

THE CAUCASIAN BORDERLAND

By William Edward David ALLEN

Meeting of the Society, 4 May 1942

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William Edward David Allen (January 6, 1901 – September 18, 1973) was an Ireland-born English scholar, Foreign Service officer, politician and businessman, best known as a historian of South Caucasus.

Born in Waterford, Ireland, he was educated at Eton College. He was a military correspondent during the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and the Rif war (1925). WED Allen served as the Unionist MP for West Belfast from 1929 to 1931 when he defected to join Sir Oswald Mosley's New Party. He was a close friend of Mosley and helped him to pursue his Fascist ambitions from behind the scenes, by supporting him financially and by contributing mainly anonymous articles to *The Blackshirt*, including "The Letters of Lucifer". WED Allen also wrote a book *BUF, Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (1934) under the pen name of James Drennan. It has frequently been reported that he was an MI5 informant but this now appears to be false.

In the pre-World War II years, he traveled a lot and conducted extensive research on the history of the peoples of the Caucasus and Anatolia. In 1930, along with Sir Oliver Wardrop, he founded the Georgian Historic Society which published its own journal *Georgica* dedicated to the Kartvelian studies.

William ED Allen was a Foreign Service officer from 1943 until he stepped down and returned to his native Ulster in 1949. Together with his two younger brothers, he ran David Allens, a major bill-posting company.

Main Works:

- The Turks in Europe (1920)
- A history of the Georgian people (1932)
- The Russian Military Campaigns of 1941-1943 (part 1, 1943)
- The Russian Military Campaigns 1943-1945 (part 2, 1946)
- *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turko-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (by W.E.D Allen and Paul Muratof, 1953)
- *David Allens - The History of a Family Firm 1857-1957* (1957) attributed to W.E.D. Allen but ghosted in part by his friend Kim Philby, the Communist spy.
- *Problems of Turkish Power in the Sixteenth Century* (1963)
- *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings: 1589-1605* (1970)



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W. E. D. ALLEN

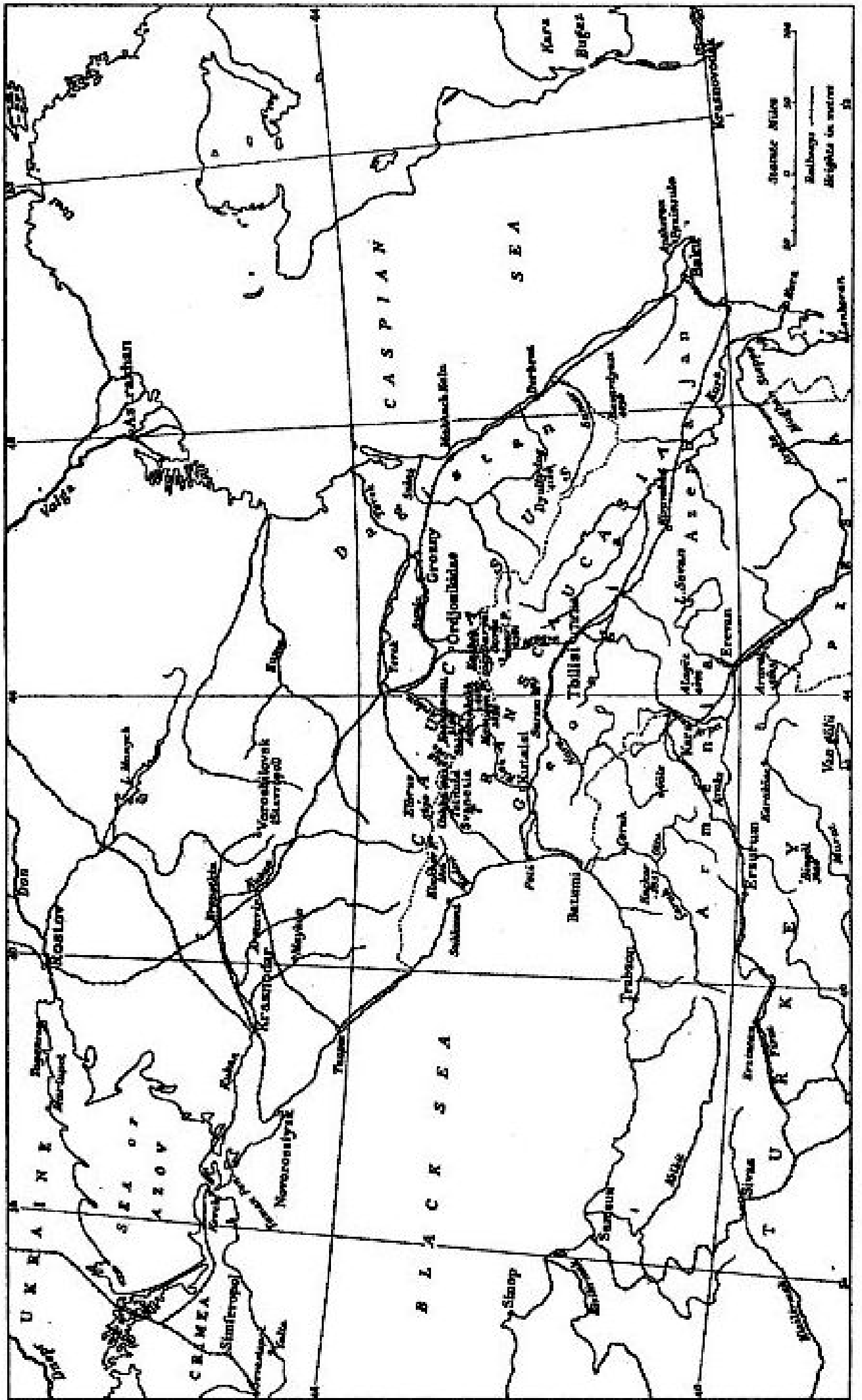
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I feel some diffidence in giving a lecture on an area which has been associated with the names of some of the most distinguished Fellows of the Society. The late Douglas Freshfield is perhaps one of the best known, his 'Exploration of the Caucasus' is the classic for the Central Range. The late Lord Bryce and the late H. F. B. Lynch, writing fifty years ago, remain standard authorities, for the geography of Ararat and the Armenian highland zone. Lastly, John Baddeley, a Gold Medallist of the Society who died two years ago, had just finished his two volumes on Dagistan and the central Caucasus which have appeared under the title of 'The rugged flanks of Caucasus.' I should like here to pay a tribute to a man who was the perfect combination of the adventurer and the scholar. All his friends will remember his noble and benign aspect, his profound erudition, his generosity, and his wisdom. Baddeley was, I suppose, the last of the Victorians, who laid the foundation of modern geographical knowledge.

