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# THE ARCHITECTURE OF SUKHUM

**Late 19th to early 20th century**



by

**Anzor Agumaa**



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Sukhum Society of Abkhaz History and Culture  
1999

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Dedicated  
to  
**Martin Schumer**

1991-1997 photographs © Victor Zenkin

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he city of Sukhum situated on the Black Sea coast, was one of the former Soviet Union's primary holiday resorts. Described as 'the pearl of the Black Sea,' every visitor, from Gorky and Chekov to Brezhnev and Gorbachev (who built dachas nearby), was deeply struck by the region's natural beauty. Here the high Greater Caucasus reach down to the Black Sea shore creating a highly fertile coastal strip, covered with trees, tea, citrus, tobacco plantations.

The modern city of Sukhum, created around the turn of the 20th century, presents a unique example of how urban architecture can blend graciously into a rich, sub-tropical landscape. The city's elegant design was due largely to the influence of a few enlightened doctors during this period who, aware of the region's unusually clean air, calm sea and nutritious local produce, saw its potential as a seaboard health centre. With one of the most favourable climates in Europe for the treatment of tuberculosis and breathing disorders (Abkhazia has double the world average of centenarians), they helped influence the design and lay-out. Streets were made wide and lined with trees, an extensive Botanical Garden was inserted right in the centre and the surrounding buildings kept low-lying and uncrowded. The overall design harmonised skilfully with the balmy Black Sea coast atmosphere. Even after its Soviet period, with the insertion of many ugly high-rise blocks, the city retains much of this unique architectural quality, found nowhere else on the Black Sea, or indeed Europe. The city's health-spa qualities were promoted by the Soviets. The Soviet Institute for Gerontology was created and in 1950 Sukhum's civic amenities were pronounced the finest in the USSR.

During the 1992-3 Georgian-Abkhaz war the city bore the brunt of the fighting. Many buildings were severely damaged or destroyed, and today stand in a state of tragic neglect, threatening to fall down. After six years of abandonment many of Sukhum's turn of the century villas and streets - classic representations of the style known as 'Caucasian Art Nouveau' - are on the verge of collapse through lack of maintenance. Already several street blocks have had to be bulldozed in advance of their collapse (for safety reasons). Nearby many more fine buildings stand, rotting on their feet, awaiting the same fate.

This book is part of an exhibition that attempts to record the details of some of the more exceptional buildings of Sukhum, before they disappear for ever. One sad consequence of the war was that many of the records of these fine buildings were destroyed with them. It is hoped that all who read this will feel the same urge as every visitor to Sukhum today - to do what they can to prevent the disappearance of a unique city lay-out and important template for future health-resort design.



## THE ARCHITECTURE OF SUKHUM

**S**ukhum is the capital of Abkhazia and centre of the region's commercial and social life. Lying in a bay on the Black Sea coast, this large resort (pre-war population about 180,000, now less than half this) has attracted hundreds of thousands of holiday-makers since the 1890s. They came both to bathe and relax on the Caucasus's Black Sea beaches, and also use its many fine health and spa facilities. As such it developed as a place where people of many different nationalities met and forged life long friendships. This remains part and parcel of the city's inheritance - over the centuries developing its unique atmosphere as a multinational culture and social melting pot. This is well reflected in its friendly, open street layout and architectural style from its earliest periods.

Much of the modern city stems from its late 19th century beginnings. Even today the pre-revolutionary old can still blend picturesquely with the Soviet new. The city continues to hint at its inheritance from the ancient cities of Dioskuria and Sebastopolis, then later the medieval Saint-Sebastian and later still, the medieval Sukhum-Kale.

Since the 1860s Sukhum-Kale, (afterwards simply Sukhum), became the administrative centre of Abkhazia (at that time the area was called the 'Sukhum Military Department,' a province of the Russian Empire). Half a century later, when the Russian Empire collapsed, Sukhum became the centre of revived Abkhaz statehood. Situated against the placid Black Sea shore, the city simultaneously belonged to two historical and cultural traditions - that of a sub-tropical coast as well as the dramatic high mountainscape of the Caucasus. Furthermore since its inception in Hellenic times Sukhum has always sat on a rich and diverse cultural boundary - which served as the foundation of its distinctive, low-lying, 'open' atmosphere.

Today approximately 300 historical and cultural monuments have been designated for State protection in and around the city. Among these are 36 archaeological sites and structures, spanning Palaeolithic times to the late Middle Ages. Additionally there are 233 architectural monuments, with styles ranging from the ruins of the Agua medieval fortress, to those of modern Soviet architects like Shuko and Golfreih, who designed the Hotel Abkhazia and Government Building.

The recent war with Georgia, combined with a subsequent neglect and collapse of many buildings, a lack town-planning documents, and absence of a competent approach to preservation, now gravely threaten many fine monuments. This in turn endangers the city's overall unique atmosphere - to the extent it may disappear forever. However it should be mentioned the process of deterioration was started long before the war, during the Soviet period when several areas of Sukhum centre had

multi-story blocks inserted with no regard for the overall architectural harmony. Furthermore the planners disregarded many dilapidated houses which could easily have been repaired (like buildings on the then Kogonia street, Makhadjiri embankment - formerly Rustaveli - or in the area of Sukhum fortress). Even the coastal strip set into Sukhum Bay suffered at the hands of Soviet architects - who permanently altered the city facade by adding the ugly Sea Port Building, today still standing on pier stilts out into the water. This 'constructive destruction' was almost as harmful as the subsequent war.



## ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

As has been mentioned, Sukhum is an ancient city. Dating back into the periods before recorded history, the Abkhaz settlement of AKUA inhabited the area of Sukhum (this name for Sukhum is still preserved in Abkhaz language). There are no finds from the Palaeolithic period in the present-day city centre. However much has been found in the surrounding hills: on the mountains Guadikhu, Samata (Sukhumskaya), Khatkhua (Trapezium), Sinop, Anykhapaara, Yashtukha, Byrtskh, Akhbuk, Gvard, Otsush; in villages Guma, Mikhailovsky, Kaman, and Andreevsky. Traces from the Neolithic period have also been found around Krasnyi Mayak, Achadara, Lechkop, the area of railway station, the Sukhumskaya mountain and Guadikhi hill; also in the city itself (in the area of MVO sanatorium, on both banks of the Basla river, at the crossing of Aidgylara Street and Mir Street). Ancient archaeological evidence is widespread, not only around the city but downtown as well, particularly on the coastal strip.

In VI century B.C. the ancient Greeks founded the city of Dioskuria on the site of modern Sukhum - named after the mythical twin brothers, the sons of Zeus, Kastor and Polidevk. According to myth, the Dioskours brothers were part of the Argonauts' search for the Golden Fleece in ancient Colchis. The city was named after them. Legend has it that Zeus then took Polidevk up to Olympus, thus making him immortal. Polidevk decided to share his immortality with Kastor out of love for his brother. In the 'Gemini' constellation both brothers appear in turn as morning and evening stars. There is an analogous Abkhaz legend containing twin brothers: Khulpyetsva (the evening star) and Sharpyetsva (the morning star).

The remains of ancient Dioskuria's centre lie at the bottom of present day Sukhum Bay. Dioskuria's outskirts still exist in the current Sukhum area. The ancient Greek city was the major port and trade centre in ancient Abkhazia, and as such was one of the greatest cities on the Caucasian Black Sea coast. The historian and geographer Strabo (1st BC - 1st AD) described the city; "Dioskuria is a focal trade centre for all peoples living nearby. 70 tribes are said to have met here." Other chroniclers (Timosphen from Rhodes, the III century BC historian) reported as many as 300 tribes: "All of them were speaking different languages since they lived scattered apart. They meet to buy salt."

In the II century AD, the ruins of Dioskuria already fallen into decay, were partially submerged due to tectonic movement. When the Romans arrived they built a new city-fortress named Sebastopolis in honour of Emperor August. ('Sevast' means 'magnificent'). It contained a Roman garrison but soon lost its significance to turn into a straight-forward military fortification. •

In the VI century Sebastopolis fell under the sway of Byzantium. A church was built, and in 541 the Archbishop's Chair was also founded. In 542 Sebastopolis and its fortress were destroyed by the Persians. The Abkhaz capital was temporarily moved to Anakopia (Novy Aphon).

The end of the VI century, during the reign of Anos, the history of the Abkhaz Czars began in earnest. In 626 the Archbishop's Chair in Sebastopolis was held by Kir, who subsequently became Patriarch Aleksandriisky. In 737 the Arab commander Murvan-ibn-Mohammed conquered and destroyed Sebastopolis. After that Sebastopolis is only mentioned in Georgian annals as the city of Tskhum.

At the second half of VIII century the Abkhaz Czar Leon I united Abkhazia and the whole of Western Georgia into one kingdom. The territory was called Abkhazia and was ruled by the house of Abkhaz Czars. In 787 the Abkhaz Catholicos participated in the 7th Christian congress in Greece.

In 1280 merchants from Genoa were mentioned in local chronicles for the first time. Sebastopolis was renamed Saint-Sebastian. Records from 1330 report a large Catholic community and church. In 1354 the presence of a Genoese consul was mentioned in chronicles, although there were only 100-150 Italians in the city (then with a population of 2000). There were also many Jews, who built a synagogue and cemetery.

In the XVth century the Turks began asserting their presence and in 1451 launched their campaign to conquer Sebastopolis. Four years later the city was attacked and destroyed by the Turkish fleet. It took them until 1578 to finally consolidate their position in Abkhazia.

In 1727 the Turks built a citadel on the ruins of the Roman fortress using the mid-XVII century French design of Woughbahn. The city and fortress were called Sukhum-Kale.

In the second half of the XVIII century the fortress became home to the Abkhaz prince Keleshbei Chachba. In 1808 Keleshbei was assassinated in his home and the Abkhaz realm came under the rule of his elder son Aslanbei Chachba. Meanwhile a new military force was showing itself - the Russian Army. Their Caucasus command sought an alliance with Safarbei Chachba (Shervashidze), another of Keleshbei's sons, more loyal to State authorities.

In 1810 the Russian fleet attacked the Sukhum fortress and occupied it.

In compliance with the Adrianopol Treaty (1829) Sukhum-Kale was then annexed by the Russian Empire. Sukhum-Kale became one of the fortresses of the so-called 'Black Sea Coastal Strip' until the 1840s. In the 1830s a small settlement was founded at the east end of the fortress, along the sea shore, which was also called Sukhum-Kale. Sixteen years later in 1846 it gained the status of a trade centre and later a port. In 1866 Sukhum-Kale was renamed Sukhum and became the administrative centre of the Sukhum Military Department.



This rich topographical history makes the site unique. Over the centuries a diverse collection of peoples and cultures blended together here - mountaineers, Apsyls and Abazgs (ancestors of the Abkhazians and the Abazins) on the one hand, and Greeks, Romans, Byzantians, Genoese, Turks, Georgians and Russians, on the other. Each left remains behind. The sea facing Sukhum bay, from the Gumista river to the Kelasur river, often took on the role as a 'neutral strip' during periods of conflict between many and various peoples. Thus it gathered a reputation as a meeting place and point of cultural exchange.

In the late XIX century Sukhum was repeatedly sacked during the last Russian-Turkish war (1877-1878). The Abkhazians fought against the Russian army and after the Russian victory the majority of them (mainly from the Sukhum and Gulripsh regions) were forced to leave their motherland and seek refuge in Turkey. Furthermore the Russians issued a decree that the remaining Abkhazian population should live not closer than five kilometres from the sea and 20 kilometres from Sukhum.

It took until 1905 for the Abkhazians to be rehabilitated. This happened as a result of their refusal to join the strikes and revolutionary action against the Government of the Russian Empire.

Meanwhile, from the 1880s on, many new settlements mushroomed in the outskirts of Sukhum. They were inhabited by numerous peoples: Germans (Neudorf, Gnadenberg), Greeks (Andreevsky, Georgievsky, Dmitrievsky, Aleksandrovsy, Konstantinovskiy, Yekaterininsky, Mikhailovskiy, Olginsky), Russians (Spassky, Marinsky, Pavlovskiy, Poltavskiy, Chernigovskiy), Estonians (Lindau, Estonsky), Bulgarians (Anastasovskiy, Vladimirovskiy, Nikolaevskiy), Armenians (Tsebelda, Azhara, Lata), and Mingrelians (Besletskiy, Yashtukha, Byrtskha, Merkheul, Akapa, Warda).

At the beginning of the XX century Sukhum's population was over 8000, comprising 20 nationalities. They included Abkhazians, Russians, Greeks, Armenians, Mingrelians, Turks, Estonians, Germans, Georgians, Poles, Bulgarians, Romanians, Persians, Jews, who in turn possessed a variety of citizenships (the main ones being Russian, Turkish, Greek, German, French, and Swedish). Each ethnic group established a community structure of their own. They built churches, opened schools and participated in Duma elections. Several Russian Orthodox churches were built as well as a Greek church (1915), a Lutheran church (1908), a Roman Catholic church (1915), a Jewish synagogue (1918), an Armenian church (1908), a Shiite mosque (1907) and a Sunni mosque (1907). Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim cemeteries were also established. Sukhum became a multinational city with many creeds and faiths, co-existing peacefully in a small area.

Most of today's finest buildings were erected in the last quarter of the XIX century. City development plans were created for Sukhum as early as the 1860s, but all

failed to meet the specifics of the landscape and came to naught. Some draft proposals were rejected, and others in the early XX century were too expensive, with their installation of sewerage pipes, drainage systems, and strengthening the riverbanks. Notwithstanding these unfulfilled city plans, the city façade and atmosphere was preserved by the people themselves as they built houses independently. These new citizens were mainly nouveau riche Greeks and Russian intelligentsia (doctors, journalists, barristers, military and civilian officers). Fashionable villas in 'modern' styles were built, mingling company buildings, tobacco storehouses with luxurious city homes. Many hotels opened across Sukhum with internationalised names like Metropolis, San-Remo, Oriental, France, Imperial, Byzantium, Riviera, Florida, and Europe.

The Russian professional class liked to build their dachas in the then modern 'chalet' style. Some started boarding houses (Lomakina, Gul-Azizova, Windberg, Lapteva, Mironova, Sopliakov, Sadkevich, Kovalskaya) or sanatoriums (Koshko, Sauer, Meerovich, Gambashidze, Machavariani, Smetskoi). Four drug stores and six pharmacy shops opened in the city.

By 1912 Sukhum had more than 60 doctors and 25,000 inhabitants. A significant factor in the creation of the modern city came from the health professions. In the 1890s the director of a Moscow therapeutic clinic, Professor Alexei Ostroumov purchased a large plot of land in the city centre, then created a park which greatly helped Sukhum's health resort business. He invited many doctors to Sukhum who impressed by its fine climate, brought in a great number of patients from across the Russian Empire. He declared Sukhum (with good reason) one of the best environments for the treatment for tubercular patients. The 1898 International Congress of Doctors held in Moscow, confirmed his opinion by pronouncing Sukhum's climate as the best in Europe to combat tuberculosis.

In 1902 the first civilian hospital was built in the vicinity of Ostroumov's dacha thanks to donations from famous philanthropists like Soldatenkov, Medvednikov and Smetskoi. At this time the cultural life of the city was rapidly gathering momentum. Several newspapers ('Sukhumskiy Listok,' 'Sukhumskiy Vestnik,' 'Sukhumskiy Vesti') and magazines ('Chernomorskiy Selianin,' 'Sotrudnik Zakavkazskoi missiye') were started, alongside six printing houses (Sheinberg, Kozlovskiy, Zakharov, Mgeladze and Kalandarishvili, Zeidsher, and Pobeda). At the same time several theaters (Aloizi, Samuridi, Kozlovskiy) and cinemas ('Illusion,' 'Nauka i Zhizn,' 'Olympia,' 'Pallas') were built and several beautiful parks created. A number of banks also opened (the State Bank, Azovsko-Donskoi, Tifliskiy, Kutaiskiy, the Bank of Mutual Credit), along with various Insurance companies, a Treasury and Tax Inspectorate. These were served by the necessary services - post, telegraph, customs, court, gendarmerie, forest inspection, internal security service (Okhranka), city administration and city Duma.



By 1914 Sukhum boasted 40 tobacco storehouses, 8 timber warehouses, 4 hardware shops, 7 brick factories, 3 bath houses, 1 telephone exchange, more than 10 barber's shops, several ice and carbonated water factories, 72 restaurants, 66 coffee-houses, an information bureau, and 7 photo studios. It also possessed 2 steamship agencies, about 10 cars and a wide range of animal-drawn transport.

This transformation was facilitated from the turn of the century onward by an influx of talented architects, military and civil engineers and land-surveyors, drawn by its reputation as a health paradise. The most notable were:

**Alexander Sinitsin - architect.**

He created some of Sukhum's most distinctive buildings - employing a wide range of styles (classical, modern, neo-classical, Moorish, romantic, modern and neo-Gothic). These included the Aloizi villa; the Ellada Hotel; Doctor Koshko's Sanatorium; the Serebriannikov dacha; the Dunder dacha. He also designed rooms in the London Hotel, and Semenov's dacha.

