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*Jabi A. Bahramov**

HISTORY OF AZERBAIJAN'S CASPIAN OIL PRODUCTION (1825-1949)

Xülasə

Məqalə 150 ilə yaxın bir dövr ərzində Xəzər dənizi suları təkində neft yataqlarının praktiki olaraq aşkar edilməsi, XIX əsrin əvvəllərindən başlayaraq dənizin Bibiheybət və Pirallahı bölgələrindən kустar üsulla çıxarılmasından başlayaraq, XIX əsrin sonunda bu məqsədlə irəli sürülən layihələr, Bibiheybət bölgəsində XX əsrin 20- ci illərinin sonuna qədər görülmən işlər və neftin hasil edilməsi, 1944-cü ildən başlayaraq SSRİ dövlətinin və respublika hökumətinin qəbul etdiyi qərarların həyata keçirilməsi və o cümlədən 1949-cu ildə Xəzərdə Neft Daşları yatağının istifadəyə verilməsi məsələləri tarixi xronoloji ardıcılıqla öz əksini tapmışdır. Müəllif zəngin faktiki materiallar və indiyədək elmi dövriyyəyə cəlb edilməmiş yeni arxiv sənədləri əsasında problemin elmi həllinə nail olmuşdur.

Açar sözlər: Bibiheybət buxtası, “Mərdəkan dəniz” yatağı, G.A.Helkvist

Резюме

Статья посвящена истории открытия морских нефтяных месторождений, первым попыткам добычи нефти кустарным способом на Биби-Эйбатском участке моря и на острове Пираллахи в 20-30 годы XX века, а также решениям Советского правительства по сдаче в эксплуатацию морских нефтяных месторождений с 1944 по 1949 гг.

Автор при написании статьи использовал фактические материалы инеопубликованные архивные источники.

Ключевые слова: Биби-Эйбатская бухта, месторождение «Мардакян море», Г.А. Хельквист.

Further expansion of oil production in the world caused emergence of new engineering ideas in the development of the Caspian Sea oil fields in Northern Azerbaijan and the spread of various projects in the world. It should be noted that for the first time in the world, offshore oil extraction is the name of the Bibiheybat Bay not only in Northern Azerbaijan but also around the world. Thus, oil extraction from thesea started in Bibiheybat in Baku between 1803-1829. In the Bibiheybat side a largewooden well was built to extract oil from the very nearest sea. However, strong wavesof the sea destroyed these wells and oil production was stopped. In 1824-1825, Bakuresident Haji Gasim bey Mansurbeyov extracted 3-4 barrels of oil a day from wells inthe sea 20 to 30 meters offshore at Bibiheybat port, but the wooden fences around thewells collapsed as a result of strong sea pressure [10, p.16]. Since then, nowork has been done in this area. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the idea of extracting oil from the depths of the Caspian Sea again became widespread. About 20 projects were submitted to the State Commission during this period.In 1896, Polish- born engineer V.K. Zglenitski (1850-1914) proposed an unusual method for the

* Ph.D, Assoc.prof., Institute of History named after A.A.Bakikhanov, djabibaxramov@mail.ru 0000-0003-0692-9016