Throughout history Caucasia has been a borderland. The main chain of the Caucasus mountains, stretching from the Taman peninsula on the Azov Sea to the Apsheron peninsula on the Caspian Sea, is the natural limit of the mountain zone of the Middle East comprising the Armenian and Iranian highlands, themselves a westerly extension of the Himalayan system. Right across Asia this vast mountain complex forms the watershed of the rivers flowing north to the Arctic and south to the Indian Ocean and divides two worlds opposed in all natural and human phenomena. Where the mountain barrier narrows, along the line of the Kopet Dagh (N.E. Persia) where the Iranian plateau falls to the sandy steppe of Central Asia and in the region of the Caucasus, the two worlds come into close contact and both areas have always been the scene of constant friction and interplay of forces and influences. In the past, from the middle eastern world Iranian and Islamic cultural influences and armies have overflowed into central Asia as far as the Dzungarian Gap and the borderlands of China. Conversely, Northern Asiatic elements: Turkish, Mongol, and, finally, Russian, have burst or filtered over the mountain barriers of the Caucasus and Kopet Dagh to the west and east of the Caspian Sea.

In the north the slopes of the main chain of the Caucasus descend to the North Caucasian steppe. This steppe is in its westward part a projection of the grasslands which are fed by the rivers flowing to the Black Sea. The Kuban, like the Don, belongs essentially to the Pontine river system. The low hills of the Stavropol ridge, stretching north to Manych, form the divide between the western and eastern steppes. Eastward, the North Caucasian steppe disappears in the sandy flats stretching to the Volga and forming part of the old bed of the Caspian Sea; an extension of the arid zone of the Aralo-Caspian depression. This steppe is typical of the desiccated desert lands of Asia north of the Mountain Heart and, appropriately enough, is inhabited by the nomad Mongol-speaking Kalmycks.

In Transcaucasia, south of the main chain, the same diagonal division is reproduced. The Little Caucasus (Suram Mountains), thrown off at right-angles from the main chain, form a ridge 1525-1830 m. (5000-6000 feet) linking the Great Caucasus with the Armenian highlands.



To the west of the Suram mountains, the Rion basin is an emerged part of the bed of the Black Sea and belongs to the climatic and natural world of the Pontus. East of the Suram mountains the valleys of the rivers Kura and Araks, coming down from the high plateau of Armenia, flow through the arid steppe of Azerbaijan which forms, as does the Kalmyck steppe to the north of the main chain, a part of the Aralo-Caspian depression.

The ranges forming “the peripheral rim”¹ of the Armenian plateau run parallel with the main chain of the Caucasus in a general direction north-west-south-east. These ranges form extensive upland plateaux averaging 2135-2435 m. (7000-8000 feet). Rising above the level of the plateaux are isolated massifs, like Alagöz (4095 m.) and Ararat (5165 m.). This peripheral rim of the Armenian plateau is cut through by the valleys of the Kura and Araks, flowing into the Caspian, and the valley of the Çoruh falling to the Black Sea. These valleys, and their affluents like the Oltu-cay and the Arpa-cay, form natural transverse ways into Asia Minor and they connect, by relatively easy passes, with the great river valleys flowing west and south-west as, for instance, the affluents of the Euphrates and the Kelkit-su.

