
New Evidence on the Iran Crisis 1945-46

From the Baku Archives

[The following documents were provided to CWIHP by Dr. Jamil Hasanli (Baku State University). Hasanli, who has conducted extensive research on Soviet policies with regard to Iranian Azerbaijan in the early Cold War, obtained these documents from the State Archive of Political Parties and Social Movements of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku. Only a sample of a much larger collection to be published in future issues of the CWIHP Bulletin and CWIHP Working Papers, these documents allow unprecedented insight into Stalin's systematic efforts to sponsor a separatist movement in Northern Iran. Some of the documents have also been consulted by Dr. Fernande Scheid (Yale University), who presented her findings for the first time at the September 1999 CWIHP Conference on "Stalin and the Cold War" at Yale University and who is the author of a forthcoming CWIHP Working Paper. Previous CWIHP publications on the subject, based on Russian archival materials, include Natalia Egorova, The 'Iran Crisis' of 1945-1946: A View from the Russian Archives (CWIHP Working Paper No. 15, Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997).

Hasanli contributed the documents in the framework of a new initiative on "The Caucasus in the Cold War," co-sponsored by the National Security Archive and CWIHP. The initiative aims at unearthing new evidence from archives in the Southern Caucasus on important Cold War issues, such as Stalin's plans for territorial expansion in 1945-46 with regard to Turkey and Iran; ethnic cleansing in the Caucasus in the context of Stalin's imperial calculations; "flashpoints" in the Southern Caucasus during de-Stalinization (e.g., Tbilisi, March 1956); and the collapse of the USSR (irredentist movements in Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia, and clashes between Soviet troops and nationalist protesters in April 1989 in Tbilisi and in January 1990 in Baku).

In a first step towards planing collaborative exploration of the archives, the "The Caucasus in the Cold War" initiative brought together some thirty Georgian, Armenian, Azeri, US and Russian scholars and archivists for a workshop in Tbilisi in October 2000 to discuss archival holdings and research agendas. Among the most noteworthy issues brought out by the discussion was the significance of inter-ethnic tensions in the immediate post-World War II period (which later exploded as the Soviet Union collapsed). Workshop participants also made clear that in Cold War historiography on topics such as the territorial disputes and war scares between Iran and Soviet Azerbaijan (1945-46) and between Turkey and Soviet Georgia and Armenia (1945-47), concurrent tensions within and among the Soviet Caucasus Republics during that period have often been overlooked. Placing regional ethnic and inter-republic tensions within the larger Cold War context will likely be a major theme of the new initiative. For further information on the Caucasus Initiative, contact CWIHP or Dr. Svetlana Savranskaya at the National Security Archive (phone: 202-994-7000).

Hasanli's work in the Azeri archives on the 1945-46 crisis first came to CWIHP's attention in connection with a National Security Archive project on "Iran and the Cold War." Together with the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), it was agreed to organize a series of workshops to gather sources and perspectives from various countries on the subject of "Iran, the Great Powers, and the Cold War." In September 1999, the National Security Archive organized a panel on the 1945-46 crisis at an Iranian studies conference in Tehran. This was followed in June 2000 by a major international conference in Tehran on the oil crisis of 1951-54, hosted by a new Iranian institute affiliated with the Foreign Ministry, the "Center for Documents and Diplomatic History." The conference agenda included the controversial overthrow (with U.S. and British intelligence support) of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq and the reinstatement of the Shah in August 1953. The meeting, which received wide media publicity in Iran, coincided with the leaked publication of a classified CIA history of the coup. It was at the June 2000 session that Hasanli presented his findings from the Azeri archives on the earlier crisis, and agreed to cooperate with the Archive and CWIHP on both the Iran and Caucasus projects. CWIHP is planning to publish Iranian documentation (translated from Farsi) on the 1945-46 Azerbaijan crisis obtained in Tehran, as well as further materials from the Baku archives, in future issues of the Bulletin. For further information on the Iran project, contact its director, Malcolm Byrne, by e-mail at mbyrne@gwu.edu or by telephone at 202-994-7000. –Christian F. Ostermann.]

