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AGRARIAN REFORM IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA¹

INTRODUCTION

The rapid and effective implementation of the land reform was a matter of utmost importance for the Democratic Republic of Georgia. This reform was linked to the existential issues for the republic, which had got the heaviest inheritance from the Empire precisely in the agrarian sphere. The peasants' reform, which started in the Empire in 1861, brought some freedom to peasants but failed to make any marked improvements in the situation from the economic viewpoint.

In 1900, peasants owned 6.2% of the land fund, its 57.8% were treasury lands (including church lands), and 31.3% of land fund was under the ownership of aristocracy (Devdariani 1931, 288-289)

The statistics on the reality existing in 1917 is provided by Konstantine Kandelaki, the Minister of Finance and Trade and Industry of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. In particular, by 1917 the land fund of Georgia amounted to 5 537 207 desyatina and was distributed as follows:

Russian Treasury 2,020,012 des., 36.4%

Private landowners 3 517 195, 63.6%

The ratio of private landowners was as follows:

Aristocracy -621 695, 17.7%

Peasants and peasant societies - 2,915,080, 82.3%.

The difference may have been caused by the increase of the land redeemed by temporarily- obligated peasants and as a result of the so-called "Stolypin reform". 52.6% of the total land stock was in the hands of peasants by 1917, however, their majority owned less than 2 hectares of land. 64% of peasants in eastern Georgia and 42% of them in western

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Georgia held the land on lease. The rental costs often made up 25-30% of the crop (Kandelaki 1960, 147-149).

In 1918 and 1921, more than 80 percent of the population was employed in agriculture. The similar figure in Finland, the former part of the Russian Empire, was 30.4% (Kandelaki 1935, 167-168) in the same period.

Georgian socialists gained their first experience of implementing the agrarian reform in Guria in 1905, where contrary to the program (municipalization) of the party, the peasants, on whom the Social Democrats had great influence, demanded the transfer of land into their private ownership.

The February Revolution of 1917 created a good grounds for launching the agrarian reform. The researchers consider the delay of agrarian reform in 1917 to be one of the main reasons for the collapse of February Revolution and the democratic changes in Russia as a whole (Woytinsky 1961, 398).

Since May 1918, the responsibility for implementation of the agrarian reform was shifted from the imperial centers to the capitals of new republics in Transcaucasia. Georgia embarked on this reform at a fairly rapid pace, Armenia tried to implement the reform but without any success (Woytinsky 1961, 235), and there were no systematic attempts in Azerbaijan at all.

The rapid introduction of the agrarian reform was essential not only for the states emerged after the collapse of the former empires of Eastern Europe, but also for Western Europe itself. The Left - wing was particularly vocal about the need for the reform. In 1914-1918, the idea of transferring land to the peasants dominated the leftist parties in Germany, Austria, France and elsewhere. Since 1918, the agrarian reforms have been carried out in: Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Noe Jordania's advisor, a renowned economist Wladimir Woytinsky, points out in his book "Georgian Democracy":

"In Georgia every peasant knows what the revolution and the young republic born of revolution have given them: land and democratic self-government: land, that is, the right to work freely without fear that someone else will come and take away the wheat sown by the sweat of your brow; Self-government, the belief that life has become clearer, easier and more civilized" (Woytinski 2018, 271).

According to Konstantine Kandelaki's evaluation, following the 1917 revolution the citizens demanded for resolving two issues: ***"Society expected the revolution to solve two major issues: freedom and land"*** (Kandelaki 1960, 145)

Transcaucasia was separated from Russia after the October coup of

1917. On December 16, 1917, the Transcaucasian Commissariat, a temporary governing body, issued a special decree and informed the citizens about the commencement of agrarian reform¹. The decree issued by the Commissariat was condemned and criticized by the Bolsheviks. In February 1918, a new temporary representative body - Transcaucasian Sejm was established. The Sejm attempted to create the legal documents for reforms in a more systematic way. In March 1918, the Sejm published a draft law on the agrarian reforms, which announced:

“The lands of all private owners, except for the size specified in the following article, will be confiscated from the owner and transferred absolutely free of charge to the land fund to be at the disposal of the land committees.”