operation of offshore oil fields, but his proposal was rejected. For this purpose, he appealed to the Baku Governorship and the State Property Administration of Dagestan asking him to leave two areas of the seabed for drilling oil exploration, but he refused. However, in the article 15 of the Journal of Oil Business (Neftyanoy delo No. 15, 1900), Z. Zglenitski pointed out Surakhani, Gala, Gum Island, Bozdag, Lokbatan, Shikh, Karachukhur and other oil fields and added yet, "the islands with signs of rich oil fields and the bottom of the Caspian Sea remain." [13, p. 64]. Referring to the factual data obtained, Zglenitski again appealed to Petersburg in 1900 and tried to prove the possibility of producing oil in the said areas. The Tsarist government creates an appropriate commission to review its proposals. Zglenitski's project envisioned the 200,000-pound floating tank that would be absorbed oil in the event of a fountain. The author of the project suggested to be placed 24 oil wells in each desyatin area. Drilling was planned to be carried out with the help of electricity. It was supposed to be cemented from below of the well for laying of a pipe to a well (which would play some kind of iron cession) and entering no water through the layers into the well. However, although the commission notes the advantages of many of the provisions of the project, it considers that its implementation is impossible due to technical difficulties and does not accept the engineer's proposal. In addition, the commission also relied on this important legal fact that it is not possible to start this work because the country's approved mining charter does not provide for exploration in the Caspian Sea. However, despite the rejection, in 1900 the tsarist government decided to go the simplest way - to fill the bay with soil and get 300 acres of fresh oil fields. This version of the sea fillings meant that the newly formed land area would form a single coastline. The attitude of the Bibiheybat to fill the Gulf came from the fact that the Gulf was surrounded by as much ground and rock as it could. Although 800 entrepreneurs wanted to buy land at that time, there were only 300 areas for sale. Each tenant of the area had to pay 120,000 rubles. It should be noted that in the second half of the 19th century - early 20th century, one of the areas where most oil wells were drilled was that oil came from the surface of the water. An oil exploration team is set upon the initiative of oil wells entrepreneurs, and a decision has been made to distribute the 200 hectares of land is intended to dry, among 54 entrepreneurs in 1902. In 1906, an international competition is being held to fill the area under consideration, and although there are 16 projects from different countries, none of them is accepted by the competition committee. Drying of the oil part of the sea was started in 1909, and in 1911 the work with the stone was completed. It should be noted that in 1910, oil businessmen of Baku invited Paots Nikolayevich Pototski (1874-1932), a Polish national, to fill the gulf. At that time, Pototski was directing the construction of the Kherson-Ochakov canal. P. Pototski, who accepted the invitation, came to Baku and worked here for more than 20 years. Till 1918, 193 hectares of 200 hectares of land were filled, and by the end of 1920 the total area of the filling land had been increased to 203 hectares [8, p. 110-111]. According to the decision, the gulf should be covered with large stones from the sea side, and the area where water is not available should be gradually filled with soil. A special car - a caravan set - was ordered from the Russian Sormovo factory to carry out this work. This set of machines consisted of 2 grounding machines with a capacity of 1,100 horsepower, 5 ships, and other objects. Technical equipment began to be assembled in 1910, but the machine set was only ready for use in 1916. The construction of the breakwater stone dam was completed in 1912, and after that the earthworks were started. By the year 1917, \$ 5 million was spent for refilling the Gulf. Refilling the sea for the development of oil fields in the Gulf of Bibiheybat was the only event in the world practice. Bibiheybat Bay Drying Technology itself was a very valuable work. During these years the work on replenishing the Bibiheybat bay was accelerated. But at that time, affliction took place. So, the engineer who managed this work, Pavel Nikolayevich Pototsky, was blind after a serious illness. Nevertheless, he exhibited great determination and business, and in 1922 he prepared an unusual and courageous project for the drying up of another 27 ha of the sea. The drilling of wells in dried areas continued as well as ground work in the bay proceeded to the sea. On May 14, 1922, gas was spilled from the first well drilled in a field. The first tube of oil drilled well entered into the mouth of the mud volcano and did not produce oil. This fact has become a serious obstacle to the

further development of the Gulf. Serious arguments have arisen in this regard - oil from the sea or not? As a result, on February 18, 1923 the well № 5 drilled in the bay, provided oil with a powerful fountain. Soon it was started to extract oil from new wells the numbers of 23, 27 and 2 with volumes of 50-100 thousand tons daily [8, p. 111]. The commissioning of these wells has laid the foundation for the development of oil fields in the depths of the Caspian Sea. The first oil fountain to gush from the land-filled maritime area has amazed the world, and this event has been described as a major event at the International Oil Congress. In addition, four more drilling machines were put into operation. Shortly afterwards, P.N.Pototsky prepared a 79-hectare land-filling project in the bay, which was successfully implemented. The courageous and perfect P.N.Pototsky's projects were welcomed commendably by leading experts of the country. In 1930, the drying of the Bibiheybat Bay in a total of 360 ha was completed. It should be noted that F. Rustambayov also took an active part in the refilling of the Bibiheybat Bay. In the area of 300 hectares for development from the area of 360 hectares filled with soil during the period from 1923 to 1935 15 million tons oil was extracted from only the top layer of the fertile layer [8, p. 111]. In the following years, when evaluating the drying of the Gulf by N.S. Timofeyev and V.Malik-Pashayev, it became clear that oil fields stayed to the sea from the wavy site, and the drying of 90 ha was not needed. It should be noted here that for the first time in the world, the production of oil from the well No. 61, built on artificial islands at the sea - the Bayil harbor, was a powerful impetus for the exploration of oil and gas fields in various areas of the Caspian Sea. The first such groundwork was laid to the east of the dried area of the bay at 270 meters from the shore and 6 meters deep in the open sea, with an area of 948 square meters and length of 55 meters [9, p. 101]. (The Americans installed the sea bed from the first wooden pole only in 1937 in the Gulf of Mexico - 1500 meters from the coast at a depth of 4 meters - J.B.). Creating artificial islands for seawells - beds was not a laborious and costly job, but was less effective for marine conditions, because it required to put poles very tight (1 to 2 m) to a large area where equipment and auxiliary facilities could be located (there were about 30 poles per square foot). The poles were thrown to the bottom of the sea by means of a special rolling mechanism (kopyor) mounted on the barge. Between 1926 and 1927, the wells pumped about 714,000 tons of oil a year. Later, in 1932-1933, two more foundations were laid, and after drilling a number of exploration wells, it became clear that the oil fields were beyond the Bibiheybat bay, filled with soil in 1932. In 1926, S.A.Kovalevski put forward a proposal to study the Caspian Sea Oil Rocks, and in 1930, on the initiative of geologists G.A.Hamburtsev and V.V.Fedinski, and with the participation of a number of local geophysicists, the exploration of marine geophysical methods was carried out. In 1931, as a result of the electro-exploration work in the Caspian Sea, the area of the Bibiheybat deposit was specified, two new offshore fields, the Mardakan Sea and the Gum Sea, were discovered and both fields were drilled [11, p. 38].