**Alfred Bammeux - architect.**

Like Sinitsin he also employed a wide range of architectural styles. He designed the Europe Hotel; the Mechnikova dacha; Samuridi's house; the Azovsko-Donskoi Commercial Bank.

**Ivan Begich - architect.**

His work followed a more consistent style - that of pseudo Russian Neo-Classicism. His hand is easy to spot in many buildings - the Hotel Russia; the Court House; the Secondary School; the Real Grammar School; the High School; Bostandjoglo's house; and the Electricity Company building.

**Vladimir Ivanovsky - engineer.**

The military engineer, architect who specialised building 'chalet' style dachas (Dmitriev's, Laptev's, Averkieva's, Ostroumov's, Rukavishnikov's, Tarlo's, Maksimov's, Merkushev's).

**Simon Kldiashvili and Sarkisov - architects.**

Architects from Kutaisi and Tiflis respectively who created several fine buildings in Sukhum including the custom's house (Kldiashvili) and the Grand Hotel and Aloizi Theatre (Sarkisov).

**Razhden Kakuba - engineer.**

The talented Abkhaz engineer who built the Mutual Credit Bank and many local bridges.

Besides these the following architects and engineers also helped create pre-Revolutionary Sukhum:

V.A. Sakharov, Levitsky, I.A. Gaideburov, V.M. Satunin, B.S. Anisimov, V.A. Kovalsky, D.A. Akimov, V.G. Sheglovsky, A.V. Modrakh, A.L. Bahm, S.K. Boiko,

Chagin, V.O. Ostrovidov, A. Lensky, V.A. Sukhodolsky, Kostalevsky, Bender, Filippov, Shtockman, Windberg, Lanin, G.M. Gabunia, and Y.M. Miminoshvili.

Later, in the 1920s-1930s the prominent Soviet architects based in Russia, V.A. Shuko, V.G. Golfreich and the Vesnin brothers also worked in Sukhum. They created the Hotel Abkhazia; the Government Building; the Sinop Sanatorium and others.

Sukhum's health-orientated architecture and spacious lay out is one of the 20th century's more convincing examples of health resort design. Even today the evidence of this integrated and calming environment is clearly felt. The city, with its lack of heavy industry, remains an excellent example of successful coastal resort development during the 20th century.

When the Soviet period began (1917-1991), the architecture inevitably suffered and many fine buildings were destroyed (the Cathedral, the Armenian church, the Shiite and Sunni mosques, the Samuridi theatre, the France and Metropolis Hotels). Others were substantially remodelled, such as the Aloizi theatre and Russian Transport and Insurance Company. Not surprisingly several ugly, multi-story blocks were also jammed into the downtown area, significantly disrupting the harmony of the original city design. In 1949 the city's main street, Lenin St (now Leon Street) was transformed completely.

During the Georgian-Abkhazian war (1992-1993) a number of specifically Abkhaz monuments and institutions were destroyed, including the Abkhaz Institute of Language, Literature and History and the State Archive and Library. In addition many archaeological vaults and repositories were looted. In the end 60 of the 200 plus historical buildings suffered grave damage. Over 10 city monuments were also badly damaged and 4 completely destroyed. But worst of all has been the subsequent inheritance of neglect - accompanied by an economic collapse and dramatic decline in the city's population. More than 80 of Sukhum's most interesting buildings are now in urgent need of restoration - just to prevent their collapse. Some sadly, are gone forever, like the Abkhaz Humanitarian Institute with its archive and library, the Central State Archive building (including its unique historical documents) and the Lakoba Museum.

After the war a number of architectural monuments suffered badly due to bureaucratic incompetence and lack of Government control - including the Imperial Hotel and Turkish Baths. Any visitor to the modern city centre will instantly see how nearly all of Sukhum's architecture is in urgent need of attention. At the moment this seems highly unlikely due to a severe lack of economic resources.



## THE PHOTO ARCHIVE

*The surviving photographs of old Sukhum are of great value, and provide vital documentation of the way the city was conceived then developed in a symbiotic relationship with its environment. Additionally many black and white postcards were printed (some hand tinted). Through photographs a record is kept of the disappearing architecture, such as the South-East Tower of Sukhum fortress before it was blown up in 1956; the grave of the Abkhazian Prince Keleshbia Chachba before its destruction in 1938; Sukhum Cathedral before the Communists pulled it down in 1937; and many other buildings of strong historical and architectural value. They also preserve some key events, like the famous 'great snow' of 1911 - when drifts completely blocked the centre of Sukhum.*

### BRIEF PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF SUKHUM

The first photos of Sukhum appeared in the second half of XIX century (1850s-1860s), but the names of the photographers are lost. They show rare views of the bay, including the original lighthouse by the port entrance.

In 1870s, the Caucasian photographer D. Yermakov produced many pictures of considerable ethnographic value. They showed Abkhaz princes, nobles, and peasants in national dress as well as much of the early Sukhum architecture - now gone.

In 1890s another photographer S. Fandeev arrived in Sukhum and using a Batum printing house, produced about 50 views of Sukhum.

From the beginning of XX century several different publishing houses issued postcards using prints from Sukhum's Babadjan brothers (more than 200 scenes). Six large prints were also sold.

Several photo-portrait studios also functioned in Sukhum during that time, like the 'Tovarishество' created by M. Suikovsky, and the photo-salon 'Sukhum Photography.' Other photographers working then were; S.Fandeev, N. Shepansky, V. Rusidze.

Probably the best known photo-studio of the time was 'Obraztsovaya.' It belonged to the photographer L.I. Pimenidi, located on the Mikhailovskaya Embankment (today no 56, Makhadjiri Embankment), and dates from 1896. Pimenidi's studio offered not only photographs but portraits in oil, water colours or Indian ink.

Another popular photographer, I.P. Yevkarpidi worked in Sukhum from 1899. In 1908 he moved his studio to the ground floor of the Oriental Hotel. He won

many awards including - a Certificate of Merit from the Russian Photographic Society in 1900; a gold medal at the 1901 Caucasian Jubilee Exhibition of Agriculture and Industry in Tiflis; a silver medal from the photographic circle of Vitebsk in 1903, and in the same year a bronze medal at the photographic exhibition in Moscow. In 1906 he was awarded a gold medal and Honourable Cross at the exhibition in Antwerp (Belgium).

Work from some of these studios appeared in a number of booklets created between 1900 and 1917 under the title 'Greetings from Sukhum.'

Postage stamps of Sukhum were also issued, printed in Sochi by the Aniskin Company and Trud Stationers. More than 20 stamps were produced but today only 4 survive - and fetch high prices.

In 1909 the new 'Progress' photographic studio opened in the Riviera Hotel building (now no 9, Leon street), by the photographer A.K. Kozlov.

In 1911 the Batum photographer E. Georgi opened a branch studio in Sukhum.

In 1912 the 'Peterburgsky' studio opened next to the 'Nauka i Zhizn' theatre (now gone).

In 1914 the Gogidjanova bookstore publishing house issued over 30 postcards by the amateur photographer A.A. Lensky.

From 1915 the Sukhum architect and photographer A.V. Sinitsin produced his own cards (more than 100 local views). A year earlier in 1914, Sinitsin opened a photo studio and laboratory in his house offering full photographic services.

In 1916 the 'Svet' photo-studio opened in Sukhum.

Almost all the above photographers issued post cards of Sukhum views. A total of more than 500 were issued by various publishing houses between the end of XIX century and 1917. Below is a list of publishers who printed postcards of Sukhum using local photographers:

1. Granberg of Stockholm. They began issuing postcards in 1896 using the Sukhum photographer L.I. Pimenidi (over 200 views).
2. Papamoskin's publishing house, Batum (over 10 views)
3. The 'S.O.G.O.' publishing house, Tiflis (over 5 views)
4. The 'Caucasus' publishing house (over 80 views)
5. The 'Assedoretphes' publishing house (over 80 views)
6. Prokudin-Gorsky's publishing house, St. Petersburg (over 50 views).  
Proskudin-Gorsky also produced two bound editions of his own pictures.
7. Pikovsky's publishing house in Odessa, (more than 50 views). Pikovsky also issued two books of his own photographs.
8. The Publishing House, Odessa (more than 20 views).



9. The Borisov's brothers, Novorossiisk, (more than 30 views).
10. Polyti's publishing house, Novorossiisk (more than 20 views).
11. Belokopytov's publishing house, St. Petersburg (more than 20 views of the 'Sinop' dacha).
12. The 'Sherer, Nabgolz and Co' photo publishing house in Moscow (more than 30 views).
13. The St. Petersburg Railway Administration Board publishing house (over 10 views).
14. Bykov's publishing house, Moscow (several views).
15. The publishing house of B.B.W. Co (several views).
16. The publishing house of St. Eugenia community (several views of Abkhazia).

## THE BUILDINGS





## THE HIGHLANDER SCHOOL

1



photo 1936

The first school in Sukhum was opened in 1852 when the Russian military administration of Sukhum Department moved from Bombori to Sukhum. The school taught amants ('hostages'). Amants were children of Abkhaz nobles and princes, taught Russian language, 'God's law,' and prepared to serve in the Russian army. In 1856, soon after the Crimean war, the first Ministry of Education school was opened in Sukhum. Unfortunately both buildings burnt down, the first in 1856, the second in 1866.

In 1863 the first Highlander school was built to replace the burnt-out school for amants. This then burnt down three years later.

In 1868 a new one-storied building was erected at the cross of Loris-Melikovskaia and Olginskaia streets (now Lakoba and Pushkin streets) to become the Highlander School (today it survives as the Abkhaz secondary school No 10 named after N.A. Lakoba). 87.5% of Abkhazian and 12.5% of Russian children studied at that school. It offered five-year courses leading to the possibility of higher education. Out of its 200 students, full board and lodging was provided by the State for 40 pupils. Independent pupils had to pay 120 roubles per year. Many graduates became prominent scientists and artists. D.I.Gulia, M.L.Chachba (Shervashidze), K.D. Machavariani, D.G. Adjamov, F.D. Avilov were among the first directors of Highlander School.

During the Soviet period the former school building was rebuilt and now occupies almost half a street block (now 33, Prospect Mir).

## THE GERMAN CHURCH

2

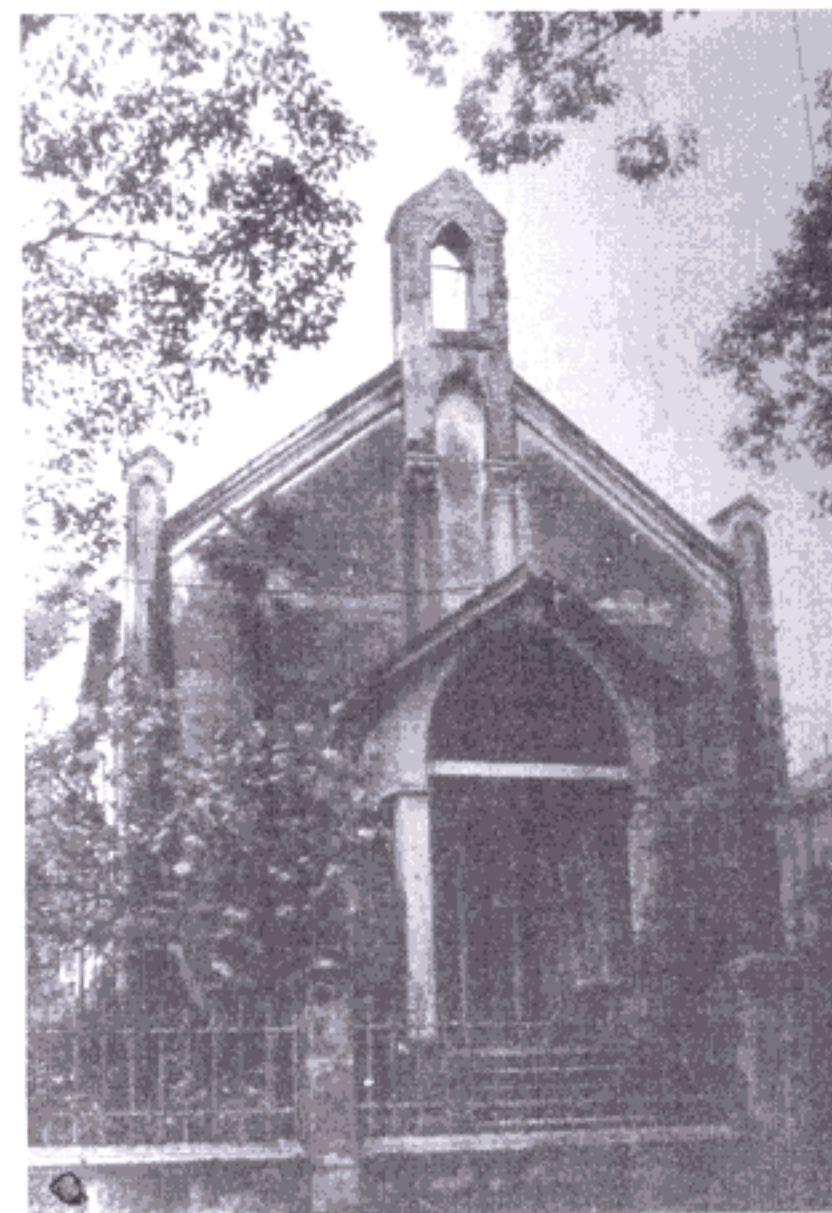


photo 1991

In 1908 the German community of Sukhum built a church on Voronsovsko-Dashkovskaya street (now 65a, Abazinskaya street - formerly Lezilidze Street). The city then had an estimated four thousand naturalised Germans.

The centre of the community was four miles from Sukhum in the 'Gnadenberg Colony' - ("the mountain of mercy"), located in Abjakva village (one of seven which formed themselves from a larger town after the 19th century expulsion of Abkhazians). The second German village, Neudorf ("new village") was the old Abkhaz village Dzyguta. In 1916, during the World War I, the Gnadenberg Colony was renamed Dubovsky and Neudorf, Suvorovsky. In the 1940s the villages became Kvemo Birtskha and Akhalisopeli respectively. Additionally Gulripsh village near the Gulripsh Sanatorium housed many German workers constructing it and the sanatoriums of Nicholai Smetskoi. Smetskoi also constructed a school and a church in Agudzera for his workers.

Today Sukhum's 120 strong German community is restoring the church. They intend to re-open it soon, for the first time since 1914.



## THE HOTEL EUROPE AND SHOPPING CENTRE

3



photo 1999

In 1913 a distinctive, chalet-style two-storied building was erected at the cross of Georgievskaya and Torgovaya streets (now 64, Prospect Mir) designed by the architect Alfred Bammoux. The building occupied, and still occupies, half a block and included a number of shops as well as the Istanbul Bathhouse on the first floor. The Hotel Europe occupied the second floor.

Today the building houses a mini-market, an outpatients' clinic and other offices. It is one of the few in Sukhum recently restored.

## DACHA OF PROFESSOR OSTROUMOV

4



photo 1901

In 1895 Professor Alexei Ostroumov (1844-1908), director of a Moscow therapeutic clinic and Councillor of State at Moscow University, bought a large plot of land on Trapezium mountain (Khatkhua in Abkhaz).

Six years later in 1901 he commissioned a two-storied dacha designed by a military engineer, Staff-Captain V.I. Ivanovsky (today the main building of the Institute of Experimental Pathology and Therapy).

The Russian writer Anton Chekhov and his wife, the actress Olga Knipper-Chekhova stayed there. Chekhov suffered from tuberculosis and Ostroumov became his doctor and good friend. On this large plot the Ostroumoffs created a park with numerous exotic plants, many surviving to the present. The contractor Samson Valikhovsky designed and built the grand outdoor staircase leading to the hospital, then to the dacha.

After the death of Ostroumov in 1908, his wife invited Pavel Dobrynin to become estate manager. He settled there with his family.

In 1909 a pension was built on the dacha grounds and maintained by the artist Sadkevich and his wife, a music teacher. In 1927 the USSR set up its first monkey farm on the dacha's land. This soon became the Institute of Experimental Pathology and Therapy. The monkeys survive to this day.