The owners of confiscated lands shall be left:

- a) 7 desyatina if valuable crops are cultivated in the region
- b) 15 desyatina, if only bread is grown in the area.
- c) And more than 40 desyatina if you only raise livestock².

On March 8, 1918, the Sejm approved the law on the agrarian reform in a special session³.

On April 22, 1918, the Sejm proclaimed the independence of Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. The Republic had existed for only 34 days and clearly failed to carry out the systemic reforms.

In the spring of 1918, in Georgia the first uprising was triggered by agrarian reasons in Gori *Uezd* (District) of Java region populated by the Ossetians. The uprising was led by the officers and Bolsheviks having returned from the front. The landless Ossetian peasants, so called “Khizani”, demanded the transfer of land into their ownership (Khvadagiani 2020, 3).

Parallel to the ongoing rebellions in Java region, the agrarian reform of May-June 1918 was also resonated in Sukhumi region. Andrew Andersen writes: “**The large Abkhazian landowning aristocrats, who feared that Georgia’s social democratic leaders might have implemented the land reform disadvantageous to them, focused their attention on the Ottoman Empire**” (Andersen 2016, 18).

The conflict in these two regions was conditioned by different factors, in Abkhazia the landowners were Abkhazians and Georgian peasants expected to get the land as a result of the reform, while in Java the situation was the opposite, Georgians were the owners of lands and the Ossetians were the ones waiting to own the land. (Welt 2013, 2-3).

1 Newspaper Ertoba [Unity], December 20, 2017, N221, p.1.

2 Newspaper Ertoba, March 8, 1918, N54, p.2.

3 Newspaper Ertoba, March 10, 1918, N 56, p.1.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF GEORGIA AND CHAOTIC NATURE OF AGRARIAN REFORM

On May 26, 2018 the Coalition Government, in which Social Democrats were outnumbered, should have taken responsibility for implementing the reform.

Karl Kautsky wrote about the necessity of implementing the revolutionary agrarian reform in the Democratic Republic of Georgia:

“A number of circumstances, which resembled those in Russia, necessitated the agrarian revolution. Under the conditions of democracy the agrarian revolution came to the same end as in case of dictatorship. However, under the conditions of democracy the revolution was carried out more peacefully, systematically and consciously, with less chaos and without disorder.” (Kautsky 2018, 88)

The main Right-wing political power – National Democratic Party openly criticized the idea regarding the confiscation of lands from landowners without compensation, National Democratic Party (EDP) also harshly criticized the Social – Federalists’ and Social-revolutionaries’ opinion about the introduction of land socialization and common property¹.

According to the calculations performed by the Central Statistical Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1918 -1919, with the exception of Batumi and Zakatala regions the territory of Georgia amounted to 7 067 676.8 sq. des. land in aggregate, out of which 852 155.8 were croplands. According to *Uezd* (District) the land was distributed as follows²:

<i>Uezd</i> (district)	Land fund	Farmland	Croplands	Vineyards
Borchalo	691 690.7	151 556.2	111 131.5	1756.3
Sighnaghi	606 312.1	63 528.8	50 902.3	5533.1
Dusheti	390 910.4	24 072.9	18 740.0	1298.1
Tiflis	458 771.5	70 239.5	55 650.5	2685.3
Gori	688 322.2	84 293.3	72 019.5	3703.2
Akhaltzikhe	267 188.9	30 271.1	27 019.5	743.2
Tianeti	486 954.9	13 845.5	11 660.8	316.7
Akhalkalaki	277 188.9	10 097.5	78 681.4	293.0
Kutaisi	348 633.5	66 350.0	59 276.7	6 848

1 Newspaper Sakartvelo, June 9, 1918, N112, p. 2.

2 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note 3, case 63, p.1-2.

