In May 1906 Tsereteli returned to Georgia. His illness had left him severely weakened and he took a long time to recover. During the summer of 1906 he was not able to take part in political life.

Meanwhile the 1905 revolution had brought forth a representative assembly, the State Duma, which first met early in 1906. It was a body elected according to a complicated franchise apportioned unequally between the various social groups. It did not have the rights appropriate to a parliament, nor was it held in high esteem by the revolutionary parties: both the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik Social Democrats decided to boycott it completely. The Mensheviks left the local party committees to decide for themselves whether or not to take part in the elections. In the Caucasus the decision was in favor of participation. The result was a Duma in which the liberal Constitutional Democrats (Kadets), while not in the majority, were the largest and most significant party, whereas the Social Democrats had only a small delegation consisting mainly of Georgians. This Duma behaved more radically than the government had hoped. The majority demanded a redistribution of landed estates. When the government reacted strongly against this proposal, the Duma proclaimed that no agrarian reform might be initiated without its cooperation. At this, the government gratefully jumped at the chance to dissolve the Duma, claiming that the latter had acted contrary to its constitutional rights.

A large number of opposition members travelled to Vyborg, in Finland, to sign a manifesto summoning the population to passive resistance, whereupon the government excluded all those who had signed the ‘Vyborg manifesto’ from re-election to the new Duma.

Shortly after the dissolution of the First Duma preparations were made for the elections for the Second Duma. In the late summer
and autumn of 1906 meetings were held in the Caucasus to appoint candidates for the new Duma. In spite of his enforced absence from the political scene Tsereteli had apparently made a sufficient name for himself, through his work for the student movement and his editorship of Kvali, to be chosen as social democrat candidate for the Kutaisi district. Zhordania, who had been a member of the First Duma but who as a signatory to the Vyborg manifesto was not permitted to stand in these elections, seems to have persuaded Tsereteli by letter to accept the candidacy. In his memoirs, Zhordania, embittered by later, very profound differences of opinion he had had with Tsereteli, writes: 'I think I'm right in saying that this was the only time that Irakli ever listened to me.' At the meetings in the Georgian constituencies where the nomination of the social democrat candidates took place, the Mensheviks won easily. As far as Tsereteli's candidacy was concerned, it was an advantage that his inheritance of his father's estate made him eligible for election. However, at the time of the nomination he had not yet reached the age of twenty-five and was therefore not eligible to stand. Political opponents tried to make use of this seeming irregularity in order to block his candidacy, but as the Georgian elections did not take place until after his twenty-fifth birthday, their attempts failed. The election results in Georgia could not have been more favorable to the Social Democrats: all seven candidates were elected and none of the other parties won seats. In February 1907 the newly-elected representatives travelled together to the Russian capital, arriving only a few days before the official opening of the Second Duma.

A year before, when Tsereteli was in Georgia, the Social Democrats had determined the principles of the policies they were going to follow in the State Duma at a party congress held in April and May 1906 in Stockholm, on the eve of the First Duma. During this congress, which has somewhat euphemistically gone down in history as the 'reunion congress' the differences between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks about the policies to be pursued in the Duma became very clear. These were the result of the conflicting views about the historical stage which Russia had reached at that time. Although both factions of the party

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1 Zhordania, p. 51.
2 Uratadze, p. 167.
3 I. G. Tsereteli, Vo vtoroi Gosudarstvennoi Dume (Iz vospominanii). Typescript, Hoover Institution, p. 3. These are memoirs of Tsereteli noted down by Nikolaevskii and destined for publication in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik. They remained unpublished on Tsereteli's request.
4 Tsereteli, Vo vtoroi Gosudarstvennoi Dume, pp. 2–3; Uratadze, p. 176.