



**A SOVIET CAPITAL:** The centre of the South-West Caucasus tea-growing industry, Tbilisi or Tiflis, capital of the Georgian S.S.R.

## What The Caucasus Means To Russia

**T**HE Caucasus is every Russian's dream-land. It is every Russian's ambition to see the Caucasus. To him it is a whole bundle of historical, literary and artistic associations. The other day I went to the Moscow opera and saw an old opera, *The Demon*. It was rather a trivial mid-nineteenth century opera written by Rubinstein. I asked the theatre manager why this uninteresting opera should still be produced week after week. He agreed the music was trivial, but said "What can you do? It's about the Caucasus, and our young people are just crazy about this demon living on mountain peaks and falling in love with the Georgian princess and pursuing her into the mountain monastery and all the rest of it." Two of Russia's greatest poets, Pushkin, and especially Lermontov, built up the Caucasus for the Russians as the most romantic and most poetical place in the world. Lermontov knew the Caucasus well—those mountains of grandeur surpassed only by the Himalayas, where in Lermontov's words, "Men are as free as the eagles." The peace of beautiful spas on the northern slopes was the scene of his astonishing novel, *A Hero Of Our Time*. To anyone wanting the feel of the Caucasus, the feel of its air, sky and mountains, I would recommend this book. The Caucasus always lived, too, in a corner of Tolstoy's heart, and suddenly when he was nearly 80, he wrote about it with all the freshness and vigour of his early Caucasus stories.

### All the Russian Needs

The Caucasus supplies the Russian with all the things he needs: mountain scenery, romance, bright oriental colours. And a variety of economic wealth. Take first the plains of the northern Caucasus, the so-called Kuban country, inhabited for centuries now by Kuban Cossacks, who, together with their cousins, the Don Cossacks, did so much to conquer the Caucasus for Russia. These people of Russian or Ukrainian blood are physically the finest specimens in the whole of Russia. The villages of the Kuban country are the richest in Russia. It is a land of milk and honey and much else besides: miles and

*From a BBC Home Service Talk, by ALEXANDER WERTH, Moscow Correspondent of the "Sunday Times"*

miles of orchards and wheatfields and vineyards. Tobacco is grown here in large quantities. The Kuban country became famous for the two greatest wheat-growing State farms, one called "Giant" and the other "Camel." Kuban also had the largest fruit-tinning plant in the whole of Russia. The Cossack women in peace time were the best dressed of all Russian women. Each Cossack woman had a large wardrobe of beautifully embroidered clothes.

### True Patriots

In the civil war of 1918-19, General Denikin's capital was Krasnodar, the main town of the Kuban country. But



**HE FOUGHT IN TWO WARS.** A volunteer in a Kuban Cossack formation in this war who fought against the German occupation of the Ukraine in 1918

although the Cossacks were divided then, and later had many differences with the Soviet Government, especially during the collectivisation period, they have shown themselves true Russian patriots. With Cossack recklessness they have attacked German troops and minced them up by the hundred with their sabres. These wonderful horsemen, having lost house and home, and leaving wives and children to the mercy of the Germans, continue a fierce war against them in the Caucasus mountains. In 1936, Stalin gave the Cossacks back their uniforms and restored many of their old customs, and so ended a dangerous brotherly feud between the Cossacks and the Moscow Government. It was a far-sighted policy, which has been fully repaid by the Cossacks' patriotic loyalty in this war.

Of all the places I know in the Caucasus I like Novorossisk least. I know it is an important naval base, and its loss is serious, because the Russian Black Sea Fleet has been compelled to move to less satisfactory harbours like Batum. But it is a bleak and miserable place, a freak of nature. All the winter a fierce north-east wind blows savagely at Novorossisk through the gaps in the mountains, and there is as little vegetation at Novorossisk as at Murmansk. But industrially Novorossisk is important. Cement is made there. The coast north of Novorossisk is quite different: it is rich with fruit and vineyards. The country to the south is even better.

### More and More Beautiful

From here both the coast and the interior country become more and more beautiful. On the coast, and on the north slopes, famous for their mineral water springs, dozens of bathing and health resorts have been developed in recent years. It was the policy of the Soviet Government to provide rest cures for thousands and thousands of workers and employees every summer. And not only in summer, for in these parts, and especially along the Black Sea border, in fact in most parts of the Caucasus, "General Winter" will be no ally to the Russians.

The southern part of the Black Sea border is not grandiose but extraordinarily lovely. It is not Russia's Riviera,

(Continued on next page)