Racha	283 774.8	17 226.7	12 659.6	1 639.7
Senaki	214 179.2	45 580.6	43 936.2	231.8
Ozurgeti	217 598.3	27 889.8	25 912.1	806.6
Lechkhumi	490 632.1	12 700.6	10 702.6	611.2
Shorapani	300 133.9	52 684.5	43 513.0	9 091.2
Zugdidi	268 861.8	51 049.0	49 412.9	1 594.6
Sokhumi region	831 103.9	99 103.6	90 826.3	6 658.0
Total	7 067 676.8	851 155.8	787 949	48 084.7

The Summer of 1918 was a hard period for the newly formed republic, because the revolutions having been initiated on the agrarian grounds by the Bolshevik's leadership broke out in Lechkhumi, Dusheti, Tianeti, and later in Zugdidi and Ozurgeti. The newspaper "Ertoba" wrote:

"Hence, we are currently faced with the following question: we must either give the confiscated lands to the peasants as private property and thus, the peasantry will stand up for the revolution as a passionate defender, and saving the country from the crucible of anarchy they will rescue the Democratic Republic of Georgia, or if we do not take the mentioned in the consideration everything will be destroyed."

According to the data of August 20, 1918, the land volume transferred to the disposal of the village land committees was as follows:-

Tiflis Gubernya (Governorates): Tiflis *Uezd* (district) - 39 857 de-syatina, Gori district - 17 341, Dusheti - 6 030, Tianeti- 8 724, Signaghi - 9 785, Telavi - 16 073, the land transferred to the province in aggregate - 97 812.

Kutaisi Governorates: Kutaisi *Uezd* -3408, Shorapani - 1 565, Racha - 35, Ozurgeti- 10 382, Zugdidi - 1 833, Senaki - 24 151, the total of land transferred to the province - 41 378².

Since Autumn 1918, the agrarian reform was retarded by the climate conditions as well. Khomeriki notified the government that, in fact, the course of agrarian reform had the seasonal nature throughout the Republic³.

1 Newspaper Ertoba, July 25, 1918, N 155, p. 3.

2 Newspaper Ertoba , September 7, 1918, N 191, p.3.

3 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note. 3, case 40, p.43.

The Department of Land Reforms of the Ministry of Agriculture was established in August, 1918¹. The chairman of the Department was Davit Chaduneli, the Department was entrusted with coordinating the affairs of provincial and district land departments and committees. In fact, the reform implementation was commenced in Spring 2019 by the Department having taken charge of 48 acting committees in Tbilisi province and 53 - in Kutaisi province. The Department launched the implementation of the reform in Spring, 2019. A number of problems emerged in the process of starting its activities. Due to the war-time the implementation of the reform in Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki and Borchalo started later². There were 17 people employed in the central unit of the department, and each *Uezd* (District) employed 1 district committee chairman (total 20). Each committee was staffed with 2 instructors and 1 administrator. As a whole, the district establishments numbered 80 staff members, with a total of 160 administrators employed in local committees. The general official staff of the department equaled to 275.³ According to Davit Chubinishvili's report of August 4, 1919, the aggregate of 48 committees functioned in Tbilisi *Uezd*, 52 –in Kutaisi Governorates and 6 committees - in Sukhumi region, that totaled to 106 committees⁴.

In order to support the agrarian reform there existed appendage departments with 205 people employed in it, the central department was staffed by 8 and the district departments – by 197 employees – the governors of local departments, land surveyors with their assistants and secretaries⁵.

NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At the end of 1918 the discussions on the new legislative initiations were launched in order to improve the pace and outcomes of the agrarian reform. And at the outset of 1919, it became evident that the opposition factions would not support the developed draft laws.

The speech made by the Minister of Agriculture, Noe Khomeriki, during discussing the Bill assumed the paramount importance:

1 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note 2, case 57, p.1.

2 Ibid. p.1-2.

3 Ibid, p. 7.

4 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note 3, case 21, p.67-68.

5 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note. 2, case 62, p.1-2.

