

# From Editors <sup>\*</sup> –

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Convinced that for intelligent Georgian readers the publication of a free periodical is an urgent question; convinced that this question must be settled today and that further delay can only damage the common cause; convinced that every intelligent reader will welcome such a publication and will render it every assistance, we, a group of Georgian revolutionary Social-Democrats, are meeting this want in the endeavour to satisfy the readers' wishes as far as it lies in our power. We are issuing the first number of the first Georgian free newspaper *Brdzola*.<sup>1</sup>

To enable the reader to form a definite opinion about our publication and, in particular, about ourselves, we shall say a few words.

The Social-Democratic movement has not left untouched a single corner of the country. It has not avoided that corner of Russia which we call the Caucasus, and with the Caucasus, it has not avoided our Georgia. The Social-Democratic movement in Georgia is a recent phenomenon, it is only a few years old; to be more precise, the foundations of that movement were laid only in 1896. Here, as everywhere else, our activities at first did not extend beyond the bounds of secrecy. Agitation and wide propaganda in the form that we have been witnessing lately were impossible and, willy-nilly, all efforts were concentrated in a few circles. This period has now passed. Social-Democratic ideas have spread among the masses of the workers, and activities have also overflowed the narrow bounds of secrecy and have spread to a large section of the workers. The open struggle has started. This struggle has confronted the pioneer Party workers with many questions of a kind that have been in the background hitherto and have not urgently called for explanation. The first question that has arisen in all its magnitude is: what means have we at our command to enlarge the area of the struggle? In words, the answer to this question is very simple and easy; in practice it is quite different.

It goes without saying that for the organised Social-Democratic movement the principal means is the extensive propaganda of and agitation for revolutionary ideas. But the conditions under which the revolutionary is obliged to operate are so contradictory, so difficult, and call for such heavy sacrifices, that often both propaganda and agitation become impossible in the form that the initial stage of the movement requires. Studying in circles with the aid of books and pamphlets becomes impossible, first, because of police persecution, and secondly, because of the very way this work is organised. Agitation wanes with the very first arrests. It becomes impossible to maintain contact with the workers and to visit them often; and yet the workers are expecting explanations of numerous questions of the day. A fierce struggle is raging around them; all the forces of the government are mustered against them; but they have no means of critically analysing the present situation, they have no information about the actual state of affairs, and often a slight setback at some neighbouring factory is enough to cause revolutionary-minded workers to cool off, to lose confidence in the future, and the leader is obliged to start drawing them into the work anew.

In most cases, agitation with the aid of pamphlets which provide answers only to certain definite questions has little effect. It becomes necessary to create a literature that provides answers to questions of the day. We shall not stop to prove this commonly-known truth. In the Georgian labour movement the time has already arrived when a periodical becomes one of the principal means of revolutionary activity.

For the information of some of our uninitiated readers we deem it necessary to say a few words about the legally printed newspapers. We would deem it a great mistake if any worker regarded such a newspaper, irrespective of the conditions under which it was published or of the trend it pursued, as the mouthpiece of his, the worker's, interests. The government, which "takes care" of the workers, is in a splendid position as far as such newspapers are concerned. A whole horde of officials, called censors, are attached to them, and it is their special function to watch them and to resort to red ink and scissors if even a single ray of truth breaks through. Circular after circular comes flying to the committee of censors ordering: "Don't pass anything concerning the workers; don't publish anything about this or that event; don't permit the discussion of such and such a subject," and so on and so forth. Under these conditions, it is, of course, impossible for a newspaper to be run properly; and in vain will the worker seek in its columns, even between the lines, for information on and a correct appraisal of matters that concern him. If anybody were to believe that a worker can gain any benefit from the rare lines that appear in this or that legally printed newspaper casually mentioning matters concerning him, and let through by the butchering censors only by mistake, we would have to say that he who placed his hopes on such fragments and attempted to build up a system of propaganda on such snippets would display lack of understanding.

We repeat that we are saying this only for the information of a few uninitiated readers.

And so, a Georgian free periodical is something the Social-Democratic movement needs very urgently. The only question now is how to run such a publication; by what should it be guided, and what should it give the Georgian Social-Democrats.

From the point of view of the onlooker, the question of the existence of a Georgian newspaper in general, and the question of its content and trend in particular, may seem to settle themselves naturally and simply: the Georgian Social-Democratic movement is not a separate, exclusively Georgian, working-class movement with its own separate programme; it goes hand in hand with the entire Russian movement and, consequently, accepts the authority of the Russian Social-Democratic Party—hence it is clear that a Georgian Social-Democratic newspaper should be only a local organ that deals mainly with local questions and reflects the local movement. But behind this reply lurks a difficulty which we cannot ignore and which we shall inevitably encounter. We refer to the language difficulty. While the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Party is able to explain all general questions with the aid of the all-Party newspaper and leave it to the regional committees to deal only with local questions, the Georgian newspaper finds itself in a difficulty as regards content. The Georgian newspaper must simultaneously play the part of an all-Party and of a regional, or local organ. As the majority of Georgian working-class readers cannot freely read the Russian newspaper, the editors of the Georgian newspaper have no right to pass over those questions which the all-Party Russian newspaper is discussing, and should discuss. Thus, the Georgian newspaper must inform its readers about all questions of principle concerning theory and tactics. At the same time it must lead the local movement and throw proper light on every event, without leaving a single fact unexplained, and providing answers to all questions that excite the local workers. The Georgian newspaper must link up and unite the Georgian and Russian militant workers. The newspaper must inform its readers about everything that interests them at home, in Russia and abroad.