## PROFESSOR OSTROUMOV'S HOSPITAL

5

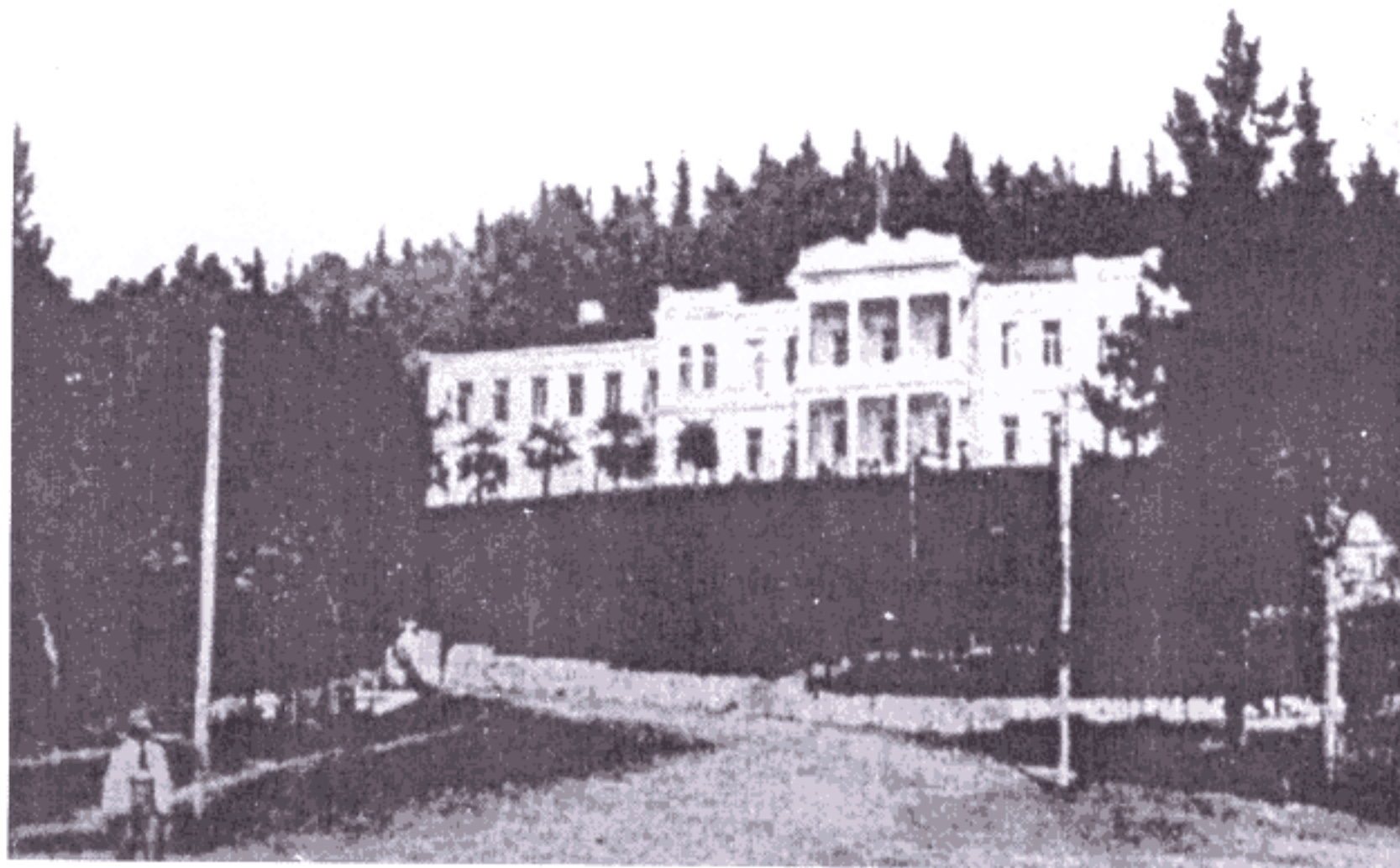


photo 1903

By the end of XIX century Sukhum had only one military infirmary of 65 beds, (built in 1868). With the rise in population a new hospital was needed.

Professor Ostroumov, keen to use Sukhum's congenial climate as part of the treatment of tuberculosis in its early stages, built, then opened a hospital in 1902. It was made possible by philanthropic investment from Soldatenkov in Moscow, Smetskoï in Sukhum and Professor Ostroumov himself.

In 1908 the State Duma named this hospital after Ostroumov and the same year Ostroumov's wife, Varvara Sergeevna, added a maternity wing with her own funds. It was named the 'Varvarinsky Wing.'

In 1926 the 'Varvarinsky' maternity wing was remodelled as an eye-hospital. Shortly afterwards the adjacent dacha belonging to General A.F.Gerardi was annexed. The dacha was tragically destroyed during the Georgian-Abkhaz war (1992-1993).

## THE INDO-EUROPEAN TELEGRAPH

6



photo 1999

In 1867 the Russian Government granted a concession to the Joint Stock Companies, Simons Brothers (London) and Simons and Halske (Berlin) to create a telegraphic link between India and Europe. The Indo-European telegraph line started in London, crossed the North Sea to Emden, then Berlin, Tori, Warsaw, Zhitomir, Balta, Odessa, Kerch, Ekaterinodar, following the Djubga river to the Black Sea. From there it ran along the sea bottom to Sukhum-Kale. After Sukhum it travelled overland to Tiflis, Yerevan, Djulpha, Tabriz, Teheran, Busher, Idjasko, Karachi, Bombay, and Calcutta. Its primary stations were London, Kerch, and Teheran. Secondary stations were Warsaw, Zhitomir, Odessa, Sukhum-Kale, Tiflis and Tabriz.

The line was completed in 1869. Cast-iron telegraph poles were constructed across Abkhazia carrying five-aerial-conductors. The telegraph office in Sukhum-Kale was completed at the end of 1869. The local Joint Stock Company was inaugurated on December 5, 1869 by the Russian Government. On May 1, 1870 the first telegram was sent from the Sukhum-Kale office. Links were established shortly afterwards to Russia, Asia, and the rest of Europe.

The Indo-European telegraph building was constructed on Sukhum's Ekaterininskaya street (now 65a, Chochua street - formerly Kalinin St). A workers' accommodation was erected beside it at 65, Chochua street. Today the Telegraph Office is a private home.



## THE HOUSE OF ENGINEER ALEXANDER DAL

7



photo 1999

In 1896 an imaginative one-storied building was designed and built by the engineer A.V. Dal in Olginskaya street (now 20, Pushkin street). The house was tiled with white carved stone and included a home for the local swallows - as vine entwined holes for the birds on the walls and roof. The pediment is inscribed with its completion date - May 1, 1896.

The arched gates into the yard were flanked by stone vases, the arch itself decorated with ornamental leaf patterns, the pediment girded with Greek ornamentation. Unfortunately the copper tracery gates have disappeared, but the front door with trimmed fretwork remains. All inner doors, windows, window frames, windowsills, shutters, jambs and lintels, wardrobes, wall shelving were made of red yew. The house contains three elegantly tiled fireplaces with deep wall flues helping to heat all the rooms. The interior walls and ceilings were beautifully painted with bunches of flowers; the roof was covered with Marseilles tile, and well insulated from below. The large reception room, led to a wide open terrace led and thence a rose garden.

The house contained a servant's quarters, with stable and coach-house in the yard.

During the Soviet period the building was partially reconstructed and used as a domestic home. At present the building stands abandoned.

## THE POLISH ROMAN-CATHOLIC CHURCH

8



photo 1998

In 1915 the Polish Roman Catholic community built a church on Vorontsovsko-Dashkovskaya street, next to the Protestant church (now 65b, Abazinskaya street - former Lezilidze St).

Although very few Poles then lived in Russia, Sukhum had a community of about 1000. Inspired by their priest Jan Piotrovski, on May 28, 1917, the Polish community established their cultural society 'Polski House' in the Roman-Catholic church. The committee consisted of Piotrovski, Secretary Mushinski and Pavlovich, Russo, Kulikovski, Plevinski.

During the Soviet period the building was used to store the Central State Archive of Abkhazia. Today the church functions normally.



## THE ABKHAZIA HOTEL

9

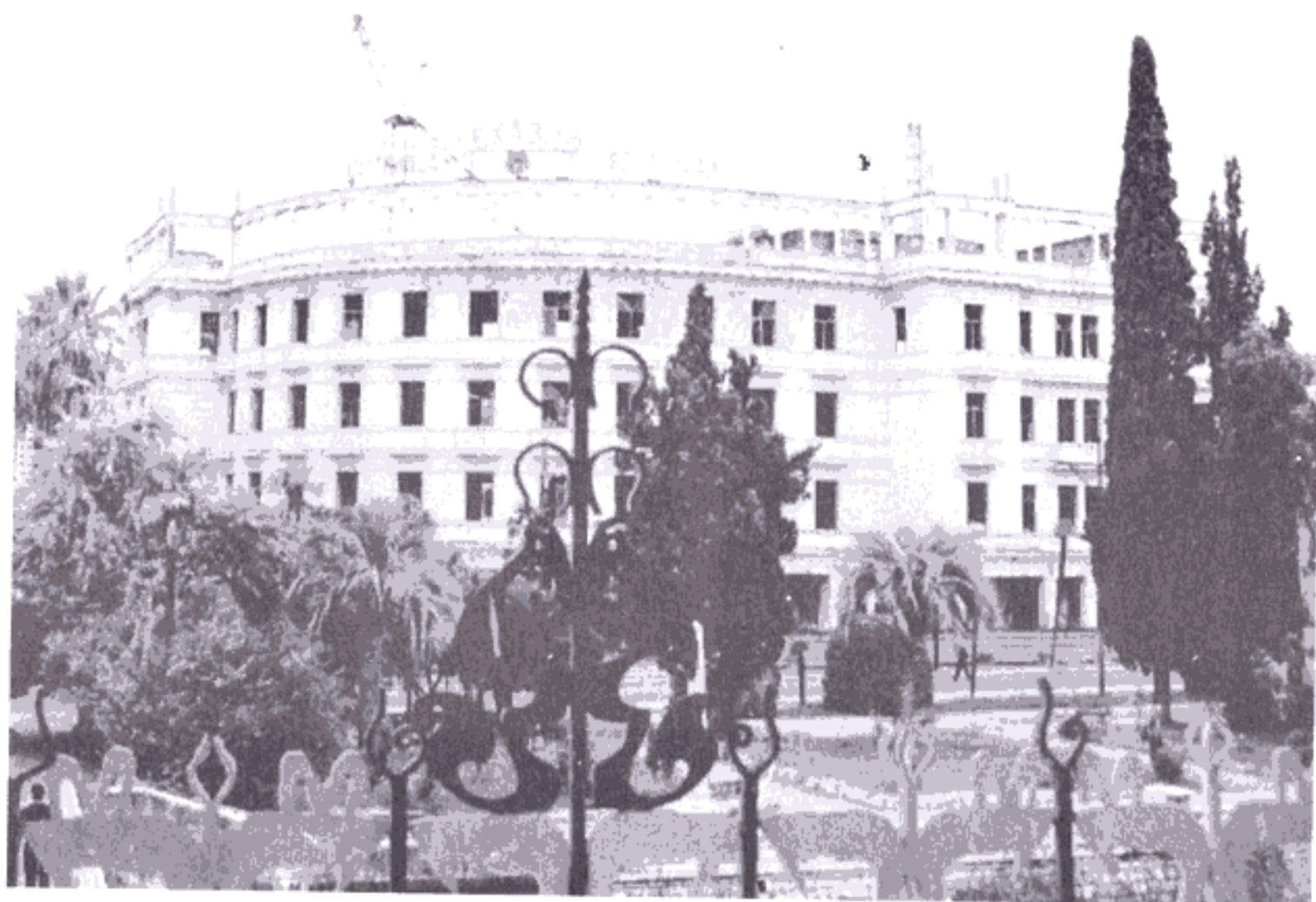


photo 1999

The foundations of the 90 room Hotel Abkhazia were laid in 1933 - at 2 Aidgylara Street (formerly Frunze Street). Designed in Soviet Classical style by the Russian architect Alexander Shuko, it included several accompanying buildings (like the one-story coffee shop and Kara-Khasan bakery). Its construction involved the demolition of the two-storied Hotel Metropolis and Abkhazia's oldest hotel The France (1879).

Until then The France had been a favourite for a number of well known guests, including the archeologists Nikitin, Uvarova and Sizov, and in 1888 Anton Chekhov.

Between 1983-1984 the Hotel Abkhazia housed the VAO Intourist Abkhaz headquarters, headed by Razman Chalmaz. It was regarded as the best in the former Soviet Union.

In 1985 it was seriously damaged by fire and closed. The Polish company Budimex was contracted for the repairs, but never completed it by the time of the Soviet Union's collapse. After that all reconstruction ceased.

## DOCTOR MEEROVICH'S SANATORIUM

10



photo 1910

In 1907 a two storied house with garret was built at the cross of Olginskaya and Inzhenernaya streets (now 16, Pushkin street), designed by Alex Bahm. It was commissioned by Doctor Aron Meerovich and used as a sanatorium. The house's 12 rooms could accommodate up to 40 patients and included special rooms for inhalation, x-ray, and physical therapy. Upstairs the garret contained a solarium. The monthly charge for full board and lodging was 100 roubles per person.

Meerovich was a member of the 'Sukhum Society Against Tuberculosis;' 'The Association of Doctors;' 'The Agricultural Society;' 'The Society of Explorers;' and his wife a member of 'The Sukhum Society of Educational Assistance'.

After Meerovich's death in 1929 the building housed the Sukhum Physiological Therapeutic Institute, and later during the Soviet period, Polyclinic No 1. The building was badly damaged during the Georgian-Abkhaz of 1992-1993.



## DOCTOR KOSHKO'S SANATORIUM

11

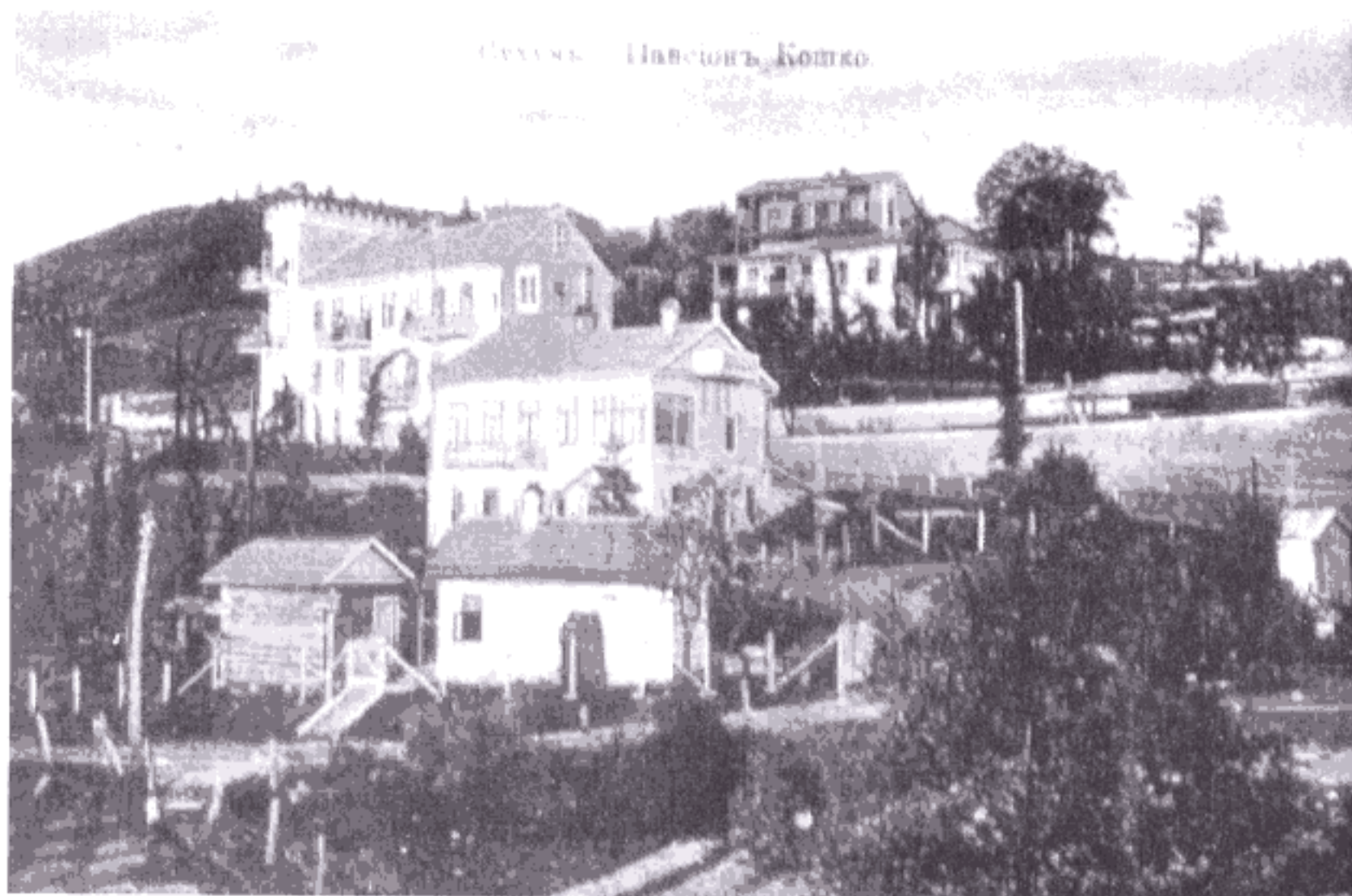


photo 1911

This sanatorium was built in 1907 by Dr Koshko, Assistant Director of the Sukhum Military Hospital - 258 Infantry Regiment. Koshko hired Alexander Sinitsin to design an 18 room clinic able to accommodate up to 25 patients. In 1915 the building was enlarged to 28 rooms and housed up to 40. It is the upper left hand building in the photo.