“Gentlemen, the agrarian issue, in general, and particularly, that of land represents the greatest political and social matter in question. This issue as a focal point converges the interests of all the circles of the entire society. A variety of communities meet here each other to struggle and lead their path. Democracy always put forth the agrarian issues and made attempts to find solutions, but the former system, our government always avoided it and tried to follow the old relationships ... Even in the first months of the revolution the movements started in villages; If we consider the documents concerning the first days of revolution, we will see that the peasantry attempted to tackle the land issue themselves. These were grounds to give rise to the excesses initiating the activities in reactionary circles, on the one hand, and laying foundation for anarchy, on the other hand... The presented Bill is originated exactly from this point. When we say that the part of confiscated land should be transferred to the peasantry in their private ownership, we imply what really exists. The reality dictates that the mentioned part of land should be transferred to peasants in private ownership”.¹

On January 28, 1919 the parliament of Georgia approved the law on the ***“Land transfer to the private estate ownership of the population from the land fund”***. The Act represented the continuation of the law of December 16, 1917 and March 7, 1918. The law stated: ***“ Article 1. The estates of the state agricultural land fund shall be transferred to private ownership of the rural population exclusive of those referred to in the following Article (2) of this law.*** (The Democratic Republic of Georgia, ... meeting 1990, 217) (The Democratic Republic of Georgia, Collection of legal acts, 1990, 217), In Article 3 it was prescribed: ***“The land shall be transferred to the ownership of the landless and small landowners of rural residents whose main source of subsistence represents the agricultural labour.”*** The law also stipulated the need for the common property in relation to the pastures and forests.

The explanatory note of the Bill emphasized that it was impossible to transfer land to peasants free of charge ***“So, as we have seen, the transfer of land to peasants for a small fee is acceptable from the political, economical and financial viewpoint, it is a targeted measure in all respects. But their free transfer is not only inadmissible but impossible as well.”***²

On January 28, 1919, the law “On declaring former charter, treasury and other lands as private property” was approved. The law applied to the former treasury peasants, the so called „Khizani” (migrant) population of Osetian nationality, the peasants from Akhaltsikhe Uezd and Sukhumi region, who owned the lands pursuant to the law on Muslim population

1 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, January 25, 1919, N 19, p 2-4.

2 Explanatory note, p. 8. is preserved at the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia F559/5.

and the inhabitants of outlying regions.

According to the law from March 8, 1918 the purchase and sale of land was prohibited not only for the former subjects of Russian Empire but the citizens of foreign countries who wanted to leave the region and sell their property (Atanelishvili 2006, 48). Only on February 10, 1920, the Constituent Assembly began to work on the repeal of this ban. The Social-Democrats accepted the criticism of the National-Democrats and permitted the purchase and sale of lands (Bendianishvili, 2001, 246-247).

On February 14-16, 1919 the election of Constituent Assembly was held. In the programs published by the parties for the assembly election the agrarian issues and their attitude towards the reform occupied the salient place (Iremadze and others 2015, 142-161).

THE COURSE OF REFORM

In February 1919, one of the serious problems posed was the appropriation of former landowners' lands by peasants. In parallel to the reform the locals turned into a kind of racketeers. They seized even the established norms¹ of lands left to the former landowners. In response to such actions Khomeriki declared that those responsible for such actions would be punished by law².

Since the spring of 1919, the active reinforcement of local committees have started. The vacancies were publicly announced for the positions of land surveyors, their assistants and secretaries of committees³.

In early July 1919, the local Community (Eroba) of Kutaisi district began to distribute lands. 1 desyatina of land cost from 800 to 2400 Manats⁴. The cost of land even more increased in 1829-1921. In Khashuri 1 desyatina land of the first category cost 5000 Manats late in 1920⁵.

On July 24, 1919, pursuant to the law of January 28, 1919 the Government issued a decree specifying the categories of confiscated lands: I category: gardens, vegetable gardens and rich places, II category – fertile arable lands, III category – barren lands and IV category – pastures. The reasonable and preferential land prices were determined as well, which were as follows⁶:

1 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note 3, case 7, p.134

2 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, February 28, 1919, N 469, p 3.