DOCUMENT No. 1
Decree of the [USSR] State Defense
Committee No. 9168 SS,
Regarding Geological Prospecting Work
for Oil in Northern Iran,
21 June 1945

COPY

TOP SECRET

The State Defense Committee
 Decree of the GOKO [State Defense Committee] No. 9168SS
 of 21 June 1945
 Moscow, the Kremlin

Geological Prospecting Work for Oil in Northern Iran

With the objective of geological prospecting and drilling work for oil in northern Iran, the State Defense Committee DECREES:

1. Organize within the “Azneft” [Azerbaijani Oil] Association of the Narkomneft’ [the People’s Commissariat for Oil] a Hydrogeological Directorate and entrust to this organization the supervision of geological prospecting for oil deposits in northern Iran.

2. To conduct this prospecting work in northern Iran hold Narkomneft’ (Cde. Baybakov) and Azneft’ (Cde. Vezirov) responsible for supplying the necessary quantity of workers from the oil industry for drilling and prospecting teams and sending them to the place of work in the form of a hydrogeological detachment created in the staff of the Soviet troops in Iran (Qazvin).

3. Establish a mission for the hydrogeological detachment to conduct the following work in northern Iran:

a) Drilling

10 pumps in 7 areas, including 3 stationary pumps (deep rotary drilling) in the areas of Shakhi, Bandar-Shah, and Mianeh;

4 stationary pumps (deep structural search drilling) in the areas of Shah, Bolgar-Chay, and Khoy;

3 mobile drilling units for structural search drilling in the areas of Bandar-Shah, Shaha-Babol’ser, and Pahlavi;

b) Geological Survey – one expedition comprising 10 teams in the areas of: the Gorgan Steppe, Ashraf-Shaha-Amol’, Khorramabad, Bolgar-Chai, Jul’fa-Zanjan, Tabriz-Ardebil’, and Ku-I-Gitcha-Siyakh-Ku;

c) Geological Prospecting – one expedition of 3 teams (gravimetric “Issing”, variometric and resistivity prospecting) in the areas: Gorgan Steppe, Mazanderan and Rasht lowlands, and along entire southern shore of the Caspian Sea from the border with the Turkmen SSR to the border with the Azerbaijan SSR.

Hold the Narkomneft’ (Cde. Baybakov) and Azneft’ (Cde. Vezirov) responsible for transferring the required drilling and prospecting equipment by 1 September 1945 to conduct the work to the required degree and [for] beginning drilling and prospecting work in September of 1945.

4. Hold the Narkomneft’ (Cde. Baybakov) responsible for organizing and dispatching by 1 August 1945: a geological survey expedition of 10 teams; a well-logging and electrometer team; a geophysical expedition of 3 teams (gravimetric “Issing”, variometric ((2 instruments)) and resistivity prospecting) by removing these teams from the following regions: the gravimetric “Issing” [team] from Baku; the variometric [team] (2 instruments) from the Middle Volga Branch of the Narkomneft’ Geophysical Trust; the resistivity [team] from the area of Krasnodar.

5. With the objective of equipping the hydrogeological detachment with the necessary equipment, instruments, and material hold [the following] responsible:

a) the Narkomneft’ (Cde. Baybakov) is to allocate and ship to the Hydrogeological Directorate in August 1945: 5 sets of pumps, drilling equipment, and a rotary drilling instrument; 4 sets of ZV-750 frames, drilling equipment, and the instrument for them; 3 sets of rods (1200 meters) and an instrument for KA-300 pumps, and other necessary equipment and materials for the work of the hydrogeological detachment;

b) the Narkomvneshtorg [People’s Commissariat for Foreign Trade] (Cde. Mikoyan) is to allocate to the hydrogeological detachment in June-July 1945 15 tractors and 120 trucks from imports from the unassembled ones in Iran;

c) the Commanding General of the Transcaucasus Front, Cde. Tyulenev, is to allocate to the hydrogeological detachment the necessary office space and living quarters in Qazvin and at work locations, and also render aid with personnel from military units in assembling the 120 vehicles allocated to the hydrogeological detachment;

d) the USSR NKO [People’s Commissariat of Defense] (Cde. Vorob’yev [Marshal of Engineer Troops, M. P., Chief of Engineer Troops of the Soviet Army]) is, by 1 August 1945, to transfer to the disposition of the hydrogeological detachment in Iran two complete AVB-2-100 mobile drilling units in working order: a drilling machine AVB-2-100, a ZIS-5 water tanker, a 1.5 ton vehicle with an instrument and one

UA-125 frame with three drilling teams;

e) the USSR NKO ([General of the Army, Chief of the Rear of the Soviet Army] Cde. Khrulev) is to send to the hydrogeological detachment in working order 5 MAK 12-ton vehicles, 7 logging truck trailers, and 15 Willys vehicles, and also provide for the repair of drilling equipment and automotive transport in repair shops of the Soviet transport directorate in Iran.