Between 1907 and 1912 the building transformed into one of Sukhum's many health orientated pensions. Its position up on Sukhum Mountain (29, Papaskiri Street), was considered better from the point of view of air quality. From 1912 to 1931 it became a full sanatorium (in 1921 it was named after the Soviet Doctor Poluogorodnikov). The sanatorium's original Director was Dr Shulz and monthly charge for full board and lodging was 100-150 roubles per person.

After 1931 it converted to a boarding school, and after 1940 became a domestic residence.

## THE AZRA SANATORIUM

12

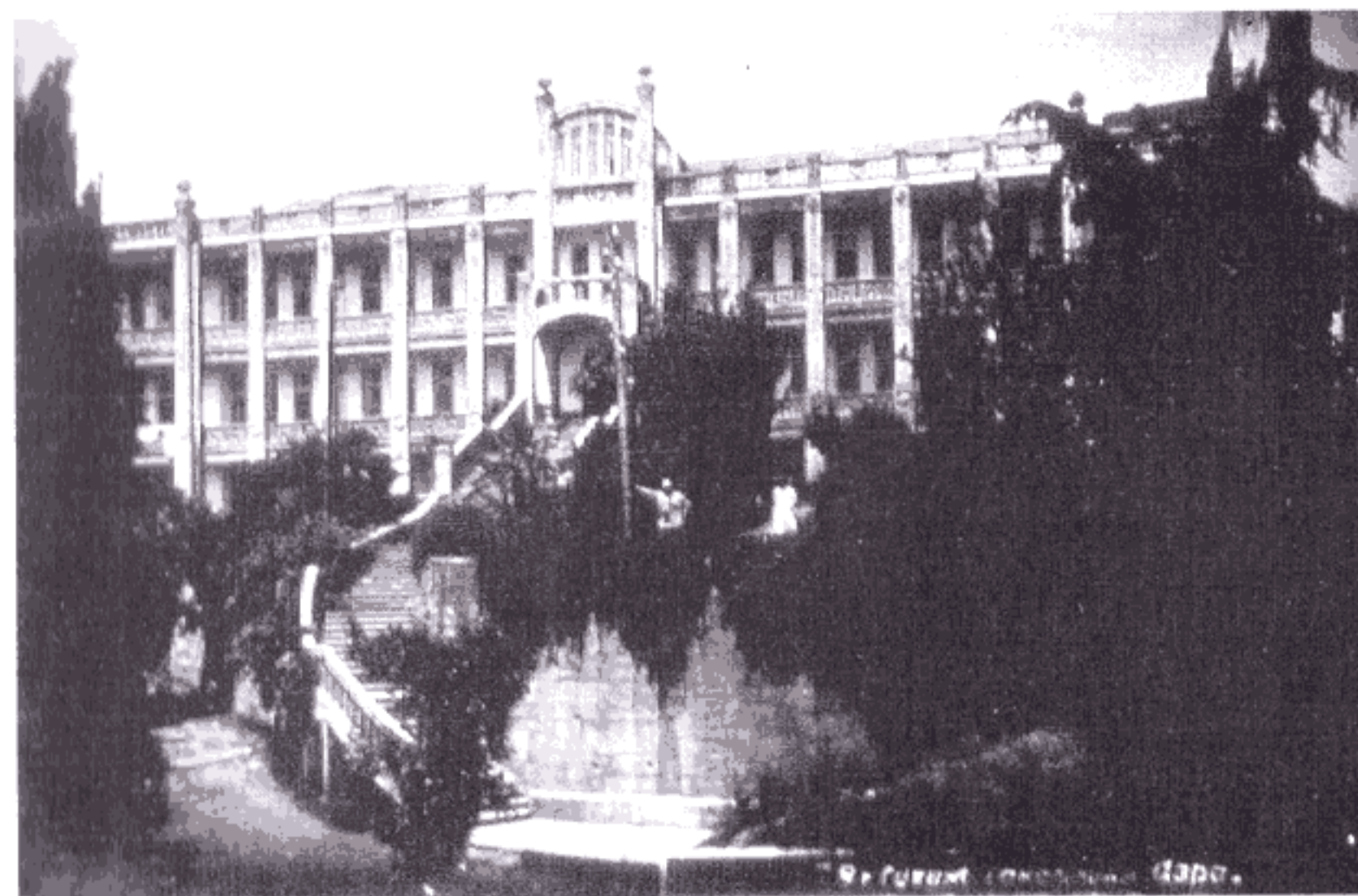


photo 1927

In 1914 an imposing, three-storied sanatorium was constructed on Cherniavsky Hill. The Communists renamed the hill Stalin Mountain, then later Sukhum Mountain (its Abkhaz name is Samat-ikhu). Commissioned by Ekaterina Alleroova it was named 'Azra' on completion. She hired Dr Naryshkin to run it. Its original capacity was 60 patients (enlarged to 80 during the Soviet period).

Between 1928 and 1936 the sanatorium was renamed 'Pamiati 4 Marta' ('In Memory of the 4th March' - the day when Soviet Power was established in Abkhazia). Later the Balneology Institute was established here and two more floors added.

At the present moment the A. Kudjba Institute of Alternative Medicine, is located here.



## SAMURIDI'S VILLA

13



photo 1999

In 1912 an elegant, domed townhouse was commissioned by the tobacco merchant and Chairman of the Greek community Christopher Samuridi. Designed by the architect A.V. Modrakli it was built at the crossing of Torgovaya and Konduktorskaya streets (now 44, Aidgylara Street - former Frunze St).

In 1915 the house was bought the businessman, Prince Djato Chachba (Shervashidze) - owner of a winery and tinning factory. It is said when the young Prince married Djota's relative, Prince Tatarkhan Achba rode up the stairs to the second floor on horseback to announce the bride's arrival. This anecdote was used by Fazil Iskander in his book set in the region 'Sandro of Chegem.'

In 1921 the Abkhaz Central Executive Committee was located in the building and later the Council of Ministers. Shortly before the 1992-3 war the office of the patriotic movement 'Aidgylara' was situated here.

At present it contains the Institute of Humanities named after Dimitri Gulia.

## THE HOTEL RUSSIA

14

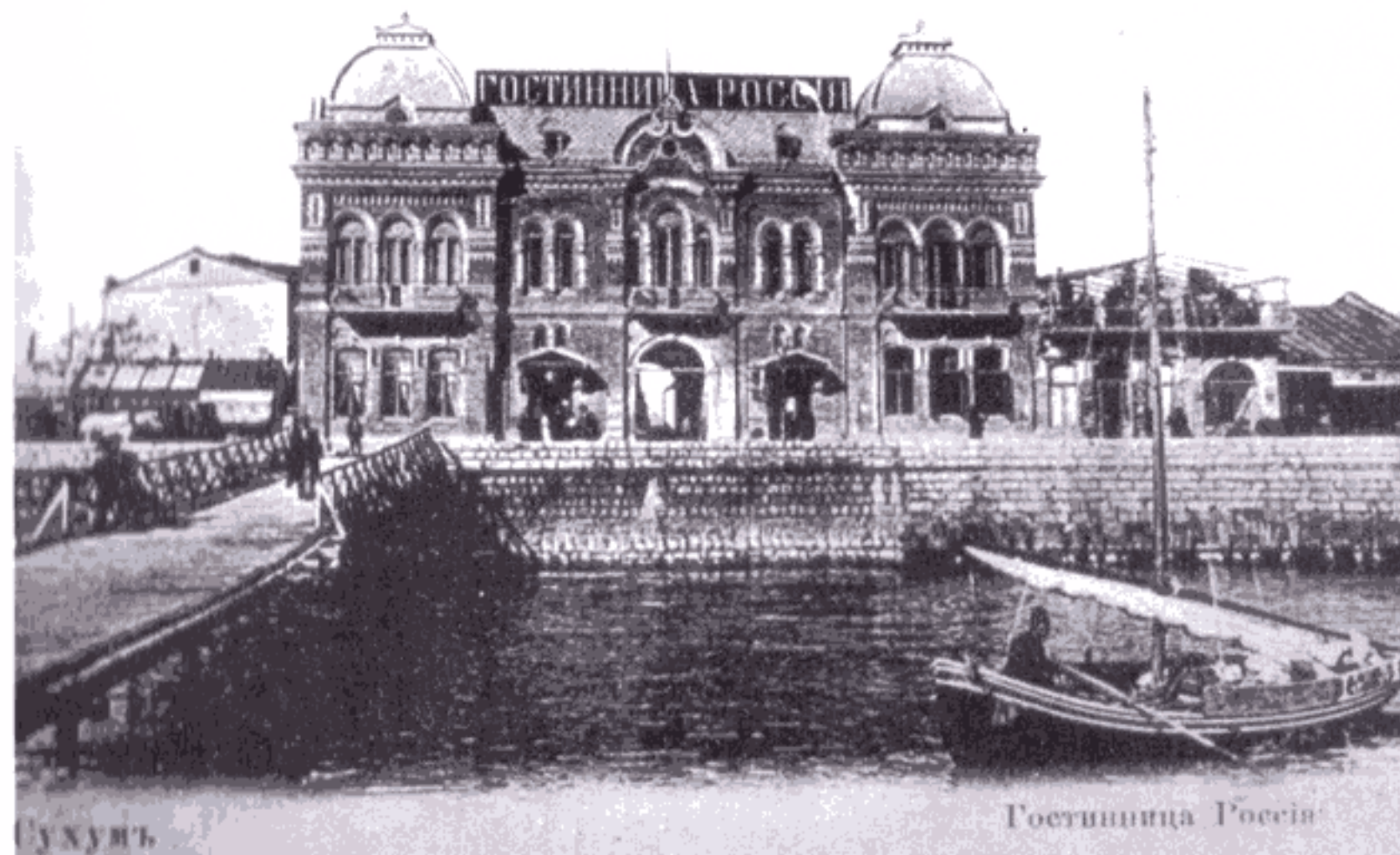


photo 1899

In 1898 a first class hotel was constructed on the Mikhailovskaya embankment (now 62, Makhadjirov embankment - formerly Rustaveli) - and named The Russia. The hotel belonged to the merchant, Solomon Wolfenson and contained 30 comfortable rooms, a big reception hall and high quality restaurant. The same year Wolfenson built a landing-pier for small feluccas to fetch passengers from ships in Sukhum Bay, who were then encouraged to stay in The Russia, the city's 'best' hotel. If they did their journey was free of charge. The hotel looked very appealing from the sea, and the tariff ran between 1 to 6 roubles per day.

On March 15, 1903 the city authorities decided to cobble the street in front of the hotel. Since the building was then the city's most elegant, the paving was painstakingly lowered 3,5 inches so not to disturb it.

In January 1908 a fire destroyed the hotel, and although rebuilt the same year, it lost much of its former beauty. The original domes were not restored.

In 1910 Wolfenson's son sold the building to the Russian Insurance Company. The first floor became a warehouse and apartments for second, third and fourth class passengers. The second floor remained for first class passengers. Rumours that it was won during a card game - due to its attractive brick motifs of hearts and spades - remain unproved. In 1925 the Russian poet Sergei Yesenin stayed in room 21. At present the building is a private home.



## DACHA OF PRINCE G.D. CHACHBA (SHERVASHIDZE)

15



photo 1991

In 1907 a grand private house was built on Mariinskaya street (now 23, Djanashia street) for Prince Georgi Dmitrievich Chachba (Shervashidze) - Oberhoffmeister at court of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia. The Prince's manager Ketriz supervised the building of the house.

Due to the early death of his parents, Prince Chachba (1847-1918) was adopted and brought up in Kutaisi by its Governor-General, N.P. Koliubiakin and his wife, the children's writer Anna Koliubiakina.

Chachba graduated from the Moscow University/Law faculty and served in Tiflis as Assistant to the Caucasian Governor-General. In 1883 he became Vice-Governor, and in 1889 - Governor of Tiflis. He married the widow of Tsar Nicholas II, Maria Fedorovna - after her husband's death (a marriage without hereditary rights).

Prince Chachba owned substantial areas of land in Abkhazia including a large forested plot between the rivers Dziguta and Kelasur. He also owned land in Gagra, and the villages of Fshera and Basla.

At the present the building is a private house in bad need of repair.

## HOUSE OF PRINCE A.G. CHACHBA (SHERVASHIDZE)

16



photo 1999

In 1883 a large one-storied building was erected at the crossing of Zavodskaya and Admiralteiskaya streets (now 10, Gulia Street - former Chavchavadze St). It was built for Lieutenant-General, Prince Grigori Alibeevich Chachba (Shervashidze) (1822-1898) to accommodate the Prince's large family: wife Agafia Elizbarovna Dadiani; sons Ivan, Alexander and Konstantine; and daughters, Despina, Kesaria, Sasha and Salomeya.

After the death of G.A. Chachba his elder son Ivan Grigorievich (1849-1908) moved into a new house (today 74, Zvanba Street - former Tsereteli St). The youngest brother Konstantine Grigorievich (1858-1914) constructed a house at today's 29, Shotlandskaya Street) and the middle son Aleksander Grigorievich (1852 -1933) took the father's house. Mother and sisters moved into a neighbouring house built in 1883 (now 8, Gulia Street). On the 18 May, 1918. A.G. Chachba married Princess E. Tarkhan-Mouravi.

In 1905 Aleksander Grigorievich Chachba was elected Chairman of the Sukhum City Duma, and in 1911 became Head of the City Administration. He held this post until 1921 and the institution of Soviet power in Abkhazia.

In 1914 Aleksander Grigorievich proposed the transformation of the Sukhum Okrug ('region') into a province, and Abkhazia part of a Highlander Republic.

In the Soviet period A.G. Chachba's house was used as a kindergarten. Today the building stands in a bad state of disrepair.



## VILLA OF PRINCE G.M. CHACHBA (SHERVASHIDZE)

17

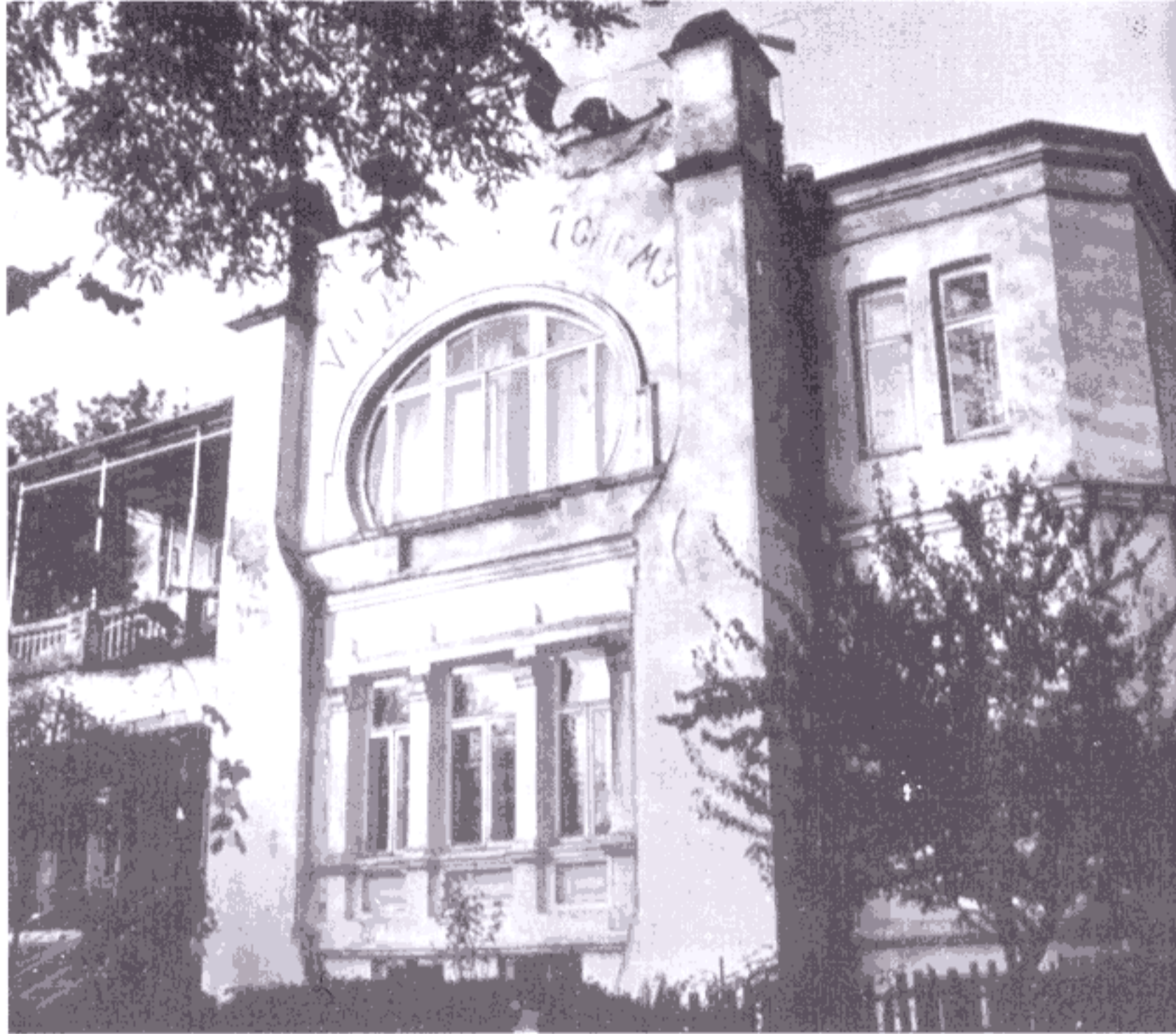


photo 1991

In 1905 a handsome Art Nouveau villa was built in Korotkaya street (now 5, Lasuria Tupik) for the poet and dramatist, Prince Georgi Mikhailovich Chachba (Shervashidze) (1846-1918). It was designed by V.A. Kovalski. Georgi was son and heir of the ruling Prince of Abkhazia, G.M. Chachba. The father called this house 'Chemi's villa' (Chemi was his son's nickname - given to him by his teacher and relative Kesaria Dadiani.) As an adult Prince Georgi married Yelena Andrievskaya. Today large copper Latin letters can still be seen on the facade.