3 Newspaper Ertoba, April 1, 1918, N 73, p.3

4 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, July 11, 1919, N 151, p 2

5 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, August 24, 1920, N 190, p. 3

6 Newspaper „Republic of Georgia, July 31, 1919, N 168, p. 3



Western Georgia (Maize)

Land categories	Maize yield (packed) per desyatina	Maize price per Pood (in manats)	Total income per 1 desyatina of land	Preferential price per 1 desyatina	Price change
I category	150	100	15 000	1 500	Not less than 1500
II category	100	100	10 000	1 000	1000-1500
III category	60	100	6 000	600	600-1000
Pastures				300	300-400

Eastern Georgia (wheat)

Land categories	Wheat yield (packed) per desyatine	Wheat price per Pood (in manats)	Total income per 1desyatine of land	Preferential price per desyatina	Price change
I category	60	200	12 000	1 200	Not less than 1200
II category	50	200	10 000	1 000	1000-1500

Ill cate- gory	30	200	6 000	600	600- 1000
Pastures				200	200-300

Despite the fact that the press often published reports on the successful progress made in the agrarian reform, the persons responsible for the reform deemed that the reform was retarding and failed to achieve its initial objectives.

By the end of 1919, the process of transferring the lands to peasants and, accordingly, the payment of duties by peasants to the state treasury had already started. At that time the Union of Local Self-Governments (Erobedi) petitioned the Ministry to leave 40% of the income from the land distribution at the disposal of the Communities¹. In January 1921, the Ministry developed a draft decree according to which 40% of the income received from the reform remained with Local Communities and 60% was included in the central budget².

In December 1919, the Local Community of Tbilisi *Uezd* declared that the agrarian reform and the distribution of land to landless peasants would be completed in 6 months³.

The government of the Republic was especially cautious about the implementation of the reform in Sukhumi region, since the landowners there were extremely influential and could cause the increased political instability.

In Abkhazia, the implementation of agrarian reform and the management of state estates were in charge of the agricultural department of the Abkhaz Commissariat. According to the press reports, the acquisition of cultivated estates in Abkhazia began only on January 16, 1920.

In 1920, Noe khomeriki's book "Land Reform and Our Agriculture" was published, where the Minister gave the detailed review on the basis and results of the agrarian reform, where he wrote that the salvation of Georgian agriculture lies not only in the transfer of land to peasants, but also in the expansion of the existing land fund and the growth of technical capabilities (Khomeiriki, 1920, 10-11). According to Khomeriki, the grain yield per desyatina in Georgia was 57 Pood, while in Germany it amounted to 134 Pood, in Belgium - 161, in Denmark - 183. The grapes yield per desyatina averaged 95 buckets in Georgia, in France it equaled to 137, Germany - 235, and in Switzerland - 319 buckets of grapes (Khomeiriki, 1920, 32). In Georgia the number of goats and sheep per 100 inhabitants accounted for 95.61 and that of pigs equaled to 19.31, which represented the Europe-

1 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, November 28, 1919, N 270, p. 2

2 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, January 14, 1921, N 9, p. 2

3 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, December 5, 1919, N 276, p. 3.

an average. According to the 1917 census, there were 1.3 million cattle and 2.1 small animals counted in Georgia. (Khomeriki, 1920, 46-47).

The Minister's report provided the information on the calculation of the land fund per family and person according to the *Uezds* (Districts) (Khomeriki 1921,21):

<i>Uezds</i> (Districts)	Fertile lands, Desyatina		Arable lands, Desyatina	
	per family	per person	per family	Per person
Racha	2.81	0.37	1.11	0.15
Shorapani	1.91	0.35	1.38	0.25
Lechkhumi	2.19	0.33	1.23	0.19
Akhalkalaki	7.39	0.96	6.40	0.84
Tbilisi	3.74	0.66	3.20	0.56
Kodori	5.81	1.06	3.83	0.78

Even in January 1920, the Ministry of Agriculture stated that the Ministry needed 700-800 land surveyors to carry out the reform at a rapid pace, while at the moment only 250 land surveyors worked in the Ministry. In April 1920, the Ministry announced the mobilization of land surveyors, and the School of Land Surveyors existing in Tbilisi was instructed to prepare the personnel in a short time.

