

E. K. KHARADZE

**THE ABASTUMANI
ASTROPHYSICAL
OBSERVATORY**

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ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE USSR
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The well-known mountain health resort of Abastumani is situated 200 km west of Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian SSR, on the forest-covered southern slopes of the Adzharo-Imeretin range, along the banks of the Otskhe, small mountain river.

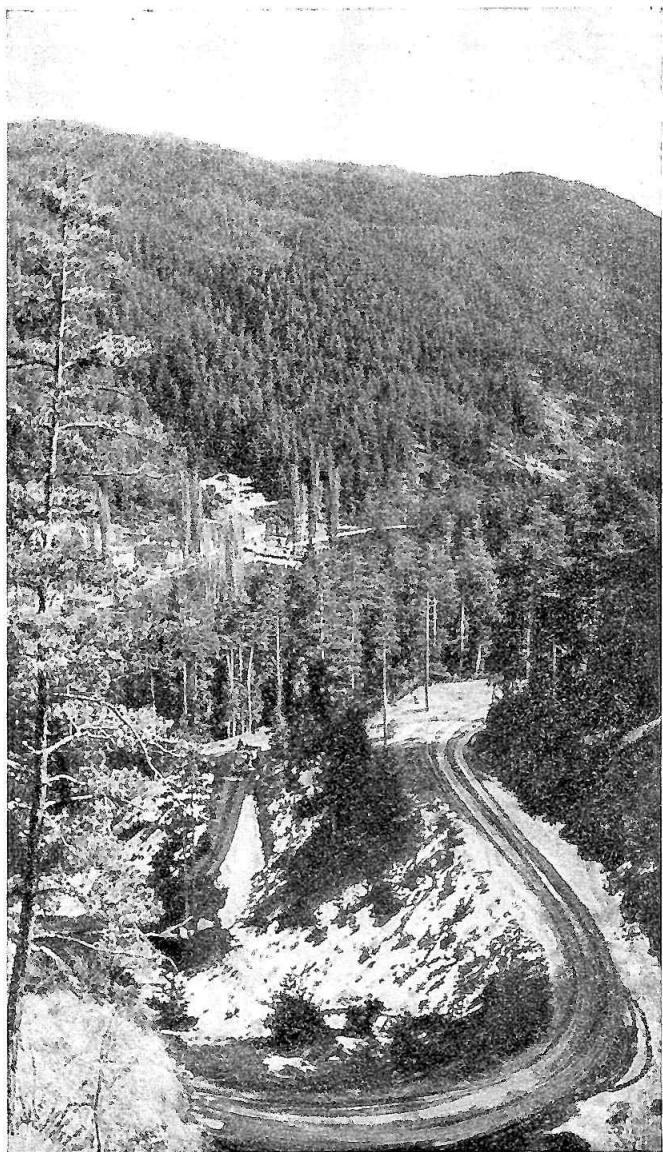
The road from Tbilisi to Abastumani passes through the ancient city of Mtskheta located on the Georgian Military Highway at the confluence of the rivers Aragva and Kura. It runs then through Gori and Khashuri, the lovely spa of Borzhomi, and through the ancient town of Akhaltsikhe, which lies 30 km from Abastumani and is connected by railroad with Tbilisi. In the past Akhaltsikhe was for a long time the political, cultural and economic centre of the south-western area of Georgia, Meskheta, the granary of the land and its ancient cultural seat. There are still numerous cultural monuments in its vicinity: fortresses, monasteries ornamented with rich frescoes by old Georgian masters,

temples with engraved stone cupolas erected in the VII—XIIth centuries, ruins of palaces, a great multitiered cave city hewn in sheer rock in the XIIth century, complicated aqueducts and other relics of Georgian ancient art and architecture.

Travelling north along the Otskhe river to the outskirts of the resort town and then up the steep mountain highway, a magnificent view opens before you: great mountains covered with dense primeval pine forests form a kind of giant hollow, and deep down at the bottom, the villas and rest homes glimpse through the rich verdure. The southern side, where the mountains end, reveals a section of the Akhaltsikhe plain with a mountain chain in the far distance. The high mountains in the north, towering over the forests, are covered with alpine meadows vividly green under the blue of the sky from summer till autumn and gleaming with snow throughout the winter till late in the spring.

Soon the highway becomes steeper and steeper, enters a dense forest and emerges at the summit of a mountain spur stretching from west to south. Here the forest is a little thinner and several white buildings with built-in towers culminating in spherical domes come into view. By driving along the spur to the east and west, however, one has a glimpse of other buildings scattered amidst the trees. There are over 20 buildings on this 10 hectare territory, including astronomical towers and pavilions, dwelling-houses, a small house of elementary school, the power station, a garage and other auxiliary structures.

Here, in this little settlement amidst the age-old forests and mountains, far from any town or village, people live and work the year round. Special instruments have been mounted, laboratories equipped, libraries supplied with thousands of books and magazines, workshops opened,



Mount Kanobili road. Summer houses of the Abastumani resort
are seen in the canyon