The main chain of the Caucasus mountains consists of a series of parallel ridges. These ridges are linked by necks forming cols which give access from north to south of the main chain. The connecting ridges often form wide upland glens, sometimes at a great elevation. A typical example is Upper Svanetia and the Tush and Khevsur glens in the Eastern Caucasus. Here communities have lived in almost complete isolation for many centuries.

The main granitic backbone of the Caucasus range runs as a single wall right across the Caucasian isthmus, from sea to sea, and separates the basins of the rivers of the northern slope from those of the southern slope. It thus represents the main transverse water-divide of Caucasia. The overlapping parallel ranges are all shorter in length than the main chain, but the principal parallel range of Bokovoy (which means in Russian “flanking”) is higher than the main chain and gives rise to some of the most notable peaks of the Caucasian system, namely, Mounts Elbruz (5630 m.), Koshtan-tau (5198 m.), Kazbek (5043 m.), and Adai-khokh² (4410 m.). The peaks of the Bokovoy generally exceed in height those of the main chain, namely, Ushba (4697 m.), Tetnuld (4858 m.), and Shkara (5182 m.).

The Western Caucasus, under the influence of the moist climate of the Black Sea basin, is heavily forested, and the snow-line is considerably lower than in the eastern mountains which come under the desiccating influences of the Aralo-Caspian depression.

There are three main lines of access over the main chain from north to south. First, the Black Sea coast road. This is an artificial route which has only been developed during the last century. A motor-road and a railway have been built by the Russians along the line of the Black Sea coast from Novorosslysk to Kutaisi in Georgia.

The second is the Georgian Military Road from Ordjonikidze (formerly Vladikavkas), in the Northern Caucasus, to Tbilisi (Tiflis). This route follows up the valley of the Terek, crosses the main ridge by the col of Krestovy (2381 m.), now known under the Georgian form Juari (“Cross”), and runs down the valley of the Aragva to its junction with the Kura above Tbilisi.

¹ H. F. B. Lynch, ‘Armenia: travels and studies,’ 1901.

² Tau (tor) and Khokh (hoch) are Indo-European (Ossetin) toponyms.

It passes through the gorge of Daryal,¹ as celebrated in the history of the Middle East as the famous Cilician Gates through the Taurus. It was only at the end of the eighteenth century that the Georgian Military Road became a practical highway, when General Todleben, the conqueror of Berlin, crossed the pass with two battalions and four guns. The Caspian coast route has always been the historic highway along which armies have marched from north to south or south to north.

The third route follows the sandy foreshore of the Caspian between the foothills of the Dagistan mountains and the sea. The narrowest point between the mountains and the sea is at Derbent² where the gap is about 10 kilometres in width.

There are other passes over the Caucasus, the best-known of which are the Mamison (Ossetian Military Road) which connects the upper valley of the Ardon, a tributary of the Terek, with the valley of the Rion, and the Klukhor pass (2816 m.) connecting the valley of the Kuban with that of the Kodor. There are at least seventy other tracks and paths across the main chain, some of which are only suitable for men marching in single file and others for pack transport. In many cases they are blocked by snow except for three or four months a year.³

History

The Caucasus, historically, was the outer edge of the world of the old settled cultures of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Kingsley has well imagined the ancient conception of the Caucasus in "The Argonauts": "And at day-dawn they looked eastward, and midway between the sea and the sky they saw white snow-peaks hanging, glittering sharp and bright above the clouds. And they knew that they were come to Caucasus, at the end of all the earth: Caucasus the highest of all mountains, the father of the rivers .of the east. On his peak is chained the Titan, while a vulture tears his heart, and at his feet are piled dark forests round the magic Colchian land."

The Caucasus mountains constituted a formidable barrier to armies and to travellers. At the same time, the two marine basins, the Black Sea and the Caspian, gave access to the unknown hinterland beyond the Caucasus. From the seventh century B.C. the Greeks were developing a colonial empire round the shores of the Black Sea. The Greeks themselves were probably the heirs of an earlier Minoan thalassocracy in the Black Sea basin, and there is much evidence that an advanced Bronze Age culture flourished in the valley of the Kuban, and probably also in the Transcaucasian valleys.⁴ In the time of Herodotus the Aorsi had already become wealthy as the tribe controlling the portage between the Volga and the Don and they seem to have been the first predecessors of the Khazars and later Volga powers. But it was only with the rise of the Caliphate that the Arabs developed a great transit trade from south to north across the Caspian, comparable in extent and influence with the Black Sea trade of the Greeks.

¹ Dar-i-al=Persian *dar-i-alan*=The Alans' Gate. The mediaeval Alans are to be identified with the modern Ossetins, who call themselves *As* or *Iron*; they gave their name also to the Azov Sea=As-ov=Sea of the As; *cf.* also the Arab name for the Caspian: Bahr-ul-khazar= Sea of the Khazara.

² Derbent=Persian *dar-band* ; Arab *bab-at-abwab*=gate of gates.