In January-February 1920, the preliminary outcomes of the agrarian reform were published, covering the period from June 1 to December 1, 1919. The following amount of land was transferred to the common fund¹:

<i>Uezds</i> (Districts)	The amount of confiscated estate	Area (in desyatinas)
Tiflisi	33	4 351.94
Sighnaghi	76	4 057.17

¹ Newspaper Ertoba, February 1, 1920, N24, p. 3.

Telavi	9	74.39
Borchalo	148	35 548.98
Akhaltzikhe	141	74 786.33
Akhalkalaki	33	12 145.81
Kutaisi	99	783.01
Lechkhumi	45	35 197.17
Ozurgeti	186	19 939.23
Racha	12	45.83
Senaki	93	696.15
Shorapani	145	2 435.50
Total	1023	190 061.52

Here, during the period from spring of 1918¹ to January 1, 1920, in Eastern Georgia the total of 2714 estates were confiscated amounting to 511,538,97 desyatina, in aggregate. The amount of land left to the former landowners according to the established norms equaled to 27,572,46 of desyatina, making up 5.4% of the land fund of Tbilisi province².

In Western Georgia, excluding Sukhumi and Batumi counties (regions), 995 estates with the total area of 110,157,95 desyatina were confiscated, and the land left pursuant to the established norms amounted to 7,115,40 desyatina by January 1920³.

The confiscated land fund according to the *Uezds* was as follows :

In Eastern Georgia

<i>Uezds</i> (districts)	The area of confiscated land (in sq. desyatinas)
Tiflisi	42 139.71
Sighnaghi	39 159.68
Telavi	4 4901.74
Borchalo	91 314.18
Dusheti	20 612.62

¹ The process of land confiscation to great extent was implemented in 1918.

² Newspaper Ertoba, July 2, 1920, N147, p. 3

³ Newspaper Ertoba, July 2, 1919, N 147, p. 3.

Tianeti	31 636.79
Akhaltsikhe	7 8376.24
Akhalkalaki	12 685.61
Gori	12 0506.12
Total	511 538.97

In western Georgia

Uezd	The area of confiscated land (in sq. desyatinas)
Kutaisi	92 73.09
Zugdidi	28 87.03
Lechkhumi	37 668.33
Ozurgeti	22 227.67
Racha	139.72
Senaki	28.541
Shorapani	9 420.42
Total	110 157.95

The most part of confiscated lands represented forests and pastures. Out of the land confiscated, only 146,784,01 desyatina accounted for the cultivated land in eastern Georgia, and the same figure for western Georgia was 29,932,26.

In order to overcome the food crisis in 1918-1921, the Government held discussions how to increase the amount of cultivated land and thus, eliminate the risks of famine in parallel with the reform. On January 6, 1920, the government ruled that if the owner did not sow the land with wheat, the Local Communities would force them either to sow or lease them¹.

The preparatory works on the agrarian reform in the Batumi region was launched only in Autumn of 1920, 2-3 months after the annexation of the region to the Republic². Landowners had a significant influence in the district, due to which the serious conflict and even a small political crisis was created between the representative of the central government of the Republic, the special commissioner Benia Chkhikishvili and the leaders

1 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, April 28, 1920, N 78, p. 2

2 Newspaper Republic of Georgia, July 21, 1920, N161, p. 2

of the Mejlis (parliament) of Muslim Georgia

In Autumn of 1920, the idea was put forward that the development of agriculture in Georgia necessitated inviting the European, especially German, agronomists and sharing their knowledge in planning the agricultural sector of the republic¹.