It should be noted that using the methods of electro-exploration, the tectonic position of the vast coastal part of the sea from the Caspian Sea part of the Russian Federation to the Gaza Strip in 1933-1935 was studied [11, p. 38]. In 1939-1940, the scope of deep exploration and exploration in the Caspian Sea was limited, with the outbreak of war in 1941, it was completely stopped. However, only in 1940 3 million tons of oil was extracted off the coasts of the Bibiheybat and Pirallahi of the Caspian Sea. However, it is also true that all drilling operations in the Baku oil region was stopped by the decision of the State Defense Committee of the USSR on the North Caucasus in 1942 due to the severe situation on the Stalingrad front and the threat of Hitler, and most enterprises were moved with their colleagues to the Turkmenistan SSR and Kuybyshev and Saratov provinces of RSFSR. There were S.A.Vazirov, S.A.Orucov and A.A.Zamanov from Azerbaijan SSR among the authorized representatives appointed by USSR SDC for carrying out intended works here. First of all, this opinion is unanimously confirmed by archival documents. So, if 100-189 people were employed in the Azerbaijan Oil Industry by June 1, 1941, by October 1, 1943, their total number would be 64,842, which was 64% compared to the pre-war period. By October 1943, the number of mobilized people from the oil industry to the Soviet army was 30,595, and the number of specialists relocated to the