³ Baddeley, 'Rugged flanks,' vol. I, pp. 12; *el seq.*, notes two practicable routes in the area between the Mamison and Daryal passes: R. Fiag-don via Khiliak and Rok passes to upper valley of Liakhva; R. Ghizel-don, Resi pass (12,533 feet), Upper Liakhva. East of the Georgian Military Road, animal transport can by-pass the Daryal by the difficult route up the R. Assa and over the Arkhotis pass (*op. cit.*, pp. 168 *el seq.*).

⁴ See my 'History of the Georgian People,' and various articles in *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua*, vol. VII. This early Caucasian culture may well have belonged to the same cultural world as Anau (Transcaspia) and Sumerian and Indus civilizations. This Caucasian culture was doubtless devastated by the *Völkerwanderung* at the end of the twelfth century B.C.

The Khazar and Bulgar states, which arose along the Volga and the Kama from the eighth century onwards under the influence of the Arab world, are comparable in character with the Russian river states which were rising along the Dnepr and W. Dvina at the same period under Byzantine and Scandinavian influences. Everywhere civilization was penetrating from the inland seas by way of the great waterways across the vast Eurasian plain. The Khazar state, on the Lower Volga, was the first of a series of Volga powers. The Khazars were replaced by the Kipchaks, and the Kipchaks by the Mongol Golden Horde. Finally, Muscovite Russia appeared as the latest and greatest of the Volga powers.

Muscovite Russia, which emerged in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries in the area between the Upper Don and the Volga, was a synthesis of the two old and passing worlds of orthodox Byzantium and the Islamized Tartar-Mongols. Muscovy, a state and civilization arising out of the riverlands of the Eurasian plain, was an entirely new historical phenomenon which was destined to modify and transform neighbouring and older societies.¹

Before they became a European power (on the Black Sea and the Baltic) the Muscovites mastered the great Eurasian rivers: northern rivers like the Pechora flowing to the Arctic, and the Volga, along which the older Asiatic powers had established themselves as the overlords of the whole Eurasian plain, and down which the Russians were destined to advance towards all the lands of the Middle East and Central Asia. Chief instrument in this Russian advance from the region of the Upper Don and the Middle Volga to the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, and in the west down the Dnepr to the Black Sea, were the Cossacks: communities of men with many purely anarchic tendencies but serving military and colonial ends, a peculiarly original manifestation of the Russian genius.

By the end of the sixteenth century the Russians had finally established their power on the Volga and defeated the great Turkish attempt to fight off their progress to the south (1570). During the following century the Don Cossacks were challenging Turkish control of the Azov Sea, and on the Caspian shore the Terek (Tersky) Cossacks had set up forts along the Terek and the Sunja where they came into conflict with the formidable Muslim tribes of Dagistan.

In 1722, the state of civil war in Persia encouraged the Emperor Peter to attempt the conquest of the Caspian coasts. The first regular army trained on modern European lines to operate in Caucasia was transported by sea from the mouth of the Volga to the Terek, and Peter, with no great difficulty, occupied all the country as far as the Khanate of Kuba to the north of Baku. Russian troops were also landed on the southern coasts of the Caspian in the Persian provinces of Gilan and Mazanderan. Unfavourable weather conditions on the Caspian and the outbreak of epidemics checked further progress, and the death of Peter, followed by changes in Russian policy, and later the rise of a powerful military dictatorship in Persia under Nadir Shah, delayed Russian expansion round the Caspian coasts for half a century.

The campaign of 1722 had however demonstrated the practicability of a relatively rapid advance along the Caspian flank of the main chain of the Caucasus, particularly when this operation was carried out by combined sea and land manœuvres. The Russians eventually achieved their conquest of Caucasia by a great flanking movement directed from the Lower Volga across the Caspian to the basins of the Kura and the Araks. They thus in effect turned the main chain of the Caucasus, and it was only after their conquest of Transcaucasia that they turned to the pacification of the tribes inhabiting the main mountain massif.

¹ This rise of Russia as a trans-continental power is comparable to the rise of America in the following centuries. The emergence of these two vast and new powers transformed the old world of "local" European and Asiatic relationships.

Ethnology

Caucasia has always been both a refuge of nations in flight before new conquerors and a reservoir from which human elements have emerged to mingle with the populations of neighbouring lands. Many remnants of the old Asianic cultures of the Middle East are to be found in Caucasia.

The *Cherkess*, or Circassians, of the Black Sea coast represent a stock formerly much more widely distributed. Cherkess place-names are found in many parts of the Ukraine in such forms as Psiol and Kremenchug. The Cherkess remained an important element in the population of the Crimea until the eighteenth century, and they occupied most of the north-western Caucasus and the basin of the Kuban until the Russian conquest in the middle of the nineteenth century. Old Russian documents frequently refer to the Cossacks as Cherkess, and there was obviously a substantial substratum of Cherkess blood in the very mixed population of the Northern Caucasus and the Black Sea coast lands as far west as the Dnepr. (Compare Kluchevsky's work showing that there is an important substratum of Finnish blood in the populations of the Volga basin and North Russia). But that is only one aspect of the remarkable dispersion of these people. Professor Zakharov and Professor H. R. Hall have produced evidence for the belief that Caucasian elements were represented among the "Peoples of the Sea" who swarmed into the Mediterranean basin at the end of the twelfth century B.C. and threatened Egypt.¹