After the death of Georgi Mikhailovich in 1918 the building was inherited by his cousin, the actor Prince A.K.Chachba (1867-1968). Alexander Konstantinovich Chachba lived there only until February 1919 when he emi-

grated to France as part of Diagelev's ballet troupe. Currently there is a proposal to turn the building into a House-Museum for G.M. and A.K. Chachba. At the moment there is little chance of this as the building was seriously damaged during the Georgian-Abkhaz war. So far no repairs have been made.



G.M. CHACHBA (SHERVASHIDZE), photo circa 1880



## THE RUSSIAN STEAMSHIP AND TRADE COMPANY

18



photo 1999

The building of the Russian Steamship and Trade Company (Russian abbreviation - 'ROPiT') was built at the beginning of XX century on Mikhailovskaya embankment (now 68, Makhadzhiri embankment - formerly Rustaveli) in front of today's Port Building. It was the Company's second building. The first was built in 1880 beside the company storehouse (now 1, Konfederati street). The company's main exports were tobacco, hardwood and tea.

The company agent was the Italian A.I. Kantesini and their ships transported passengers, various cargoes and mail. On the front of this elegant domed building one can still see where the big copper letters 'ROPiT' were nailed. A jetty and narrow-gauge railway was built before it, with trolleys shuttling to and from the storehouse.

Today the 'ROPiT' building is occupied by the Abkhaz Steamship Company.

## VILLA PALKOVNIK AVERKIEV

19



photo 1991

One of the most prominent buildings in Sukhum, this distinctive villa with twin, curved, Art Nouveau windows and entrance, stands on the summit of Sukhum Mountain, at 36 Papaskir Street. Built in 1905 for the Russian General Palkovnik Averkiev, he had it designed to include a sanatorium for Dr Gambashidze - a Georgian doctor. During Soviet times it became a student hall of residence.

At the start of the Georgian-Abkhaz war in 1992 this splendid villa was the first to be destroyed, when a helicopter crashed into its roof.



photo 1999



## THE KSANDOPULO BROTHERS HOUSE

20



photo 1991

In 1906 a distinctive, two-storied building, designed by the Ukrainian architect, Savva Boiko was erected at the cross of Mikhailovskaya embankment and Alekseevsky Prospekt (now 70, Makhadjiri embankment - formerly Rustaveli). Commissioned by the Greek merchants, the Ksandopulo brothers, the building remains virtually unchanged, still sporting its elegant cupola room on its western end.

In 1911 a third floor was added to the building's second half. The Ksandopulos brothers lived in the building, but also let out some of their rooms. The ground floor contained a storehouse, and included a separate coal warehouse.

At the present the building is a private house.

## THE REAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

21



photo 1991

In 1904 a grammar school was constructed on Konduktorskaya street (now 24, Basaria street), designed in neo-classical style by the architect Ivan Begich. As a day school it contained one preparatory form and seven standard forms. The charge for students was 40 roubles a year.

By 1908 Sukhum had seven educational institutions and 940 students (582 boys and 358 girls).

The annual educational budget was 72 thousand roubles, of which 47 thousand came from the State Treasury and 25 thousand from the Sukhum City Council.

By 1912 the number of educational establishments had risen to 14 and the annual budget to 75 thousand roubles.

Today the Sukhum Industrial College occupies this building.



## HIGH SCHOOL AND TEACHER-TRAINING COLLEGE

22

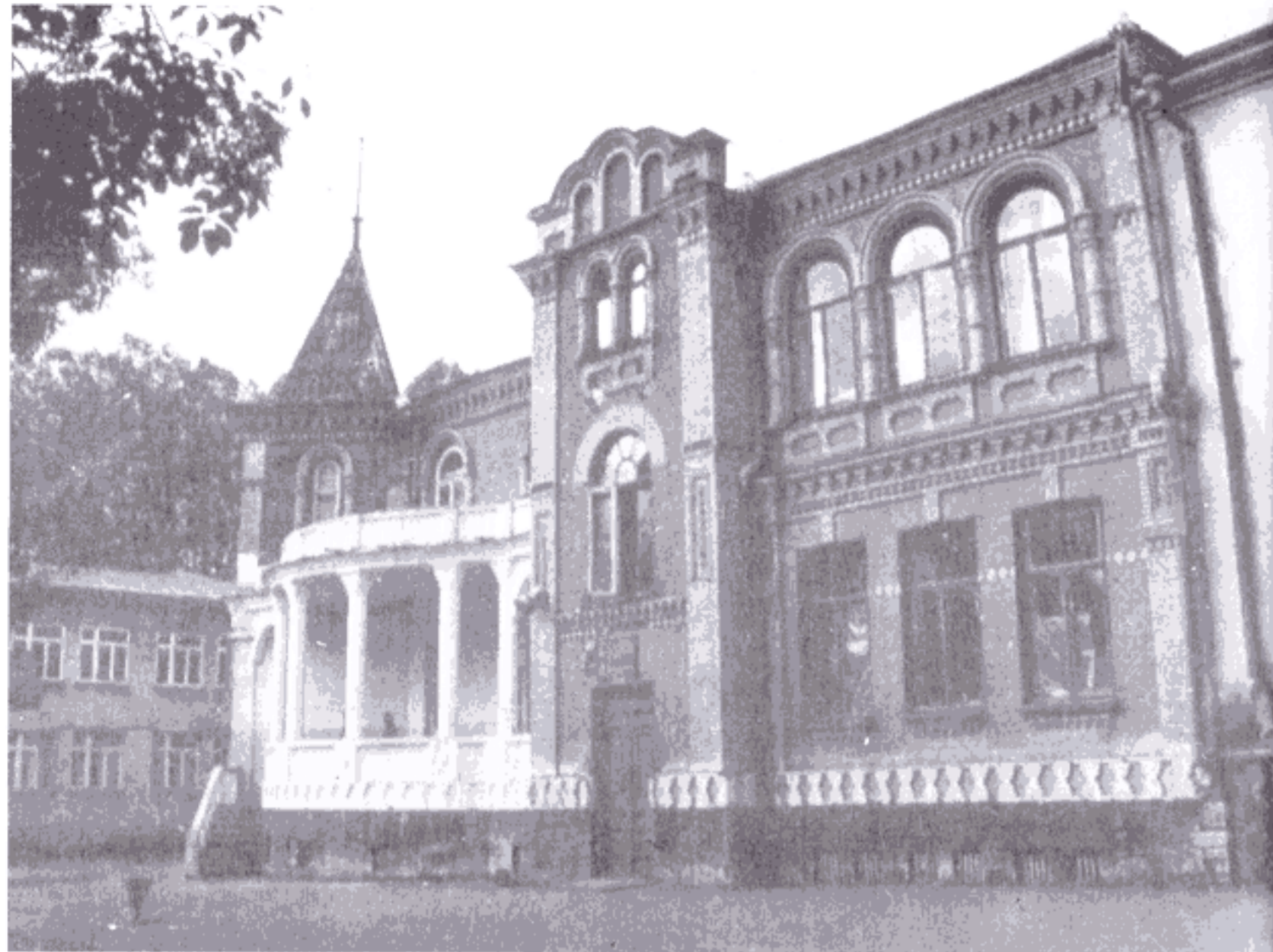


photo 1991

In 1900 a High school was built on Tretia Podgornaya street (now 60, 4th March Street), designed by architect Ivan Begich. It offered six-year courses for students as well as teacher training. The charge was 10 roubles per year, without board and lodging. The Abkhaz educationalist A.M. Chochua was the School Inspector and he initiated a two-year teacher-training course. A second free primary school was also attached to the High School. Lavrenti Beria studied at the school from 1907 to 1914 and was noted as a backward student. He also attended the teacher-training course. From the Soviet period onward the school was renamed School No 3. Today the school still stands but without its roof.

## THE ALOIZI VILLA

23



photo 1906

In 1896 the construction of one of Sukhum's finest villas was begun at the crossing of Zavodskaya street and Bariatinskaya street (now 1, Gulia Street, formerly Chuchavadze). It belonged to the Deputy Head of Sukhum Okrug region, Lieutenant-Colonel M.A. D'Simon.

The building was bought from D'Simon's widow in 1903 by the French silkworm breeder, Ioakim Mikhailovich Aloizi (1854-1925), formerly living in Kiev. It cost him five thousand roubles. A year later he commissioned the architect Alexander Sinitsin to reconstruct the villa in a lavish mixture of architectural styles - 'romantic modern,' neo-gothic, Moorish and the latest elements of pseudo-Russian.

He also designed the garden, which included a fountain with Cupid holding a fish in his hands, water spouting from his mouth. The second floor corridors were hung with skulls of long-horned Caucasian goats, aurochs and deer. The building carries an unusual quantity of stucco moulding, the gates and columns are adorned with lion sculptures, and the roof has three cupolas. Between 1925 and 1938 the Abkhaz playwright Samson Chanba made the villa his home.

Currently this beautiful structure stands in a state of tragic neglect. The wood is rotting, cupolas rusting, and structural cracks are appearing in the walls. Without urgent attention this unique building may be lost.





photo 1924

In 1914 a three-storied, first-class hotel was built facing the sea at the crossing of Romanovskaya street and Mikhailovskaya embankment (now 2, Leon Street - formerly Lenin Street). The hotel had 25 comfortable rooms and was owned by the Greek timber merchant Christopher Spanaki. The hotel's first floor restaurant, 'The Birzha,' was the best in Sukhum.

Until 1914 the site was occupied by several buildings; the former one-storied 'Birzha' restaurant, built in 1884; the two-storied hotel 'Tsentralnaya' ('Central') built in 1907; the one-storied hairdressing salon 'Jean' built in 1899; and the two-storied Gollandia ('Holland') confectioner's built in 1907. All were knocked down to build the San Remo, which then attracted many prominent people. In 1938 the Communists renamed it The Ritsa in an attempt to disassociate it from its Capitalist past. (Communist power only fully took hold in Abkhazia after 1937, after Beria had Abkhazia's leader, Nestor Lakoba murdered).

In 1924 Leo Trotsky delivered his speech on the occasion of Lenin's death from the second floor balcony - which marked the launch of his conflict with Stalin. In 1930 the Armenian poet Marietta Shaginian stayed in room 6. In October 1992 the hotel was destroyed by fire during the war, and now stands as a burnt out shell.



photo 1999



## YANOVSKY'S DACHA

25

Кадравил. Суахмел. Пауциора Мирочовой.



photo 1901

An important figure in local educational history was Kirill Petrovich Yanovsky - Inspector of Schools for the Caucasus region. Yanovsky is famous for re-structuring the educational system, establishing a number of agricultural schools across the Caucasus, and generally broadening international knowledge on the region. As a keen ethnologist he published the 'Almanac of the Tribes and Regions of the Caucasus' (Russian abbreviation-SMOMPK). Yanovsky became a local Counsellor, and from 1901 a member of the State Council.

In 1879, soon after the Russian-Turkish war he purchased a large plot of land in Sukhum (about 19 acres) for 3,5 thousand roubles from a Captain Babaevski. His dacha was completed in 1892 on Yekaterinskaya Street (now 67 Chochua Street - former Kalinin St).

During the Soviet period the Institute of Advanced Teacher Training was located there.

The building was badly damaged during the Georgian-Abkhaz war (1992-1993).

## THE AZOVSKO-DONSKOI COMMERCIAL BANK

26



photo 1999

The Sukhum branch of the Azovsko-Donskoi Commercial Bank was built at the end of 1912. This large two story building, designed by Alfred Banmeux, stood in Loris-Melikovskaya street (now 31, Iakoba Street). The pediment carries a local landscape painted by the artist Pisht and called "Sukhumi panorama from the sea".

The bank was opened in 1913, and managed by M.L. Tomara.

Today an exhibition hall occupies the ground floor, while the second is shared by the State Picture Gallery and the Sukhum branch of 'Menatep' Bank.



## THE ORIENTAL HOTEL

27

Кабинетъ. Сухумь. Видъ на гостиницу „Ориентъ“.



photo 1910

Sukhum's Oriental Hotel was built in 1908 at the cross of Mikhailovskaya embankment and Koliubiakinskaya Street (now 1, Leon Street - former Lenin Street). Commissioned by the Georgian merchants Georgi Gvalia and Dimitri Chavchanidze, the Hotel occupied the second floor, had 22 balconies and 52 rooms. Tariffs ran between 1 and 10 roubles a day.

Its long street-frontage ran down from the sea front and housed a number of businesses; the Akinians Brothers drapers; an expensive restaurant; the Babadjan tobacco shop; the Pobeda rubber stamp factory; the Pravda photo studio run by Yevkarpidi; the jeweller Moses Minkov; and Sukhum's first cinema 'The Renaissance.'

During the Soviet period the hotel was renamed The Tkvarchal.

In 1985 the same fire that destroyed the Abkhazia Hotel also seriously damaged The Oriental. Repairs were begun the following year by the Polish company Budemex, and although never completed, a new roof was installed which saved the interior. It has remained unused for the last thirteen years.

## SEREBRIANNIKOV'S DACHA

20

Сухумь. Пансионъ Ковальской

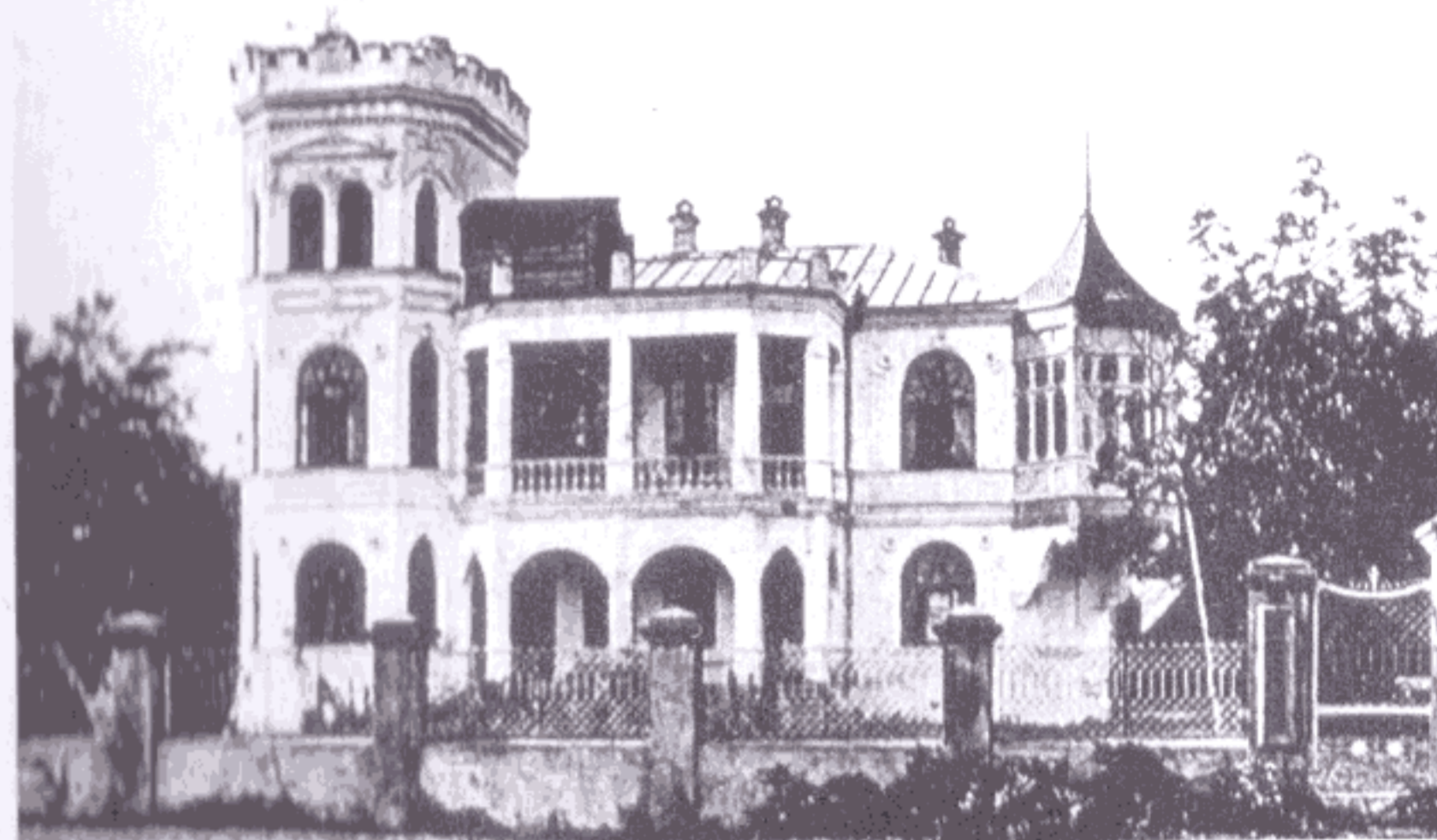


photo 1902

In 1892 the Swedish mining engineer, Simeon Serebriannikov built an impressive private home on Zavodskaya street (now 20, Gulia Street, formerly Chavachavadze) very close to the botanical garden. He constructed a small garden-park around the dacha. In 1903 the house was transformed into a boarding-school. When Serebriannikov returned to Sweden in 1917 the building was taken over by the newspaper *Sukhumskaya Pravda*, and the following year by the administration of the botanical garden itself.