6. Hold the Commanding General of the Transcaucasus Front, Cde. Tyulenev, responsible for rendering aid to the hydrogeological detachment in drilling and geological prospecting work [by] providing a guard force, an escort for the expeditions, providing cartographic materials, and also providing personnel of the hydrogeological detachment with clothing and appropriate documents.

7. Hold the Narkomfin [People's Commissariat of Finance] (Cde. Zverev) responsible in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 1945 with allocating to the Narkomneft' 8 million rubles, including 2,400,000 in rials for the Hydrogeological Directorate of the Azneft' Association to obtain transport equipment and materials and for the maintenance of personnel.

8. Permit the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR to issue permission for entry into Iran of personnel sent by the Narkomneft' and the Azneft' Association for the business of the Hydrogeological Directorate.

9. Confirm as Chief of the Hydrogeological Directorate Cde. Melik-Pashayev, V. S.; Chief of the Hydrogeological Directorate in the staff of the Soviet troops in Iran; Cde. Geydarov, N. G.; and as Deputy Chief of the Hydrogeological Directorate Cde. Kornev, A. N.

10. Hold Narkomneft' (Cde. Baybakov) and the Azneft Association (Cde. Vezirov) responsible for personally exercising control over the supply of the hydrogeological detachment with personnel, engineering and technical workers, and provisioning with equipment and materials to carry out drilling and geological prospecting work in northern Iran.

11. Hold the Secretary of the CP(b) CC of Azerbaijan, Cde. Bagirov, responsible for rendering the Hydrogeological Directorate of the Azneft' Association all possible aid and observing the geological prospecting work for oil in northern Iran.

Chairman of the State Defense Committee
I. Stalin

Attested: [not signed]

[Source: State Archive of Political Parties and Social

Movements of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku (GAPPOD AzR), f.1, op. 89. d.104. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli. Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]



DOCUMENT No. 2
Decree of the Politburo of the
Central Committee (CC) of the Communist
Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) to
Mir Bagirov, CC Secretary of the Communist
Party of Azerbaijan,
on "Measures to Organize a Separatist
Movement in Southern Azerbaijan and Other
Provinces of Northern Iran,"
6 July 1945¹

TOPSECRET

To Cde. Bagirov

Measures to Organize a Separatist Movement in
Southern Azerbaijan and Other Provinces in Northern Iran

1. Consider it advisable to begin preparatory work to form a national autonomous Azerbaijan district [*oblast'*] with broad powers within the Iranian state.

At the same time develop a separatist movement in the provinces of Gilyan, Mazandaran, Gorgan, and Khorasan.

2. Establish a democratic party in Southern Azerbaijan under the name "Azerbaijan Democratic Party" with the objective of guiding the separatist movement. The creation of the Democratic Party in Southern Azerbaijan is to be done by a corresponding reorganization of the Azerbaijani branch of the People's Party of Iran and drawing into it supporters of the separatist movement from all strata of the population.

3. Conduct suitable work among the Kurds of northern Iran to draw them into the separatist movement to form a national autonomous Kurdish district.

4. Establish in Tabriz a group of responsible workers to guide the separatist movement, charging them with coordinating [*kontaktirovat'*] their work with the USSR General Consulate in Tabriz.

Overall supervision of this group is entrusted to Bagirov and Yakubov.