In the classic world and in the Middle Ages the slave trade was the normal mechanism for supplying the labour market of the civilized world. It was obviously at the same time an instrument for imposing a continual process of redistribution of population. As slaves and soldiers the Cherkess were celebrated in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, and they finally rose to fame in the celebrated Mamluk Corps which dominated Egypt until the time of Napoleon. The Mamluk Corps was in fact a sort of Foreign Legion which was recruited largely from the Western Caucasus and the Don steppe. It was the Mamluks who first defeated the Mongols at Ain Jalut (1259), one of the decisive battles of history. The Mamluks still maintained themselves in the Sudan after Mehemet Ali's massacre of the Cairo garrison, and one of the principal reasons for Mehemet Ali's conquest of the Sudan was his fear that the Mamluks might re-form and succeed in building a rival state on the Upper Nile. The last remnants of the Mamluks scattered to Darfur and beyond to Wadai, and I am told that their descendants are still to be met with occasionally in those parts.

The Ossetes (Russ. Ossetiny),² who occupied the Central Caucasus on both sides of the watershed, are an interesting people, anthropologically very mixed but speaking a language which is definitely Indo-European. Their language probably represents the survival of elements from the Germanic wanderings in the South Russian steppe during the first centuries A.D.

The Georgians are the most numerous and at the same time most civilized group in Transcaucasia. These peculiarly gifted people, who produced a brilliant mediaeval culture, have inherited an original literature and a rich art. Georgia is divided by the Suram range into Western Georgia, represented by the basin of the Rion and the surrounding mountain ranges, and Eastern Georgia covering the middle valley of the Kura and its affluents.

¹ See Hall, "Caucasian relations of the peoples of the sea," in *Klio*, Band XXII, Heft 3, pp. 335-44; *cf.* also Eisler, "Seevölker Namen in altorientalischen Quellen," *Caucasia*, Fasc. V, pp. 73-130.

² The Ossetes call themselves Os, As, or Iron. The form Ossetes derives from the Georgian locational termination: Os-eti (= Os-land).

The Western Georgians speak the distinctive Mingrelian dialect of Georgian and they are generally described as the Svano-Colchian group. They include the Svans of the main chain, the Mingrelians and Imeretians of the Rion basin, and the Adjars and Lazes of the Pontic Alps.¹ The Svano-Colchians probably include elements of the original population of the Caucasian isthmus. There is a long-headed element along the Black Sea coast and negrito types have been observed.²

The Eastern Georgians (Kartlians and Meskhians) represent an early movement into the Kura valley from Asia Minor, which probably took place between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C. Place-names in Pontus and Cappadocia indicate that the Kartlo-Meskhian group at one period occupied a much wider area than they do to-day. I think it is generally recognized that the biblical Tubal and Meshech, and the classical Meskhoi and Tibarenoi, can be identified with the Meskhians and Iberians of mediaeval Georgia.

It is interesting that the Georgian language gives a key to the tribal names of some of the Asianic peoples. For instance, Mitanni is equivalent to “mountains” in Georgian³; Tubal may be rendered *Tbeli*, meaning “a lake-dweller,” or “people of the lake country,” with reference to the lake district of the Upper Kura.

Kurds.—There are probably also connections between the Kurds and the Georgians. The classical Karduhkoi (Kard-ukh-oi) of Xenophon represents simply the Georgian nominal root Kart, with Armenian and Greek plural suffixes. The Kurds are of course a very mixed people. The Kurmanji language is classified as Indo-European, but Professor Nikitin and others have shown that it contains many non-European elements. Nordic types are not uncommon among the Kurds. At the same time the short dark Zaza Kurds of the Dersim represent one of the most primitive stocks in Asia Minor.

The Armenians (who call themselves Hai-kh) represent later intrusions into Asia Minor which can be correlated with the movement of the Meskhians and Iberians into the Kura valley. The Armenian language, again, is classified as Indo-European, but Professor Nikolay Marr and other students of the language have shown the extent to which it is penetrated with pre-Indo-European elements.

Physically there are no very marked differences between the various peoples of Asia Minor and the Caucasian isthmus.⁴ That peculiar type which is native to these parts, so-called autochthonous, is quite permanent, always resurgent, mastering the bodies of new masters. The strong-boned physique, the broad square head with its strong growth of wavy hair and beard, the wide dark eyes, the sallow skin, are bred to these mountain countries from the Ice Age. This type is called Armenoid, or more appropriately Alpine, and it has spread to Europe in prehistoric times along the mountain belt as far as the Pyrenees, and over Iran to the Pamirs; and it has filtered down through Palestine to Egypt, surviving, as all types, mostly in those parts which were likeliest in condition to its homeland. The peasantry of western Asia, whether they be called Georgian, Armenian, or Turkish, are of this autochthonous stock—out of the ground.