By the end of 1920, when the reform had been mainly completed and the area of arable land had been expanded to the greatest extent, the wheat harvest amounted to about 600 thousand tons (Woytinsky 2018, 217).

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1920 the amount of cultivated land increased by 57% compared to 1916 and amounted to 88% of data of 1913, and in 1920 the 62% of cultivated land was in Poland, 75% - in Latvia and 95% - in Lithuania compared to 1913 (Kandelaki 1960. 160).

Article 116 of the Constitution, adopted on 21 February 1921, referred to the land issue and declared:

“The protection of the products of a small producer’s, farmer’s, artisan’s, handicraft’s labour from the exploitation of individuals is a special concern of the state. The particular responsibility for the development of agriculture falls on the republic as well; The cultivation and utilization of land represents the landowner’s duty to the society”.

EVALUATIONS

Konstantine Kandelaki as an emigrant wrote in his publication:

“In January 1921, the agrarian reform in our country was almost fully completed and implemented. In fact, owing to this reform, in many cases, the small farms existing already in the form of leasing were provided with the legal basis of private property, if the amount of arable land to be cultivated theoretically averaged more than 2.5 hectares per family (5, 8 people in the family) or farm (actually, someone had more, someone had less, someone had nothing)” (Kandelaki, 1960, 154).

Noe Jordania interestingly summed up the agrarian reform:

“Our socialism has acquired a special Georgian character in this area. We transferred the confiscated arable lands to the peasantry in private property, which was contrary to socialist doctrine. Our guiding ideal was that the majority of Georgian population, the peasantry, could see that the independence of Georgia brought them land, gave

¹ Newspaper Republic of Georgia, October 19, 1920, N236, p. 2

them new means of life. Thus, the agrarian reform has become a highly national reform in our country” (Jordania 1990, 101)

The Bolsheviks criticized the agrarian reform of the Social Democrats not only because they rejected nationalization and municipalization, but also because the Social Democrats left the former landowners with quite an abundance and permitted them to buy and sell the land (Lee, 2018, 157).

The report produced by the Ministry in late 1920 declared:

“The agrarian reform in the form, in which it was launched in our country, should be considered completed today. The liquidation of landowner’s ownership has come to an end – the lands have been confiscated from them, the formal transfer of these lands to the poorest peasants has not yet been completed, however, most of this work has already been locally fulfilled. One more summer’s work and we will finally find out what benefits the reform has brought the peasantry. Despite this, even now it is safe to say that life has fully justified it... .. Owing to the implementation of the agrarian reform, the strong ties were established between the labor democracy and the peasantry, which has not been broken to date, it used to form and is still forming the main basis for the strength of our republic. The peasant appreciates the changes made and therefore, protects the republic at the cost of his life and property. “¹

According to estimates of the Ministry, the land transfer to peasants for redemption will eventually add from 1 to 1.4 billion Manats to the budget².

CONCLUSION

In February 1921, the Democratic Republic of Georgia achieved stability in terms of domestic politics. The central government controlled and effectively managed the territory of the Republic (with the exception of the disputed Zakatala region). To a greater extent, this situation was achieved through the implementation of agrarian reform along with the other reforms in the country.

The implementation of the reform, on the one hand, eliminated the grounds for Bolshevik uprisings and instability initiated on agrarian reasons, and on the other hand, the vast majority of citizens - peasants for the first time received their own private property.

As a result of the independence and, therefore, owing to the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the citizens received not only the political but socio-economic rights as well, which was expressed in private property and its protection. This reform became one of the main reasons why de-

1 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note 3, case 41, p.27-28

2 Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Fund 1915, supra note 3, case 41, p.28

spite their numerous attempts the Bolsheviks were unable to organize any uprising within the republic and get the support of the masses in February 1921. The occupation of the republic was carried out completely from the outside, through the invasion of units of the Red Army. Subsequently, a significant part of peasants, along with other classes of society, became one of the strongholds of the anti-Soviet resistance movement.

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