

Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies
Center for Slavic and East European Studies,
University of California, Berkeley

The Geopolitics of Oil, Gas, and Ecology In the Caucasus and Caspian Basin

Saturday, 16 May 1998

The Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies and the Center for Slavic and East European Studies at UC Berkeley invite you to attend a conference entitled **The Geopolitics of Oil, Gas, and Ecology in the Caucasus and Caspian Basin**. This free, all-day public conference will take place in the Toll Room of the Alumni House at UC Berkeley on Saturday, May 16, 1998.

In the early 1990s, energy companies around the world began to realize the enormity of the still-untapped oil and natural gas reserves of the Caspian sea basin, despite decades of intensive Soviet exploitation of these resources. This realization soon ignited a scramble to develop new extraction and transport networks to bring these resources to the world market. At the same time, the two Caspian littoral states on whose territory the lion's share of these reserves are located, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, have formulated ambitious, long-term plans to use the anticipated windfall of "petro dollars" from these reserves to develop their economies and societies. As these plans have moved from the drawing board into the arena of public policy and new public-private energy consortiums, they have emerged as primary factors influencing negotiations over the region's complex political conflicts and ecological problems.

Our Conference will thus focus attention on the relation between energy policies, ecological problems, and regional political dynamics in the contemporary Caucasus and Caspian basin. As the scramble for access to Caspian oil and gas has intensified, the region has been unexpectedly transformed into a fulcrum of geopolitical interaction. Both Russia and the United States, for instance, have tried to influence the placement of pipeline routes in ways that complement each of these great powers' perceived national interests. Moreover, the United States has, for the time being, successfully steered companies and regional governments away from consideration of pipeline routes running through Iran. At the same time, the growing interest of Japan, Russia, the United States, and Western Europe in Azerbaijani oil has further complicated negotiations to resolve the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and between Georgia and Russia over Abkhazia. Finally, the conflict in Chechnya has undermined the Russian government's capacity to realize its policy goal of securing pipeline routes for Caspian oil and gas running through Russian territory. The geography of regional resource endowments and potential trade routes thus intersects in complex ways with the ethnic diversity and lingering political conflicts of the region.

All of these developments are unfolding against a backdrop of deepening ecological problems. The Black Sea is currently experiencing an unprecedented ecological catastrophe, a fact that has strengthened Turkish opposition to increased shipping of oil by tanker through the already heavily traveled Bosphorous Straits linking the Black and Mediterranean Seas. In Azerbaijan, the legacy of Soviet oil production has saddled that country with a number of lingering ecological problems, casting a shadow over plans for the intensified extraction of oil and gas on its territory. And the unresolved legal status of the Caspian seabed in international law has generated a host of regional tensions over rights to Caspian oil between states bordering the sea, underscoring the powerful effect of uneven resource endowments on both regional political conflicts and geopolitical dynamics.

Thus, on the eve of the millennium, the Caucasus and Caspian littoral have emerged as one of the globe's key regions. Indeed, the outcome of current struggles to influence regional energy policies will shape the long-term prospects for energy, ecological and political stability on a global level for decades to come. For all these reasons, we believe that our Conference is particularly timely and important. Please join us for what promises to be an exciting and informative event.

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Professor George W. Breslauer, Chair, Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies,
UC Berkeley, "Introduction"

Professor Terry Karl, Professor of Political Science, Stanford University
"State Building and Petro Revenues"

Professor David Hooson, Professor Emeritus of Geography, UC Berkeley
"Politics and Environment in the Caucasus and Caspian Littoral"

Dr. Robert Ebel, Director, Energy and National Security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies
(CSIS), "The Geopolitics of Oil in the Caucasus"

Dr. Onnic Marashian, Editor Emeritus, *Platts Oilgram*
"Pipeline Routes and Pipeline Politics"

Scott Horton, Esq., Partner, Patterson, Belknap, Webb and Tyler
"International Law and Ownership of the Caspian Seabed"

Michael E. Clayton, Program Director for Georgia, Initiative for Social Action and Revival (ISAR), "Oil and
Ecology in the Caucasus"

Dr. Igor Zevelev, Fellow, United States Institute of Peace and USA Canada Institute
"Russian Foreign Policy and Strategic Interests in the Caspian Region"

Dr. Michael Ochs, Advisor to the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington DC, "The
Congress and United States Foreign Policy Toward the Contemporary Caucasus"

*Funding for this conference has been made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation to the Berkeley Program
in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies and the US Department of Education Title VI Program of the Center for Slavic
and East European Studies.*