¹ For the Lazes, see my “March-lands of Georgia,” in *Geogr. J.* 74 (1929) 135-156. For general ethnography of Georgia, see articles by A. Gugushvili and A. Javakhishvili, in *Georgica*, I, Nos. 2 and 3 (1936).

² Cf. Herodotus’s story of “black Colchians” and the ancient confusion between Colchis and Ethiopia.

³ *I.e.* mta (“mountain”) and plural suffix ni. Cf. modern (Turkish) Dagistan = Mountain-land: The Highlands

⁴ See A. Javakhishvili, “The Caucasian race,” in *Georgica*, I, 2-3.

Languages are no criterion of race. The Anatolian peasant now speaks Turkish as he once spoke Greek and, before that, Armenian or some Asianic language, but he remains, like his neighbour across the Caucasian border, a peasant of the highlands who has watched armies and empires and systems come and go. The complexity and, in many ways, the unreality of racial differences illustrates how futile are political policies based on linguistic or somatic differentiations.

Caucasian racial elements in Middle East.—The Georgians and the Armenians and, for that matter, the tribes of Dagistan have, like the Cherkess, had a wide dispersion throughout the Middle East. The Later Roman Empire was strongly tinged with Armenian and, to a lesser extent, with Georgian influences. Several Armenian emperors ruled at Byzantium: the Isaurians and John Zimiskes. The armies of the Macedonian emperors, particularly, were largely recruited from the Armenian Themes.

Again, the various persecutions of non-conforming religious elements in Anatolia, like the Paulicians, led to the transportation of several hundred thousand Armenians to the Balkans. When the Mongols established their hegemony in Asia Minor and the Caucasus, the Georgians and Armenians played an important role both as intermediaries and as mercenaries. Large Georgian contingents fought under the Mongol banners at Bagdad, against the Assassins at Alamut, and the Mamluks at Ain Jalut; and it is an interesting fact that in the great battle between Erzincan and Erzurum, when the Muslims defeated the Sultans of Konya, a corps of three thousand Georgians fought in the Mongol ranks, while a Georgian prince commanded the Seljuk army. Again, in the seventeenth century, in Persia under the later easy-going Safavid Shahs, both Georgian and Dagistani nobles dominated politics at the court of Isfahan; and Georgian and Dagistani factions, supported by their ladies in the royal harems, carried on a continuous struggle for power. At one period there were Georgian garrisons at Kandahar and other Persian forts in Afghanistan.

In the following century a Georgian contingent under King Taymuraz participated in the Indian campaign of Nadir Shah. Many Georgian soldiers settled in Persia, and I am told that Georgian-speaking villages are to be met with here and there. From the eighteenth century Georgians and, to a lesser extent, Armenians began to play a similar role at the Russian court. One of the first and the best of Russian viceroys in the Caucasus was a Georgian prince, Tsitsianov (Georgian, Tsitsishvili), and the celebrated Bagration, who held a command in the field against Napoleon, was a member of the royal house of Imereti.

Georgians and Armenians have continued to play a prominent part in modern Russian politics, both in the pre-revolutionary Menshevik party and in the Bolshevik party. Georgians and Armenians have, in fact, played in the Middle East and in Russia somewhat the same part as the Irish and Scotch have in the Anglo-Saxon world, and which, to a lesser extent, they played throughout Europe in the eighteenth century.

The same phenomenon may be noted among the Albanians who have penetrated everywhere in the military and political fields in Turkey and Egypt and among the Basques who have achieved rather similar prominence in Spain and South America. Each of these small peoples, never able for long to preserve national independence or to build viable states, send out, generation after generation, wave upon wave of adventurers who treat the whole world as their stage. Certain types of terrain undoubtedly breed men of a high average of vitality, who come into continuous conflict with each other if confined within the narrow limits of their native lands, but who can direct their vital urge into creative channels when set loose among populations of a lower average of vitality.

Turks of Azerbaijan.—Appropriately, as the arid valleys and plateaux of Eastern Transcaucasia form naturally a westerly extension of the Aralo-Caspian depression, they are inhabited by a Turkish or Tartar population (the two forms of the same name are really interchangeable) closely akin in speech and way of life to the Turko-Tartars of Central Asia. The Turks of Azerbaijan belong essentially to the eastern rather than to the western group of Turks. The language of Azerbaijan is akin to the harder Jagatay Turkish of Central Asia and contains many Persian words and idioms. The Azeri Turks adhere to the Shi'a heresy of Persia, and Azerbaijan was in fact the homeland of the Shi'a creed and of the great Shi'a family of Safawi Shahs.¹

The original population of Eastern Transcaucasia, called Albanians or Aghovans in classical sources, were probably akin to the East Georgians (Iberians). Until the seventh century A.D. there was an Albanian language into which the Bible was translated. Culturally, Eastern Transcaucasia has been very much under Iranian influences since the remote period when the Persian Sassanids were holding Derbent against the northern nomads. Turkish elements were already established there soon after, if not before, the era of the Hejira. One of the Arab geographers about the ninth century A.D. describes the typically Turkish physical type and compares the dialect of Azerbaijan with that of Khorasan. The name Azerbaijan was only applied to Eastern Transcaucasia after the Russian revolution. The original names were Shirvan for the country north of the Kura, Aran for the country between the Kura and the Araks, and Mughan for the steppe south of the Araks junction with the Kura. The adoption of the name was calculated to emphasize community of interest with the Turks of Persian Azerbaijan.

