialist Revolutionary mentioned by name, while the names of six members of the Lovers of Wisdom, an early nineteenth-century philosophical circle, are provided. The

Decembrists and their uprising in 1825 are covered in about six pages; the Moscow insurrection of December 1905, the turning point of the Revolution of 1905, gets one sentence.

It is hard to believe that the differences between the early and the later chapters represent the author’s deliberate choice. A second edition, in which he could more fully deploy his gifts and his learning, would be welcome indeed.

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STEPHEN F. JONES. *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy 1883–1917*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2005. Pp. xiv, 384. \$49.95.

The Russian Empire was composed of diverse nationalities, as was the revolutionary movement that sought to overthrow it. Georgians played a prominent role in both the evolution of the empire and the revolutionary movement. Russia offered Georgians protection from nearby Islamic states, an administrative and military alliance against the enduring mountain insurgency in the North Caucasus, and institutional and intellectual resources in their historic struggle to build a nation and overcome regional fragmentation. The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), however, proved to be more centralized and inflexible than the empire of the tsars. Russian revolutionary thought “was a desert for innovative ideas on nationalism’s relationship with socialism,” and Georgia’s socialists gradually found themselves disappointed in not just the Bolsheviks but Russian Mensheviks as well (p. 227). Stephen F. Jones describes the valiant but futile efforts of Georgian Social Democrats to redirect and moderate the interests of their revolutionary comrades in Russia, and “establish a European path for Russian social democracy” (p. 218).

Georgian Social Democrats consistently addressed their own historic national dilemmas regarding geopolitics, regional fragmentation, ethnic diversity, and the role of Russian “enlightenment” in the region. They viewed socialism as a means to “modernize, integrate and nationalize Georgian society and territory” (p. 15). Between 1893 and 1905 Georgian Social Democrats were the “most effective Marxist organization in the Russian Empire,” and they successfully established the first legal Marxist newspaper in tsarist Russia (p. 30). Georgia’s radicals drew on the traditional concerns of the Georgian intelligentsia, and emphasized literacy, self-help programs, and the preservation of the Georgian culture and language. Many socialists were veterans of the many autonomous societies that had emerged in Tbilisi and throughout the region from the 1850s on that were dedicated to the collection of Georgian folklore and the description of Georgian cultural traditions. Others were former village teachers who shared similar concerns. Georgian social democracy, Jones emphasizes, “reflected the pragmatic radicalism and socialist

nationalism of its own native intelligentsia as much as Marxist universalism" (p. 47).

Again in contrast to their comrades in Russia, the Georgians addressed the contradictions of a proletarian vision in a largely agrarian society. The peasant rebellion in western Georgia from 1902 to 1905 was accompanied by the formation of the Gurian revolutionary committee, successful railway and telegraph strikes, and smaller peasant revolts in eastern counties such as Dusheti and Gori (pp. 152–158). The events provided new members, knowledge, and experience for Georgia's Social Democrats, who after 1905 further concentrated on distinctly national and local issues. They increasingly published in Georgian for Georgian readers, while RSDLP publications addressed Russian-reading workers. Georgian leaders and theoreticians such as Noe Zhordania closely followed debates among Austrian socialists about regional autonomy, federalism, and language use, and took the lead, along with the Poles, Jews (the Bund), and Latvians, in pushing Russia's revolutionaries to think through the relationship of the national question to socialism (pp. 228–232). After 1905 Georgia's Social Democrats were increasingly distant even from the more open-minded Mensheviks, while Bolshevism in Georgia was largely irrelevant. Joseph Stalin (Ioseb Jughashvili) was generally absent from the region after his participation in the successful and spectacular robbery on Erivan Square in Tbilisi in June 1907 that netted some 250,000 rubles, and Pilipe Makharadze was rarely in Georgia after 1908. The Bolsheviks produced only two newspapers on their own between 1907 and 1917 in Tbilisi (pp. 198–221). Georgian Social Democracy, Jones concludes, was tragically obscured and distorted by the more powerful Russian variety, but it anticipated the innovations and flexibility of the diverse forms of national socialism of the twentieth century.

The mix of archival experience, linguistic competence, and mature scholarship that informs this book allows the author simultaneously to address numerous other issues beyond the history of socialism that are currently pertinent to the study of Russia as a multi-ethnic society. Jones contributes to the literature on imperial administration in the Caucasus, the social history of Tbilisi, Armenian-Georgian relations, the emergence of Georgian civil society and the interest of various autonomous societies in the development of Georgian culture, the history of the Georgian-language press, and the events of 1905 in the region. The author promises a much-needed companion volume on the history of the short-lived Georgian republic of the revolutionary era.

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ELIZABETH A. WOOD. *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2005. Pp. viii, 301. \$49.95.

How the Russian Revolution of 1917 deteriorated from a grandiose experiment in reconfiguring the human condition into authoritarianism in little more than a decade is a question that has preoccupied analysts since the early Soviet period itself, but few investigations have achieved the sustained focus of Elizabeth A. Wood's book. This impressively researched study examines a key Bolshevik didactic instrument, the mock agitation trial, as it reflected important shifts in the transition from revolutionary energy to dictatorship between 1919 and 1933: the subordination of the individual to the collective, of private prerogatives to public responsibilities, and of initiative and dialogue to coercion. As she charts the transition of agitation trials from a humanizing and socializing device to a shaming and accusatory ritual and finally an instrument for enforcing conformity, Wood's interdisciplinary methodology unearths rationales that are as often theatrical and discursive as they are political. This book is a valuable addition to the growing body of work that scrutinizes early Soviet attempts to inculcate a new social consciousness among citizens.

Party leaders initially strove to encourage local initiative following the revolution while maintaining strict preferences regarding forms to be encouraged or discouraged. The staging of mock trials as agitation—which was fully consistent with the Bolsheviks' view of law as a revolutionary instrument rather than an expression of abstract principles—offered the opportunity to lead audiences while not overtly appearing to do so. And this mode of Bolshevik agitation, Soviet claims to originality notwithstanding, tapped a preexisting Russian fascination with trial as theater: religious mystery plays, the trials of revolutionaries, mock trials of Silver Age literary works. Soviet mock trials were never solely the product of central direction, however, and including the audience as participants fed the illusion that the staged proceedings were the product of spontaneous local initiative. Needing to find entertaining ways to engage masses who were bored with slogans, speeches, and rallies by 1919–1920, local activists initially staged trials of military desertion and White generals as well as of Vladimir Lenin and the October Revolution (as a means to answer existing criticisms of the regime and debunk rumors). When it then turned to issues of pressing local concern—syphilis, prostitution, sanitation, medical care, abortion, hooliganism, and the responsibilities of women in the home—the genre hit its stride. Even as the trials became more scripted in 1921–1923, they featured a dialogue between opposing points of view and often incorporated spirited defenses based on mitigating circumstances such as ignorance and the failure of society to provide correct guidance. In this morality play format, audiences deliberated whether a prostitute on trial for infecting a soldier with a venereal disease was a legal perpetrator or a social victim, while the medical experts who appeared as witnesses provided the audience with information about syphilis and living examples of the voice of scientific reason.

The tenor of the trials changed significantly in the