5. Entrust the Azerbaijan CP(b) CC (Bagirov and Ibragimov) with developing preparatory work to hold

elections in Southern Azerbaijan to the 15th Convocation of the Iranian Majlis, ensuring the election of deputies who are supporters of the separatist movement on the basis of the following slogans:

- a) Allotment of land to the peasants from state and large landowning holdings and awarding long-term monetary credit to the peasants;
 - b) Elimination of unemployment by the restoration and expansion of work at enterprises and also by developing road construction and other public works;
 - c) Improvement of the organization of public amenities of cities and the public water supply;
 - d) Improvement in public health;
 - e) Use of no less than 50% of state taxes for local needs;
 - f) Equal rights for national minorities and tribes: opening schools and publication of newspapers and books in the Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Armenian, and Assyrian languages; court proceedings and official communications in local institutions in their native language; creating a provincial administration, including the gendarmerie and police, from local national elements; formation of regional, district, and city enjuments [and] local self-governing bodies.
 - g) Radical improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations.
6. Combat groups armed with weapons of foreign manufacture are to be created with the objective of self-defense for pro-Soviet people [and] activists of the separatist movement of democratic and Party organizations.
- Entrust Cde. [Nicolai] Bulganin together with Cde. Bagirov with carrying out this point.
7. Organize a Society for Cultural Relations Between Iran and the Azerbaijani SSR to strengthen cultural and propaganda work in Southern Azerbaijan.
8. To draw the broad masses into the separatist movement, [we] consider it necessary to create a "Society of Friends of Soviet Azerbaijan" in Tabriz with branches in all regions of Southern Azerbaijan and Gilyan.
9. Entrust the CC CP(b) of Azerbaijan with organizing publication of an illustrated magazine in Baku for distribution in Iran and also three new newspapers in Southern Azerbaijan.
10. Commit the OGIZ [State Publishing House](Yudin)

to allocating three flat-bed printing presses for the use of the CC CP(b) of Azerbaijan to create printing resources [tipografskaya baza] for the Democratic Party of Southern Azerbaijan.

11. Commit the Narkomvneshtorg [People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade] (Cde. [Anastas] Mikoyan) with providing good paper for the publication of the illustrated magazine in Baku and also the three new daily newspapers in Southern Azerbaijan; the total press run is to be no less than 30,000 copies.

12. Permit the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR, under the observation of Cde. Bagirov, to issue permission for departure to Iran and return from Iran of persons being sent on business connected with putting these measures into effect.

13. To finance the separatist movement in Southern Azerbaijan and also to hold elections to the 15th Convocation of the Iranian Majlis; to create in the CC CP(b) of Azerbaijan a special fund of one million foreign-currency rubles ("for conversion into tumans").

6 July 1945
CC VKP(b) Politburo

[Source: GAPPOD AzR, f. 1, op. 89, d. 90, ll. 4-5. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli. Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]



DOCUMENT No. 3
Secret Soviet Instructions on Measures to
Carry out Special Assignments throughout
Southern Azerbaijan and the
Northern Provinces of Iran,
14 July 1945

Strictly Secret

Measures to carry out special assignments throughout Southern Azerbaijan and the northern provinces of Iran

I. The Question of Creating the Azerbaijani Democratic Party

1. Immediately organize [the] transport of Pishevari and Kombakhsh to Baku for talks. Depending on the results of the talks keep in mind [the] transport to Baku of Padekan [sic! "Padegan" in other documents], the Chairman of the District Committee of the People's Party of Azerbaijan.

2. To create organizing committees in the center (Tabriz) and elsewhere [*na mestakh*], within a month select candidates from authoritative democratic elements from the intelligentsia, middle-class merchants, small and average landowners, and the clergy in various democratic parties, and also from non-party members and bring them into the organizing committees of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party.

The first priority is to create an organizing committee in Tabriz which, via the existing democratic press *Khavar Nou*, *Azhir*, *Dzhodat* and others, will publish an appeal to organize an Azerbaijani Democratic Party and print leaflets.

3. With the appearance of the appeal, initiative groups elsewhere will speak out in the press in its support and create Azerbaijani Democratic Party committees from the most active organizations of the People's Party and other democratic organizations and elements.

Do not permit a mechanical renaming of organizations of the People's Party to committees of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party. Recommend that the Tabriz district committee and its local organizations of the People's Party discuss the appeal of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party, decide to disband the organizations of the People's Party and enter its members in the Azerbaijani Democratic Party.

4. After establishing the organizing committee of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party in Tabriz the first priority is to create local committees of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party in the following cities: Ardebil', Rezaye, Khoy, Mianeh, Zanjan, Maraghe, Marand, Mahabad, Maku, Qazvin, Rasht, Pahlavi, Sari, Shakh, Gorgan, and Mashhad.