It is worth noting that while the Volga and Crimea Tartars have passed increasingly under the influences of their Russian neighbours and the Anatolian Turks feel the attraction of the Mediterranean world, the cultural background of the Caucasian Turks, like that of the Central Asian Turks, is very largely Iranian. The Turanian and Iranian worlds have for two thousand years, probably for very much longer, been subject to mutual mixing and- to all kinds of linguistic and cultural cross-currents.

In Eastern Transcaucasia and in Dagistan the Arabs must not be ignored as a creative factor which has influenced the cultural mould of modern populations. The Arab Caliphate, which in form was half Iranian, ruled the Eastern Caucasus for about the length of time the Romans ruled in Britain. Arabic has remained the classical language of Eastern Transcaucasia as Latin persisted in Western Europe and Greek in Orthodox Russia. In the mountain *auls* of Dagistan are to be found many learned Arabists, Hajis who have made the journey to Mecca; and Arabic rather than Turkish remains the basis of orthodox Islam in the Eastern Caucasus. Turkish, the language of the common man, is the vehicle rather of modern nationalist trends, and Russian of Communist thought and influence.

The grassy steppes and highland pastures of Eastern Transcaucasia proved an irresistible attraction to the nomad armies of central Asia. The Mughan steppe in the southerly bend of the Araks was famous as horse-raising country from classical times, when Strabo recalled the "Nissæn steeds" of the Achæmenian kings. It is interesting to think that these famed Nissæn horses, bred on the rich pastures at the nearest point of junction between the Eurasian and the

¹ Nizami, one of the greatest of Persian poets, was a native of Ganca and a contemporary of the celebrated Georgian poets, Shota Rustaveli and Sargis Tmogveli, who were both under the influence of the Persian literary tradition. Modern Azerbaijan has produced excellent poets and actors who maintain the tradition of the Persian theatre; modern Georgian (Soviet) art retains strong Persian influences.

Eurafrican worlds, probably represented a perfect cross between the two great northern and southern breeds of horses.¹

In the Middle Ages the country to the south of the estuary of the Kura became the main base and principal remount depot of successive nomad armies: Seljuk Turks and Mongols. After the conquest of Iran the Mongols moved north to the Mughan and from here began their invasion of Russia, following the foreshore of the Caspian, and swinging westward across the Lower Don. Later in the same century the Mughan became the standing winter camp of the Mongol Ilkhans of Persia, and in the summer their great herds of horses moved up to the pastures of Karabagh and Xangezur. From the Mughan the Ilkhans dominated Iran and 'Iraq to the south and east, and Anatolia as far as Syria to the west; and they were in a position to move northward at short notice against their kinsmen and rivals of the Golden Horde, established on the Volga.

A century later Tamerlane revived the power of the Southern Mongols, and in his campaigns against Toktamish secured a decision in the long feud between the Iranian and Volga Mongols. Tamerlane, the finest nomad of them all, was only happy in his great camp which moved according to the season between the Mughan steppes and the highlands of Karabagh to the upland meadows of Göle in the region of the sources of the Kura, and Bingöl (''thousand lakes'') to the south-east of Erzurum. From their grazing bases in Eastern Caucasia, his armies ranged over all the old world between the Volga and the Mediterranean, and from here Tamerlane set out on his last great ride towards China.²

The Mongol strategy, based on the maximum mobility of horsed armies and on the maintenance of great reserves of horseflesh, was influenced by location of pastures. In the same way, those who direct the strategy of modern mechanical armies must be influenced by the location of oil reserves—the grazing of Armoured Fighting Vehicles. It is curious that the pastoral wealth of Eastern Caucasia, a significant factor in the planning of Mongol campaigns in the Middle East, was located in the same area as the vast petroleum reserves of modern Baku and the Ural-Caspian basin.

In Caucasia, just as there is an extraordinary juxtaposition of race and creeds, so there are extraordinary social and economic contrasts. The impact of the industrial revolution on the Middle East has produced the phenomenon, amongst others, of the great oil industries of Caucasia and Persia, located among populations who are either tribal and pastoralist or engaged in agriculture and small village industries. Baku, with its mixed population of all the nationalities of the Soviet Union, is the third industrial centre of Russia. On its oil production, combined with that of the lesser fields of Maykop and Grozny, to the north of the main chain, and the new Emba-Urai fields to the north of the Caspian, depends the transport, the industry and the mechanical agriculture of Soviet Russia.

¹ For the crossing of the Central Asian and African (''Arab'') breeds, see Ridgway, 'Origin of the thoroughbred horse.'