Such, in general, is our view of what the Georgian newspaper should be.

A few words about the content and trend of the newspaper.

We must demand that as a Social-Democratic newspaper it should devote attention mainly to the militants workers. We think it superfluous to say that in Russia, and everywhere, the revolutionary proletariat alone is destined by history to liberate mankind and bring the world happiness. Clearly, only the working-class movement stands on solid ground, and it alone is free from all sorts of utopian fairy tales. Consequently, the newspaper, as the organ of the Social-Democrats, should lead the working-class movement, point the road for it,

and safeguard it from error. In short, the primary duty of the newspaper is to be as close to the masses of the workers as possible, to be able constantly to influence them and serve as their conscious and guiding centre.

As, however, in the conditions prevailing in Russia today, it is possible that other elements of society besides the workers may come out as the champions of "freedom," and as this freedom is the immediate goal of the militant workers of Russia, it is the duty of the newspaper to afford space for every revolutionary movement, even one outside the labour movement. We say "afford space" not only for casual information, or simply news. No! The newspaper must devote special attention to the revolutionary movement that goes on, or will arise, among other elements of society. It must explain every social phenomenon and thereby influence every one who is fighting for freedom. Hence, the newspaper must devote special attention to the political situation in Russia, weigh up all the consequences of this situation, and on the widest possible basis raise the question of the necessity of waging a political struggle.

We are convinced that nobody will quote our words as proof that we advocate establishing connection and compromising with the bourgeoisie. The proper appraisal, the exposure of the weaknesses and errors of the movement against the existing system, even if it proceeds among the bourgeoisie, cannot cast the stain of opportunism on the Social-Democrats. The only thing here is not to forget Social-Democratic principles and revolutionary methods of fighting. If we measure every movement with this yardstick, we shall keep free of all Bernsteinian delusions.

Thus, the Georgian Social-Democratic newspaper must provide plain answers to all questions connected with the working-class movement, explain questions of principle, explain theoretically the role the working class plays in the struggle, and throw the light of scientific socialism upon every phenomenon the workers encounter.

At the same time, the newspaper must serve as the representative of the Russian Social-Democratic Party and give its readers timely information about all the views on tactics held by Russian revolutionary Social-Democracy. It must inform its readers about how the workers in other countries live, what they are doing to improve their conditions, and how they are doing it, and issue a timely call to the Georgian workers to enter the battle-field. At the same time, the newspaper must not leave out of account, and without Social-Democratic criticism, a single social movement.

Such is our view of what a Georgian newspaper should be.

We cannot deceive either ourselves or our readers by promising to carry out these tasks in their entirety with the forces at present at our command. To run the newspaper as it really ought to be run we need the aid of our readers and sympathisers. The reader will note that the first number of *Brdzola* suffers from numerous defects, but defects which can be rectified, if only our readers give us their assistance. In particular, we emphasise the paucity of home news. Being at a distance from home we are unable to watch the revolutionary movement in Georgia and provide timely information and explanation concerning questions of that movement. Hence we must receive assistance from Georgia. Whoever wishes to assist us also with literary contributions will undoubtedly find means of establishing direct or indirect contact with the editors of *Brdzola*.

We call upon all Georgian militant Social-Democrats to take a keen interest in the fate of *Brdzola*, to render every assistance in publishing and distributing it, and thereby convert the first free Georgian newspaper *Brdzola* into a weapon of the revolutionary struggle.

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\* Leading article in the illegal Social-Democratic newspaper *Brdzola (The Struggle)*.

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## Notes

1. *Brdzola (The Struggle)*—the first illegal Georgian newspaper issued by the Leninist-*Iskra* group of the Tiflis Social-Democratic organisation. It was founded on the initiative of J. V. Stalin. The newspaper was launched as a result of the struggle that had been waged since 1898 by the revolutionary minority in the first Georgian Social-

Democratic organisation known as the Messameh Dassy (J. V. Stalin, V. Z. Ketskhoveri and A. G. Tsulukidze) against the opportunist majority (Jordania and others) on the question of instituting an underground revolutionary Marxist press. *Brdzola*, was printed in Baku at an underground printing plant that had been organised by V. Z. Ketskhoveri, J. V. Stalin's closest colleague, on the instructions of the revolutionary wing of the Tiflis Social-Democratic organisation. He was also responsible for the practical work of issuing the newspaper. The leading articles in *Brdzola*, on questions concerning the programme and tactics of the revolutionary Marxist party were written by J. V. Stalin. Four numbers of *Brdzola*, were issued: No. 1, in September 1901; No. 2-3, in November-December 1901; and No. 4, in December 1902. The best Marxist newspaper in Russia next to *Iskra*, *Brdzola* urged that there was an inseparable connection between the revolutionary struggle that was being waged by the Transcaucasian proletariat and the revolutionary struggle waged by the working class all over Russia. Propagating the theoretical principles of revolutionary Marxism, *Brdzola*, like Lenin's *Iskra*, urged that the Social-Democratic organisations must proceed to take up mass political agitation and the political struggle against the autocracy, and advocated the Leninist idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In its fight against the "Economists," *Brdzola*, urged the necessity of creating a united revolutionary party of the working class and exposed the liberal bourgeoisie, nationalists and opportunists of all shades. Commenting on the appearance of No. 1 of *Brdzola*, Lenin's *Iskra* stated that it was an event of extreme importance.

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