In the Soviet heyday of the 60s, the building was substantially reconstructed, given a quasi Art Nouveau facade. Today it remains as the botanical garden administration.

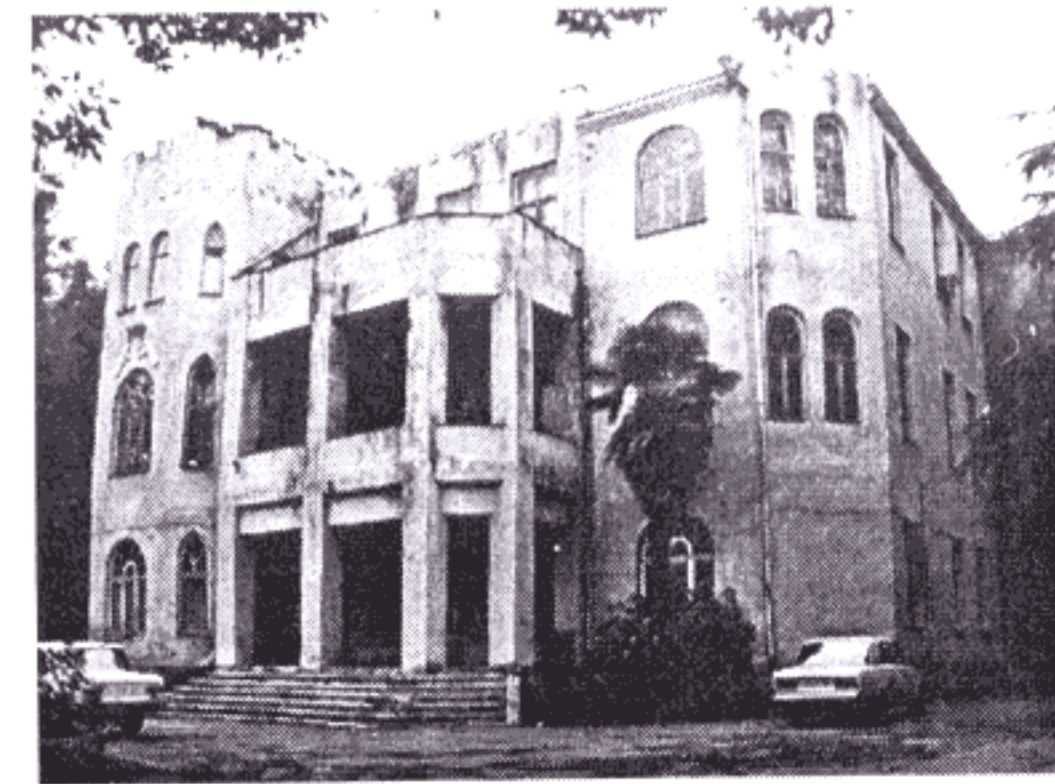


photo 1994



## THE STEPHANIDI RESIDENCE

29



photo 1934

In 1912 the then highest building in Sukhum was built at the cross of Georgievskaya and Vorontsovsko-Dashkovskaya streets (now 102, Prospect Mir). The five-storied house belonged to the tobacco magnate, Stephan Stephanidi who lived on the second floor. The ground floor housed Stephanidi's tobacco shop and a pharmacy (now a city drug store No 2). In 1920s-1930s the building became the Dom Kolkhoznika hotel (House of the Collective Farmer). Stephanidi's locally grown tobacco was sold mainly to the Turkish market, and branded as 'Samsoon' and 'Trabzun.'

Currently the building contains, various shops, a library and drug store.

## SMETSKOI'S DACHA AND SUBTROPICAL GARDEN

30



photo 1991

One of former Sukhum's most prominent sea-front resort areas - Smetskoi's Arboretum - started its life in 1889 when the merchant Nicholai Smetskoy (1852-1931) and his invalid wife bought land in Sukhum and Gulripsh. In 1892 he built a dacha on the 135 acre site and the following year laid out a large subtropical arboretum. A great variety of plants were included; 50 species of palms, 80 eucalyptus, more than 50 camellias, a variety of magnolia, agave, and coniferous trees, alongside a unique collection of cacti. He also created a 5.4 acre tangerine grove. Every year between 1890 to 1900, Smetskoi visited Southern Europe and North Africa to gather new saplings and seeds. He employed a number of specialists; A.S. Bishkevius - on fruit-growing, vine-growing and ornamental plants, V.A. Dokin - on general agronomy; K.A. Kirov - on winemaking.

The variety of plants in Smetskoi's arboretum made it virtually unique in Europe. It was frequently mentioned in English, French



and German magazines for its success in cultivating plants from many different global climates.

Smetskoi became known as a philanthropist and was invited to numerous agricultural exhibitions in the Russian Empire and abroad. He would usually speak on his collection as well as his wine-making innovations.

In 1921 the Commissariat on land of Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia (Russian abbreviation- NARKOMZEM of SSR) placed the Arboretum under the authority of the Agriculture Experimental Station.

In 1925 the Institute of Botany, Subtropical Division was opened at the dacha, which was then transformed into a sanatorium, named after Stalin's henchman, Sergo Ordzhonikidze. It became a rest home for the Party elite. Many prominent politicians and social figures stayed there, including: Dzerjinsky, Fadeev and the poet Osip Mandelstam.

In 1925 Smetskoi, as senior consultant of the arboretum, received the highest pension in Abkhazia. In 1946 the sanatorium was given to the Ministry of Interior of USSR and a governmental dacha set up there.

In 1953 the dacha was taken over by the Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR and renamed "The Sukhumi Sanatorium." During the Georgian-Abkhaz war in 1992-1993 Eduard Shevardnadze stayed there. Currently the dacha remains government property.

## THE GULRIPSH SANATORIUM

Гульрипш. Санатория Н. Н. Сметского.

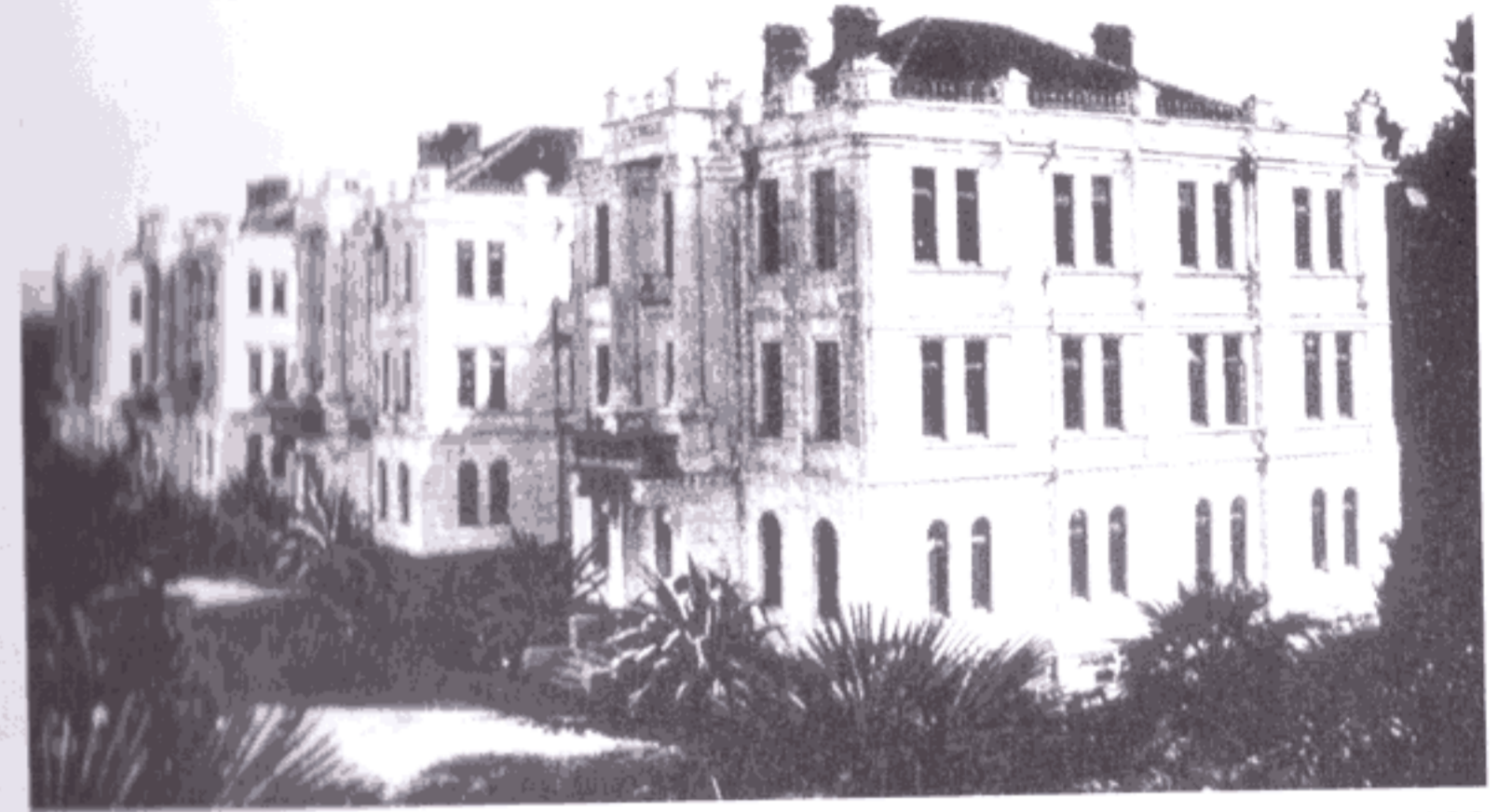


photo 1903

In 1898 Nicholai Smetskoi began his distinguished career as sanatorium builder, starting his first on a 150 acre hillside site overlooking the Black Sea, 8 kilometres south of Sukhum. He called it Gulripsh after the local village and it was opened in 1902. The three-story building could house 110 people (increased to 200 during the Soviet period), and full board and lodging cost 60 roubles per month. It contained all the then modern conveniences - electricity, running water, full bathrooms, elevators, telephones, 4 large canteens, post-office, carriages, as well as a theatre and dining room. Specialising in the treatment of tubercular patients, its windows were constructed in such a way that they could stay open the year round, in the winter the air being carefully directed upward and heated before entering the rooms. During the Soviet period a lung sanatorium was created there named after Lenin.

During the 1941-1945 war it converted into a military hospital. Today the Gulripsh sanatorium remains in a state of sad abandonment and slow collapse.



## THE AGUDZERA SANATORIUM

32

Светлая Гора, Абхазия



photo 1907

In 1895 Smetskoi founded a small botanical garden in his plot of land in Agudzera village, it covered some 15,000 square meters. He also created a large vineyard planted with 'Shasla' grapes. In 1905 he hired the architect Alexander Sinitsin to build his large Agudzera sanatorium on and around this plot. The sanatorium would eventually cover 110 acres and he also had the neighbouring 122 acre park planted out. The two-story sanatorium had 70 rooms and could accommodate 100 persons (in the Soviet the figure was doubled). Full board and lodging cost 55 roubles per month.

The sanatorium was well equipped and included a drug store, a large hall filled with luxurious furniture, 4 sitting rooms, 5 verandas, a reading-room, a post-office, a landline, and substantial restaurant/theatre, all with running water and central heating.

On the nearby sea shore Smetskoi built a lighthouse and small jetty. He lined the approach road with 400 cypresses and provided the sanatorium with carriages for trips to Sukhum.

In 1908 he improved communications further by building the Agudzera railway station; a house for German workers, a parish school and German church.

During the Soviet period the sanatorium became part of the Sukhum Technical Institute of Physics. Today it stands deserted.

## THE GULRIPSH 2 SANATORIUM

11



photo 1938

In 1913 Smetskoi built yet another sanatorium. Larger still than the others and with fouratories, the Guripsh-2 had 112 rooms, could accommodate 250 patients (400 in the Soviet period). The charge was 125 roubles a month. It included hydropathic and inhalation rooms, a large canteen with stage, numerous baths, full plumbing, telephone, elevators, post-office and carriage facilities. The walls were painted with murals and it contained a large top-floor veranda for patients to take the air.

A total of 5 million roubles were spent on Smetskoi's three splendid sanatoriums Gulripsh, Agudzera and Gulripsh-2, and they covered an area of some 3,800 acres. Smetskoi also built a brick and tile factory, a sawmill, a metal workshop, a six-kilometer narrow-gauge railway, a live-stock farm for 30-35 cows, a winery, shops and several houses for the German sanatorium staff.

Behind the sanatorium he planted a forest covering some 3,500 acres where patients could walk. 432 acres were planted with ornamental plants, 216 acres with orchards, 135 acres with vines, 810 acres with various agricultural products, and also a three acre kitchen garden.

During the Soviet period the sanatorium specialised in lung complaints and was named after Lenin. During and after the Georgian-Abkhaz war (1992-1993) the building was badly looted and at present lies in a tragic state of abandonment.





photo 1991

In 1904 the architect Alexander Sinitsin was commissioned to build a three-storied, 30 room hotel in Koliubiakinskaya street (now 9, Leon Street - formerly Lenin Street). Its owner, a German doctor's widow, Anna Rudolfovna Preobrazhenskaya first named it The Kurort. In 1907 the hotel was partly destroyed by fire; rebuilt and in 1912 renamed The Riviera. Rooms rented for 1-6 roubles a day. At that time Sukhum's population was around 25,000.

The building contained a variety of businesses, the best known being the Sukhum Cultural Society, which occupied the ground floor. This restaurant and theatre combined, quickly gathered a reputation for excellent concerts and drama productions. Beside it stood the photographer A.K.Kozlov's 'Progress' photo-studio and beside that the horticultural shop of the Agricultural Society - who looked after Sukhum's Botanical Garden. The Hotel occupied the second floor and third floors and included its own Doctor's surgery (Dr Mäuseltz).

The Riviera flourished until 1938, when it was taken over by the city's main local newspaper 'Sovietskaya Abkhazia' - published in three languages - Russian, Georgian and Abkhaz. By then Sukhum's population had swelled to 70,000.

During the Georgian-Abkhaz war the hotel was badly damaged. Currently it lies sealed and abandoned, awaiting restoration.



photo 1999



## TELEGRAPH AND POST-OFFICE

35



photo 1991

By 1884 both Sukhum's telegraph and post offices were housed in the same building at the cross of Mikhailovskaya embankment and Morskaya street (now 1, Sakharov Street - former Octoberskaya St). But soon the one-storied building (constructed in 1880) became too small and in 1902 B.S. Anisimov designed a second floor.

The postal service became of greater importance due to the increasing population and number of holiday-makers. In 1915 the architect Samoilov designed a new, bigger, two-storied telegraph office at the crossing of Georgievskaya street and Shervashidzievskaya street.