² Cf. M. V. Minorsky, *J. Asiatique*, vol. 217, 1930; *Transcaucanica*, ''Min-Göl et lea Expéditions de Timur.'' The highly-trained and seasoned Mongol cavalry, followed by herds of remounts, changed horses several times a day and were capable of covering 100 miles in twenty-four hours, a rate of advance which compares favourably with that of modern armoured fighting vehicles. Baddeley, 'Rugged flanks of Caucasus,' I, p. 121, recalls that General Veliaminov records that Chechen horses, specially trained, could carry their masters 100 miles between dawn and dusk on a summer's day.

To the north of Baku is Dagistan, comparable in social and economic conditions with the North-West Frontier of India. To the south are the Araks steppes, now partly being put under cotton, and the primitive communities of the Lenkoran forest zone. Across the Caspian stretch the wide deserts of the Aralo-Caspian depression.

The mountainous areas of Caucasia, the upland glens and valleys of the main chain and the meadowlands and high plateaux of the Armenian peripheral rim, are sparsely inhabited except on the Erevan plateau where the concentration of an Armenian population has led to a rather artificial industrial development. Population clusters thickest in the middle valley of the Kura and in the western valley of the Rion and along the fertile but insalubrious Black Sea coast. After Baku, Tbilisi and Erevan are the most important centres of population.

Communications

In Caucasia communications follow *the* seashore, and the principal river valleys. The railway from Rostov to Baku runs along the foreshore of the Caspian. Another railway (so far incomplete) and a motor-road follow the Black Sea coast. Baku and Batumi are linked by the Transcaucasian Railway, which is built along the line of the Kura-Rion valleys, crossing the ridge of Suram by a tunnel. Another line, completed in recent years, links Baku with Erevan via the Araks valley and the line of the Russo-Persian frontier. There are various transverse branches which link the Transcaucasian and Araks lines.

A motor-road, but no railway, crosses the main chain of the Caucasus from Ordjonikidze to Tbilisi. It is worth emphasizing that a large proportion of Transcaucasian traffic is transmarine. It is estimated that 40 per cent. of Soviet internal trade passes across the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and over the internal waterways of Russia. In normal times the production of Transcaucasia is moved by sea from Batumi and Poti to Russian Black Sea ports. The bulk of Baku production is transported by water across the Caspian and up the Volga. The two marine basins, the Black Sea and the Caspian, have the same importance in the economy of the U.S.S.R. as the Great Lakes have in Canadian and American economy.

The impact during the last century of modern industrialism on Caucasia, expressed politically in varied forms of imperialism and communism, has produced conflicts which were inevitable. Nationality itself is a mass-consciousness of group characteristics which have developed in past epochs as a result of varying degrees of differentiation, imposed by the economic conditions of the time. An acceleration in human contacts, a general shaking up of semi-isolated communities, is an inevitable result of a revolution in methods of production and transport. The more fixed the state and psychology of a community, the more violent is the impact of new conditions.

Throughout Europe and the Middle East peasant communities, expressing themselves in terms of nationality, have attempted to resist the impact of industrialism and to apply the results of industrialism in their own defence. In the Middle East it was natural that the pastoral communities should react violently against the impact of neighbouring, and often alien, industrialisms. Instances of this reaction have been the great Basmaji movement in Turkistan, the Kurdish revolts in Asia Minor, and the Bakhtiari resistance to the local "modernism" in Persia.

The national Republics established in the Caucasus after the last war did not survive long, but the peasant resistance to Soviet innovations persisted into the 'thirties. Lenin, as early as 1918, saw the necessity for a synthesis between Russian Communism and the local nationalisms of the minority nationalities of the U.S.S.R. The Soviets have since developed a nationalities policy which recognizes the individuality of the different national groups within the Union.

Thus Transcaucasia consists of the three Soviet Republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, each of which is a full member of the U.S.S.R. Numerous smaller groups enjoy the status of autonomous S.S.R. or Districts within the Union. This system holds promise of allowing the minority nationalities some prospect of self-expression within the structure of the Soviet Union.

DISCUSSION

Before the paper the PRESIDENT (the Rt. Hon. Sir GEORGE CLERK) said: Captain W. E. D. Allen is well known to us as an authority upon the history and the peoples of the Caucasus. He is the author of a 'History of Georgia,' and has contributed several papers to *the Journal*. A year or two ago he wrote a 'History of the Ukraine' which received high commendation.

Captain Allen then delivered the lecture printed above.

The PRESIDENT : We have listened to an absorbing lecture on one of the most interesting portions of the globe, one of the oldest and one which, as our lecturer has shown, exercises very great influence on the development of a large portion of humanity.

As one of the early photographs indicated, it is a wonderful country, especially when viewed from Trabzon as I have viewed it. There, in the middle of the foreshore, is the one and only place where the caravans must have arrived since time immemorial, and that custom has not changed. Going up towards Erzurum by the new road the Turks have made one sees the old road still going up the valley, and there is one point at which one can turn and imagine the spot goes on, unchanged, sending its influence out and exercising it in these days, as our lecturer has indicated. We share his hope that from this war and the policy which the Soviet Union is following there will emerge something that will offset the suffering that the Caucasians and the Russians are passing through now.