Send representatives of the central organizing committee to organize the committees in these cities. Systematically place positive responses and calls to join the Azerbaijani Democratic Party in the democratic press.

5. Create a press agency in the organizing committee of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party in Tabriz under the name "Voice of Azerbaijan".

6. Organize the drafting of programs and a charter for the Tabriz organizing committee.

II. Ensuring the Election of Deputies to the 15th Convocation of the Majlis

1. Begin talks with deputies of the Majlis who are supporting them during the elections to the Majlis for this convocation with the object of nominating these deputies to the 15th Convocation under the condition that they fight for the implementation of the slogans of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party.

2. Begin work to nominate candidates for deputy to the

Majlis from democratic elements who would fight for the implementation of the slogans of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party.

3. Review the list of deputies recommended by the Embassy in light of [these] new tasks.

4. Organize a broad popularization of the selected candidates for election to the Majlis in the press and their contacts [and] meetings with voters.

5. Support meetings, demonstrations, strikes, and the disbanding [*razgon*] of electoral commissions unsuitable for us with the objective of ensuring our interests in the elections.

6. In the process of preparing for the elections, compromise and expel from the electoral districts of northern Iran candidates nominated by reactionary circles [who are] actively operating against the candidates of the democratic movement.

7. Demand the replacement of unsuitable reactionary-minded leaders of local bodies [*vlasti*].

III. Creation of the "Society of Friends of Soviet Azerbaijan"

1. In the matter of organizing the "Society of Friends of Soviet Azerbaijan", use the delegates participating in the jubilee celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Azerbaijan SSR.

2. Recruit the workers of our consulates, military commandants, and their active [Party] members into the organization of the Society.

3. The organizing group of the "Society of Friends of Soviet Azerbaijan" in Tabriz is to draw up the charter of the Society.

4. To widely attract the population to the "Society of Friends of Soviet Azerbaijan", use the press to systematically illustrate the achievements of the economy, culture, and art of Soviet Azerbaijan and the historical friendship of the peoples of Southern Azerbaijan and the peoples of Soviet Azerbaijan.

IV. The Organization of the Separatist Movement

1. Organize work to develop a separatist movement to create: an Azerbaijani Autonomous District [and] a Kurdish Autonomous District with broad powers.

In Gorgan, Gilyan, Mazandaran, and Khorasan provinces organize the separatist movement along local [*korennyye*] questions, in particular:

in Gilyan Province:

The organization of public services and amenities in the cities of Rasht [and] Pahlavi, leaving no less than 50% of the tax proceeds collected from the province for this purpose;

in Gorgan Province:

Study in the native Turkmen language in the schools; replacement of the local organization, gendarmerie, and police with Turkomans, leaving no less than 50% of the tax proceeds collected from the province for public services, amenities, and health in Gonbad-e-Kavus, Gorgan, and Bandar Shah.

in Mazandaran and Khorasan Provinces:

1. Return of land to small and average landowners taken by Reza Shah (amlyak lands).

2. Leaving no less than 50% of tax proceeds collected from the province for public services and amenities of the cities of Sari, Shah, Mashhad, and New Quchan.

Additionally, bring to light locally such questions so as to organize a separatist movement in the above provinces.

Raise the demand to conduct land reform not only in Southern Azerbaijan but in [regions] regions of the northern provinces of Iran.

V. Organization of Enjumens

1. After creating the organizing committees of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party at the same time as work is conducted to elect deputies to the 15th Convocation of the Majlis, develop a campaign to organize enjumens, using the electoral enthusiasm of the population for this purpose.

VI. Organization of Press Organs

1. To organize all the agitation work via the press, establish a publishing house for new magazines in the cities of Rasht, Rezaye, and Mahabad in addition to the existing newspapers.

[illegible signatures]

14.7.45

[Source: GAPPOD AzR), f. 1, op. 89, d. 90, ll. 9-15. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli. Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

¹ See also the top secret 11 June 1945 draft decree of the CC CPSU for "Measures to Organize a Separatist Movement in Southern Azerbaijan and Other Provinces of Northern Iran." Handwritten across the upper left-hand corner: "One copy for Yemel'yanov." Distribution: 1-2 Cde. Molotov; 3-4 Cde. Bagirov; 5- Cde. Kavtaradze.