Mail arrived mostly by the ships of the Russian Trade Company and Russian Transport and Insurance Companies. It was then delivered by bicycles and Russian troikas until automobile transport became available after 1912. Today the Sukhum General Post-Office occupies the building.

## THE GIRL'S GYMNASIUM SCHOOL

10



photo 1991

In 1870 a girls' gymnasium school was built at the crossing of Koliubiakinskaya street and Inzhenernaya Street (now 25, Leon Street - former Lenin St). In 1904 a second floor was added. The school had 8 forms, offering full board and lodging to 24 girls. The cost was 10 roubles a year (1-4<sup>th</sup> forms), 100 roubles (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> forms) and 120 roubles (8<sup>th</sup> form).

In the Soviet period the school was named School No 2, then later the Pushkin Gymnasium School. During the Georgian-Abkhaz war the building was badly burnt and now stands roofless and unusable.



photo 1999





photo 1991

The Sukhum Mutual Credit Company was established in 1901 by local citizens, led by Michael Tomara. Eight years later in 1909 it had 415 members with a working capital of 53 thousand roubles. By 1911 the figures had increased to 657 members and a working capital of 529,155 roubles, which nearly doubled again the following year to 808,129 roubles.

In 1912 the Company decided to build a two-storied office in

Kotlubinskaya Street (now 4, Leon Street - former Lenin St) - designed by Abkhazia's first professional architect Razhden Kakuba. It opened on November 4, 1912 and housed the company bank. The first floor held the press and editorial offices of the local newspaper 'Sukhumsky Vestnik'.

The company was to become a vital support for many commercial operations, including the export of tobacco, tea, citrus.

During the Soviet period the Russian Drama Theatre was located there. During the Georgian-Abkhaz war (1992-1993) the building's interior and roof were completely destroyed.



photo 1999



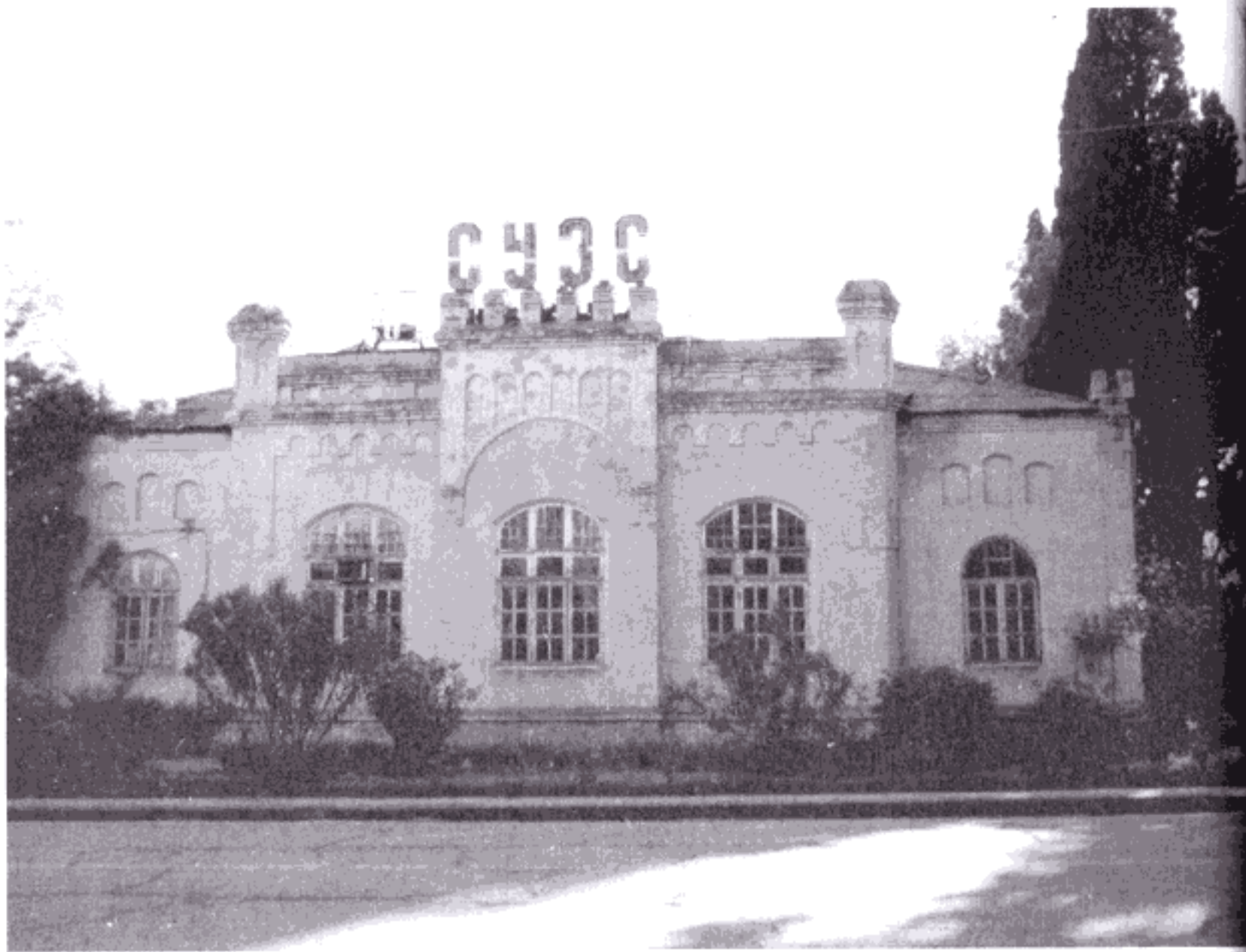


photo 1999

In 1907 a one-storied transformer building was built at the cross of Koliubiakinskaya and Inzhenernaya Streets (now 23, Leon Street - former Lenin St) for the Sukhum Electricity Company. It was designed by Ivan Begich.

In June the same year the company, headed by G.F. Nikitin and partnered by the engineer K.E. Andrievsky, began constructing a hydroelectric power station in upper reaches of the Basla River.

Until 1909 Sukhum had been lit by kerosene or gas, but by the end of that year it boasted one hundred street lamps, mostly installed at cross-roads. Electrification of the city was completed by May 1, 1909. Most parks, gardens, squares, the city market, landing stages, hotels, schools, hospitals and private houses were soon lit. Shortly afterwards small mills, factories and printing houses also began to use the electricity.

Today the building remains the central city electric power station.



photo 1924

In 1914 the 'Mir' Tobacco Company built an office at the cross of Koliubiakinskaya and Georgievskaya Streets (now 17, Leon Street - formerly Lenin St). The three storied building was large enough to accommodate K.I. Bauman's drug-store (now the city drug-store No 1), a library, Gogidzhnova's stationary shop, the 'Singer' sewing machine shop, and Shanshein's clothing shop.

During the Soviet period it became the 'Palace of Labour' then the Council of Soviet Deputies building. When in 1950 Sukhum was hailed as having the USSR's best civic amenities, Moscow Council presented the city with tower clock which was installed on the building's dome - which remains to this day.

Today the City Administration remains in this building.



## LAPTEV'S DACHA

40



photo 1899

In 1892 the rich but infirm Moscow citizen D.P. Laptev, came to Sukhum. Due to his subsequent recovery, Laptev built a splendid two-storied dacha on a plot on Podgornoe Shosse (now 2, Dagestanskaya Street), completed in 1896.

In 1901, soon after his death, his wife Anna Sergeevna developed it into a guest house (most of Sukhum's villas became guest-houses at one time). Then in 1904, as Chair of Sukhum's Red Cross Society, she turned it into a sanatorium for officers wounded in the Russian-Japanese war. From 1909 until 1917 Anna Sergeevna Shanshieva (the name of her second husband) redeveloped it as the Monrepo guest house.

At the present moment the dacha is a private house. The beautiful garden-park made by Laptev has disappeared.

## THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CONVENT

41



photo 1991

In 1888 a two-storied Russian Orthodox Convent was built on Olginskaya Street (now 8, Pushkin Street). The school offered further education facilities for graduates of the gymnasium school, as well as religious training for those wanting to become nuns.

At the beginning of the Soviet period it was converted into a hospital. By then Sukhum had a Russian primary school, a Greek college, an Armenian college, a Jewish college, a Georgian school, a private college belonging to V.E. Okorokova, and several others. Today the building stands vacant.



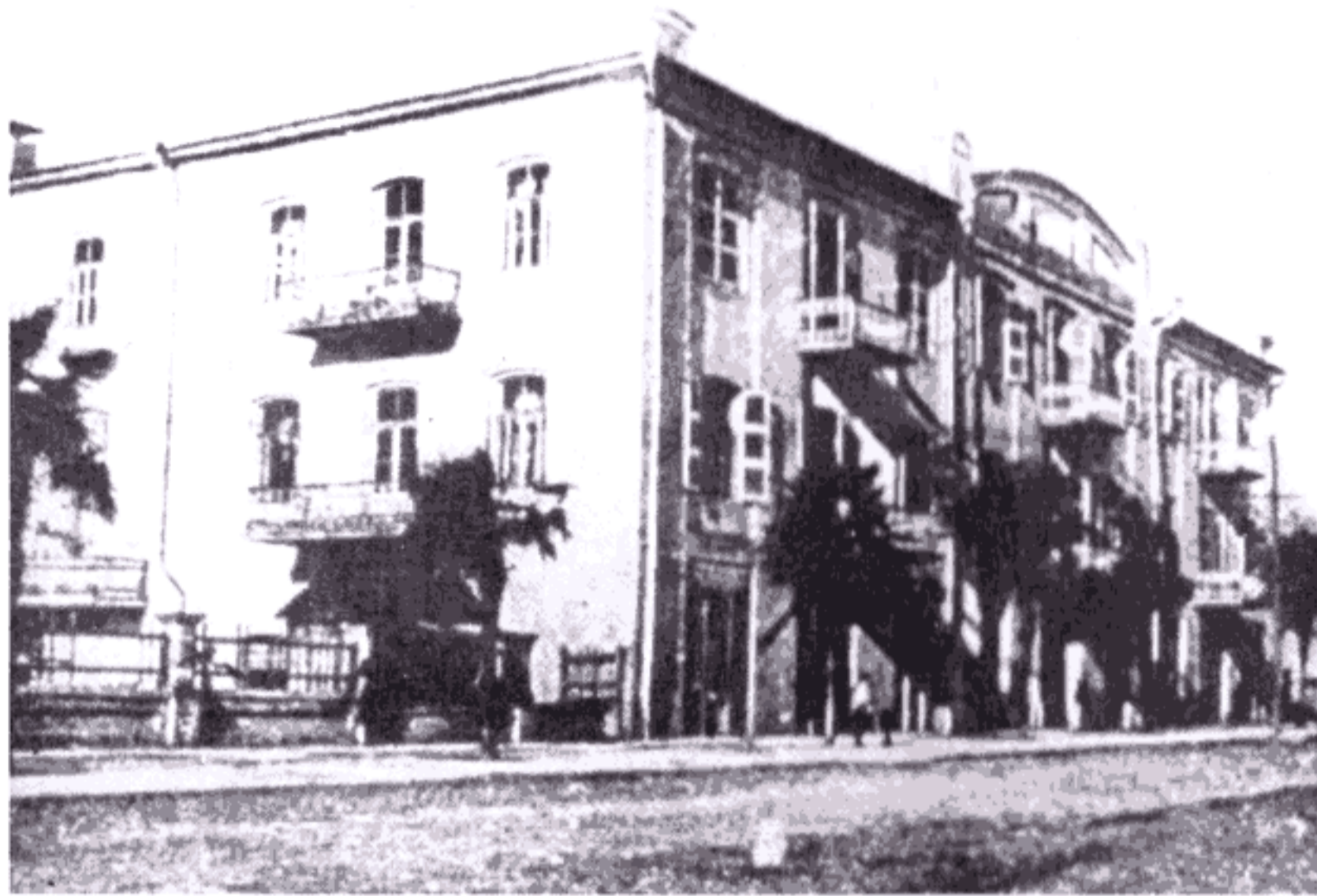


photo 1914

In 1907 the foundations were laid for a large building by the sea-front, situated at the corner of Mikhailovskaya embankment and Olginskaya Street (now 2, Pushkin St). The building was commissioned by the merchant Ioakim Aloizi (designed by Sarkisov) to become Sukhum's Grand-Hotel. The structure was finally finished in 1912. By then it had grown to include not only a comfortable 30 room hotel but a 670 seat theatre - built behind it.

The overall structure eventually included an expensive restaurant, casino, garage with car hire, the 'Olympia' cinema, and two shops. Additionally a roller skating-rink was built in front of the hotel. In 1921 the then 'Aloizi' theatre was renamed the State Theatre of Abkhazia, and in 1930 the Grand-Hotel took on the Abkhaz name the Bzyb.

In 1945 a fire ruined both the hotel and theatre. Its rebuilding in an eclectic, pseudo-Classical style was more imaginative than many Communist creations of the time. The architects were Kote Chkheidze and Misha

Chkhikvadze and the new theatre contained 800 seats. It re-opened on the 1st May 1950. Since then it has remained the Abkhaz Drama Theatre.



photo circa 1965



## THE ELLADA HOTEL

43

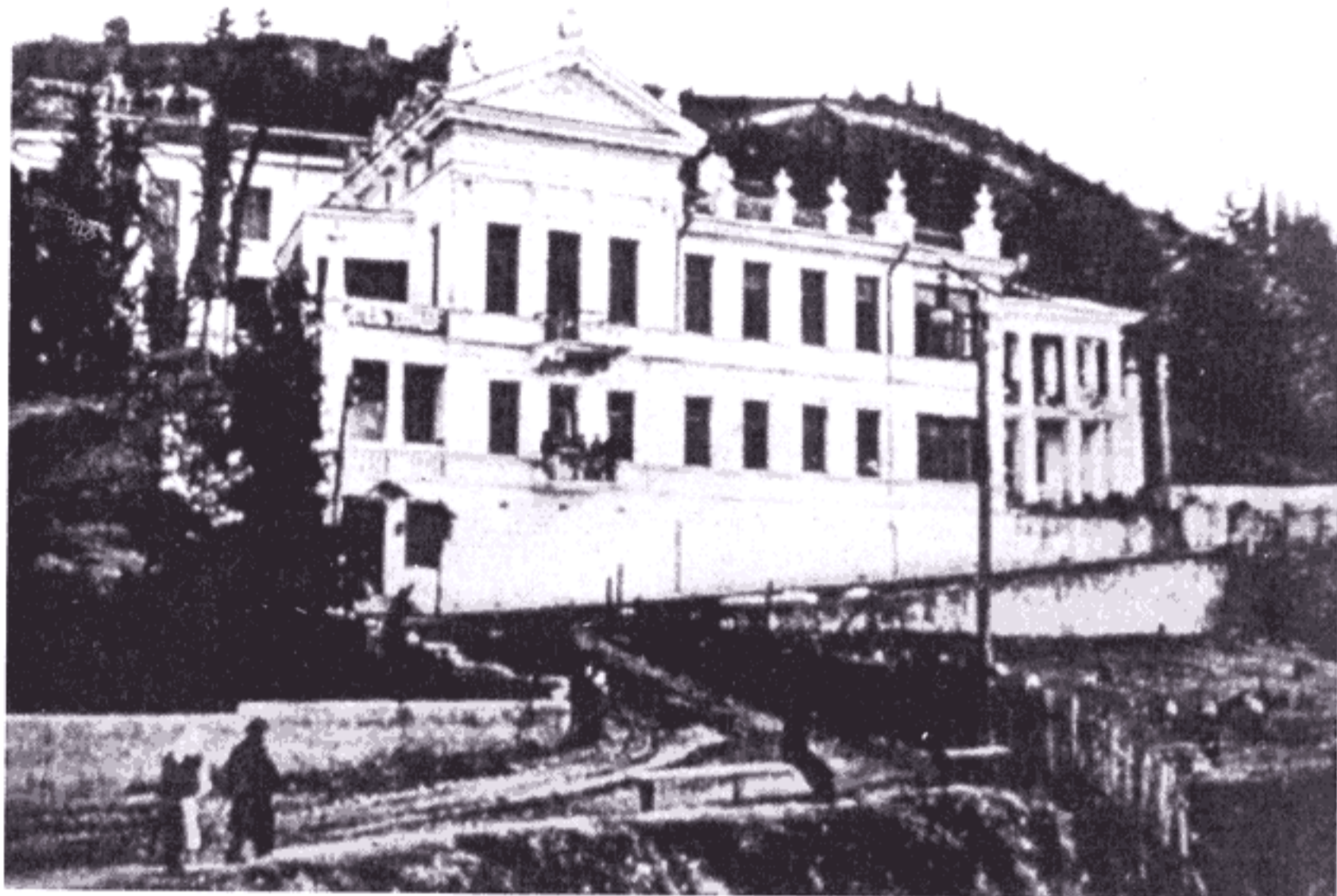


photo 1908

In 1907 a two-storied hotel was built in neo-Classical style, at 71 in Kurortnaya Street (now 11, Papaskiri Street). Commissioned by the merchant D.K. Komnino and his wife (Chairman of the Sukhum Charitable Society), it was designed by Sinitsin and named The Ellada.

The hotel could sleep 20 and cost 1-5 roubles per day. Full board and lodging ran between 45 and 100 roubles a month.

In autumn of 1916 the Teachers' Seminary took over the hotel and opened a small primary school, to give trainee teachers work experience. Prominent educationalists such as D.I.Gulia, N.S.Djanashia, M.T. Ranneft, P.A. Pravdivtsev, I.I. Zaporozhsky, and the dramatist S.Y. Chanba, gave lectures there.

At present the building houses the Kovach Musical School.

## SUKHUM CATHEDRAL

44



photo circa 1895

With the end of Ottoman domination, the Russian Orthodox Church was able to re-establish the Abkhaz Diocese in 1851.

In 1885 Abkhaz Diocese was divided into two regions. The first stretched from Novorossiisk in the north down to Pitsunda. The second from Pitsunda to the Inguri river, including one village in the Zugdidi district. The combined Diocese included over 100 churches.

In 1888 the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was erected in the centre of Sukhum-Kale. Over the years the building was expanded a number of times, the bell tower in particular climbed several stories. A small cemetery for priests and prominent figures was created beside the cathedral. In 1937 the Communists razed the Cathedral to the ground along with the cemetery.

In 1947 they replaced it with the Sukhum Philharmonic Theatre - which remains there to this day.



## THE BISHOP'S HOUSE

45



photo 1912

The process of building the Bishop's house beside the Cathedral in Koliubiakinskaya (now 22, Leon Street - former Lenin St) began its life by special decree of the Holy Synod of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1891. On August 27<sup>th</sup> 1891 His Grace Bishop Agafodor applied for permission to the City. On 21 September 1891 they allotted him a plot of land to the west of the Cathedral. The building was finished in 1897 and included the Diocese offices.

To the north of the house a small park and cemetery was also created.

When the Red Army arrived, they abolished the Orthodox Church in 1924. The Bishop's house was transformed into the Abkhaz State Museum. It remains as such today.

## SAMURIDI'S THEATRE AND 'NAUKA I ZHIZN' CINEMA

46



photo 1935

In 1912 a 'modern style' Art Nouveau theatre and cinema, was erected on Koliubiakinskaya Street. Commissioned by the merchant and Chairman of the Greek community Christopher Samuridi, it was designed by architect Alfred Banmaux. The theatre and cinema were called 'Samuridi' and 'Nauka i zhizn' ('science and life') respectively.

During the Soviet period the cinema was renamed 'Apsny.' In 1970 the Samuridi theatre was completely destroyed by fire. Excavations on the site produced a 12 centimetre statuette of the Greek goddess Demeter sitting on a throne.

Later the Georgian Drama Theatre was built in that location, now the Russian Theatre.



## THE SINOP DACHA OF PRINCE A.M. ROMANOV

47



photo circa 1900

In 1894 Prince Alexander Mikhailovich (grandson of the Russian Emperor Nikolai I) and his wife, Princess Ksenia Alexandrovna (the daughter of the Russian Emperor Alexander III) bought the 'Flora' dacha from Colonel Apolon Vedensky. This attractive dacha was built in 1872 and so called for the 10,000 young trees and seedlings cultivated there, many never seen in Abkhazia before.

Alexander Mikhailovich renamed the dacha 'Sinop' in honour of the Russian fleet's 1853 victory against the Turks in Sinop harbour. The royal couple collaborated with the German horticulturist Karl Brenner to develop the dacha's garden.

Previously, in 1886, Alexander Mikhailovich had bought a large plot of land (620 acres) at the mouth of the Machara river which he named 'Dioskuria.' He also created a second estate (2160 acres) not far from Gagra which he called 'Colkhida'.

The 'Sinop' garden became famous for its agricultural exhibitions and won many prizes. In the Soviet period the 'Sinop' garden, 'Dioskuria' and 'Colkhida' estates were turned into horticultural industrial estates producing a wide variety of seeds, plants and young trees.

In 1917, after the emigration of the Romanovs, the 'Sinop' dacha became the 'Sinop Holiday Camp.' It was destroyed in the Georgian-Abkhaz war.

## THE SINOP DACHA

48

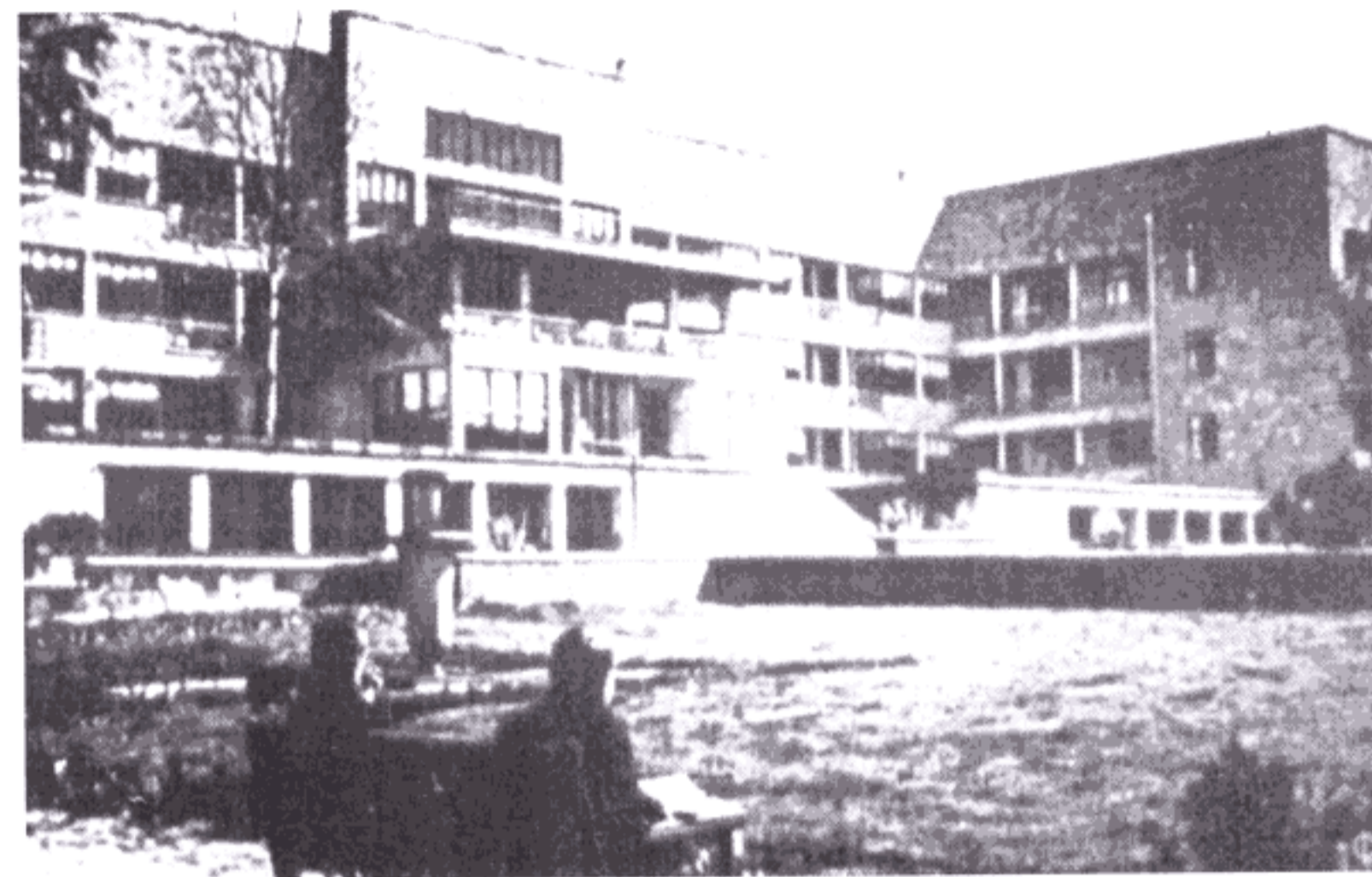


photo 1936

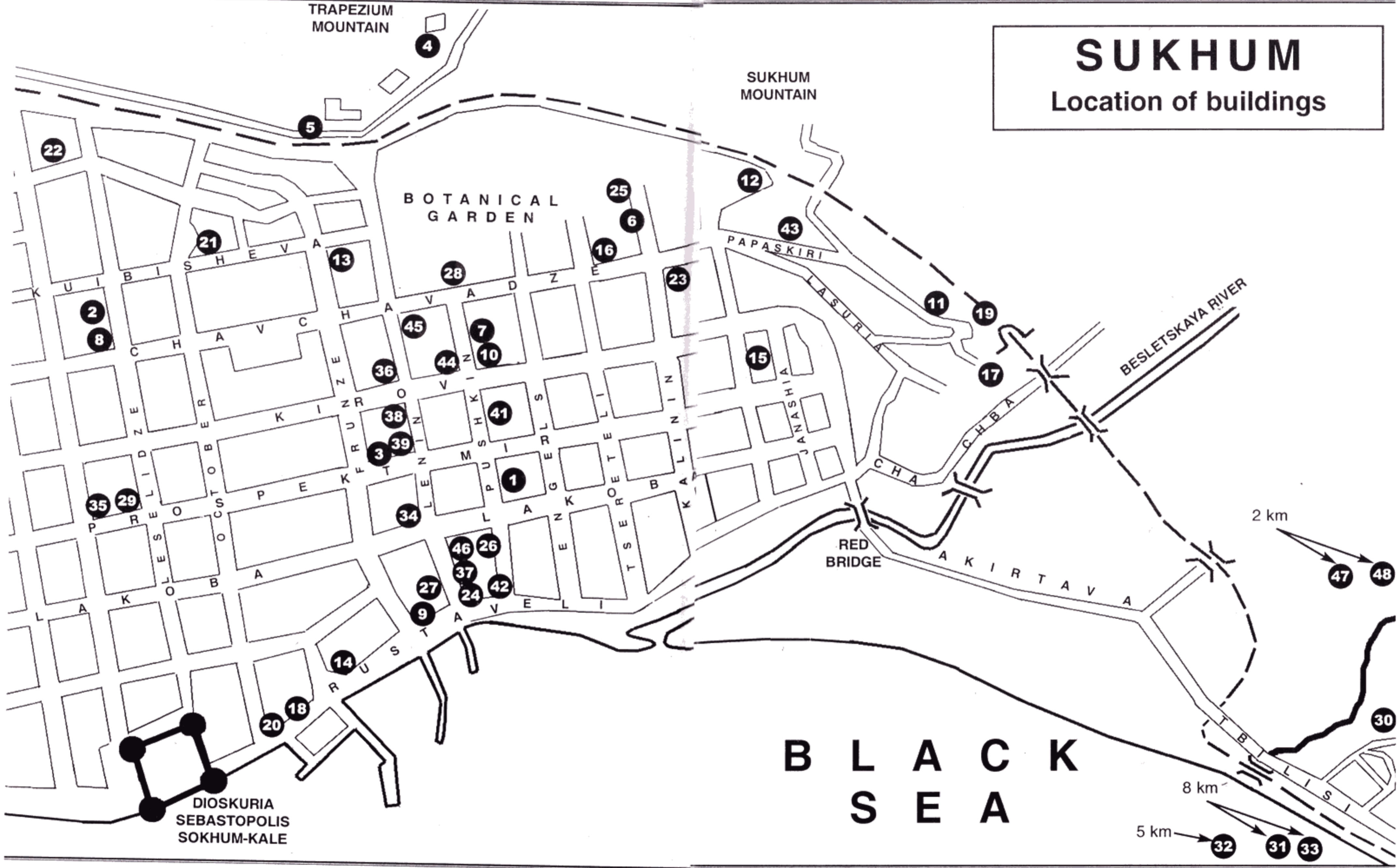
In 1933 a three-storied sanatorium was built on the 'Sinop' dacha land for the Central Executive Committee of CPSU using Armenian tuffa stone. The entrance was heralded by tuffa stone lions. In 1946 it became a hostel for captured German scientists working on the atomic bomb. After their departure from USSR in 1956 the building was used a domestic house for Soviet scientists at the Technical Institute of Physics. Today it is a private home.



TRAPEZIUM MOUNTAIN

SUKHUM MOUNTAIN

**SUKHUM**  
Location of buildings



DIOSKURIA  
SEBASTOPOLIS  
SOKHUM-KALE

**B L A C K  
S E A**

2 km

8 km

5 km

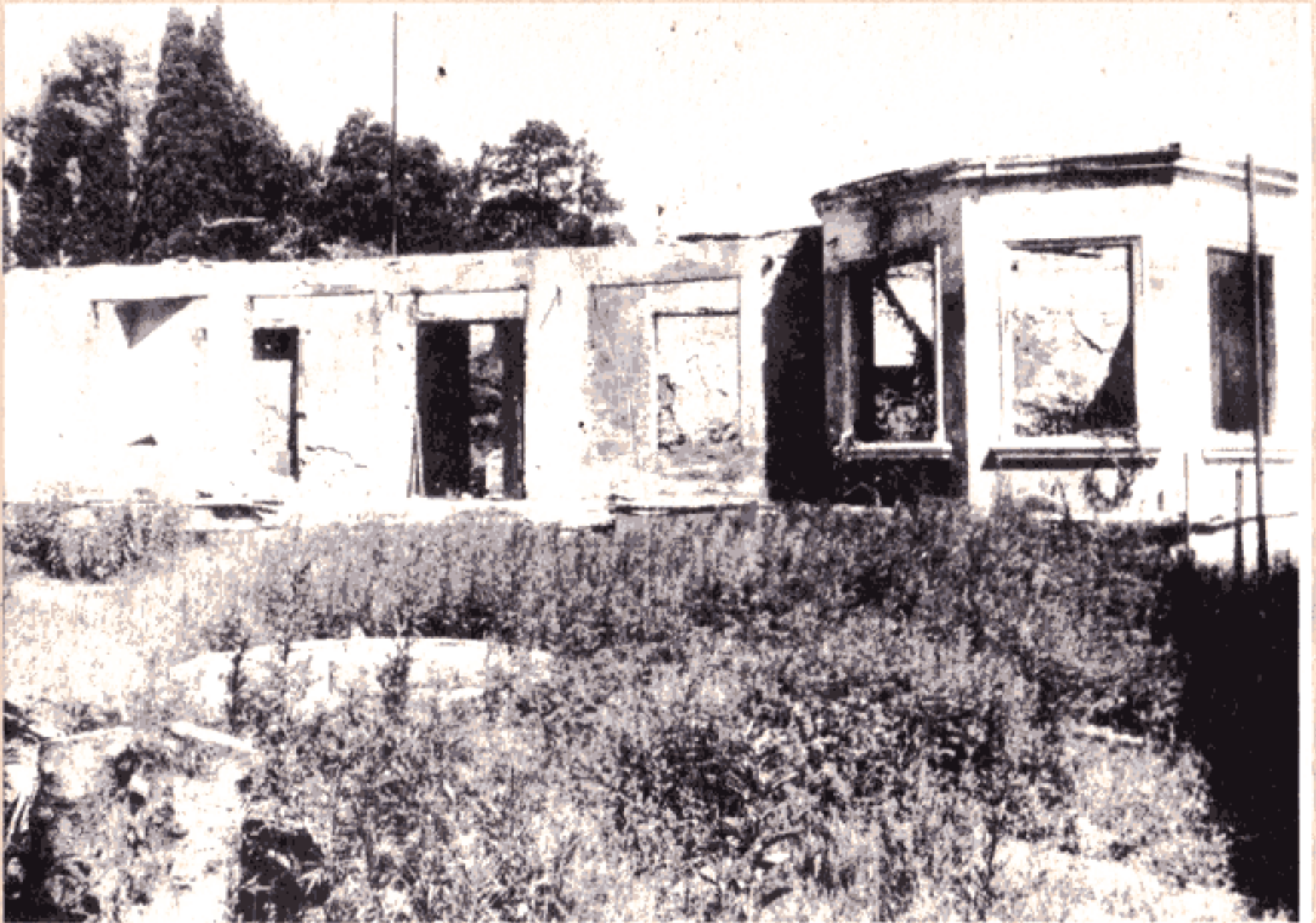


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Most of the buildings in the modern city of Sukhum, situated on the Caucasian Black Sea coast, were created around the turn of the century, during the heyday of Art Nouveau. What makes this city so unique is the influence exercised by the health professions on the city's design. Unfortunately in 1993 this elegant city suffered badly during the Georgian-Abkhaz war. This book is a historical record of some of the more interesting buildings, mostly before (and sometimes after) the assault of war.



***THE FRONT COVER*** photo (1991) shows the Anna Baskova Dacha (late 19th century), before the war. ***THE BACK COVER*** photo shows it in 1998.