eastern regions of the country was 10,695 [5]. Another point to note here is that Hitler's military plans included not only destroying the Baku oil region but also committing acts of sabotage and diversion. In this regard, Russian researcher Felix Chuyev wrote on page 174 of his work "Soldatı imperii" ("Soldiers of the Empire" – J.B.) that "a woman from one of the closest relatives of fascist ideologues Dr. Rosenberg, with the direct help of the secret members of the Dashnaksutun party operating here, is employed as an employee of the military enterprise's chemical laboratory in Baku. However, it is well known to be aware reconnaissance agencies of USSR that on the eve of the attack of Nazi Germany to the USSR, the German reconnaissance-sabotage groups were placed in Iran near the USSR-Iran border. 7 kilograms of potassium-cyanide poisoning were seized during a search by a group of Azerbaijani reconnoiter led by Colonel V.S.Ryasnoy in the home of Rosenberg's relative, who was employed to the Baku military chemical plant." [15]. The main purpose of the German reconnaissance, which placed Dr. Rosenberg's relative at the hands of the Armenians at this military chemical enterprise, was to capture the Baku oil fields, as well as destroy the urban population through this poisonous substance. Fortunately, this anti-human plan developed by German-Armenian fascism failed. After removal the threat of occupation of the Baku oil region, in 1944-1949 seismic surveys were conducted in the north of the Absheron Peninsula, from Amiga point to Alat, Chilov Island and Oil Rocks District. It should be noted that Suleyman Vazirov, Baba Babazadeh and Rustam Rustamov were named the Hero of Socialist Labor by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for their great service in the continuous supply of fuel and fuel products and for the development of the country's oil industry [11, p. 38]. At the end of 1945, 739,000 tons of 11 mln. 493,600 tons of oil, produced in Azerbaijan SSR, was extracted from offshore oilfields [11, p. 38]. In 1946-1949 the USSR AS Azerbaijan Oil Expedition investigated the marine sediments in the Baku Archipelago, and as a result in 1947 discovered the "Gurgandenis" oil and gas field. Therefore, the post-war period can be characterized by extensive exploration and development of offshore oil fields for the Azerbaijani oil industry. It should be noted that during the war, a number of important scientific achievements were made in the field of geological exploration in Baku. One of these was discovery of seismic methods of exploration in the sea and oil fields at different depths by the Azerbaijan Oil Expedition in 1944, led by geologist Aghagurban Aliyev. Up to 1944 in the USSR and some other countries around the world, drilling rigs were installed on steel poles 30-40m deep. However, this method was laborious, expensive and seasonal. On September 24, 1944, the All-Union Competition for the invention of basis structures for drilling wells was announced. In 1945, oil-engineers Y. Safarov, S. Guliyev and R. Shishenko proposed tube assembled and disassembled construction method for offshore beds. This block construction ensures quick installation of the drilling rig under any weather conditions. This units, large blocks were made at factories, which accelerated the installation process. In 1946, the first large-block drilling rig for bore on the open sea was constructed in the Gorgan-Deniz oil region (near Baku), and the methods of construction and rapid construction of bores for onshore and offshore drilling oil wells were developed. The Soviet government, which paid great attention to the post-war recovery of the country's disintegrated economy during the war, has been working hard to put into operation the oil fields discovered in the Caspian Sea since 1946. Large loading crane vessels for the installation of block towers and bore equipment on the sea, construction crane vessels for the installation of bridges (racks), and special platforms for the assembly of rigs in the shortest time were designed and commissioned. Also, enterprises for the production of anti-abrasion-proof metal structures and the Caspian Sea Fleet were established. Since 1947, for the first time in the world, the construction of metal racks at sea has begun. In the same year, from the method used for the first time in the country to drill holes in different directions, later was widely used in the development of other oil fields (including Western Siberia). On November 14, 1948, towing ship called "Pobeda" (Victory) of Captain Ajdar Sadikhov's, who had big sailing experience in the Caspian Sea after the war, approached to the coast of rocky islands, which were badly-named between sailors and local fishermen. Also, on the towing ship were geologist A. Aliyev, drilling specialist Y. Safarov and head

of "Azerneft" exploration association S.Orucov. In December 1948, a construction crew was shipped for the first time by the "Transportnik" (Carrier) boat from the "Pirallahi" island to the "Black Stones" and they were able to prepare 14 m² of living space with for the drill brigade. Then the construction of the drilling rig was started. It is impossible not to touch a very important point here. Thus, the attitude towards oil extraction from the Caspian Sea was ambiguous. Documents stored in the funds of Archive of Political Documents of the Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, give such an idea that despite the existence of rich oil and gas deposits in the Caspian Sea, there were conflicting positions on the use of these resources. It should be noted that after the war of 1941- 1945 all the infrastructure of the south-central and north-western regions of Russia Ukraine, Belarus, Baltic states and Moldova was destroyed. The total damage to the country amounted to 679 billion rubles. As a result of the war, 1,700 cities and towns, 72,000 villages were destroyed, 65,000 km the railway line and 32,000 industrial facilities were destroyed and 35 million people were left homeless [14, p. 9]. The loss of the USSR during the war of 1941-1945 was 29,000,000,000 million, of which 12,000,000 were military and 17,000,000 were civilians [14, p. 9]. To restore all this, a huge amount of material resources and energy were needed. To this end, in 1946, the central government of the former USSR developed and adopted a five-year plan to rebuild the country's economy in the years 1946-1950 to reverse the damage caused by the war. It should be noted that during the war, the territory of Azerbaijan SSR was not the site of military operations, but the people of Azerbaijan were taking on the burden of war. If in 1940 the total population of the republic was 3 million 303.1 thousand, 700,000 of them were mobilized, and as a result, in 1945 the total population declined by 17.65% to 2 million 705.6 thousand people [7, p. 94-96]. Here, looking at official archives and statistics, it is clear that the 700,000 mobilized people from the Azerbaijan SSR in 1941-1945 did not return 626,000 of them after the war ended. It turns out that the vast majority of those mobilized to the front were dead, missing, and never returned. If in 1941 the number of workers and servants employed in the economy of the Azerbaijan SSR was 456,000 in October 1940, in September 1945 this figure had declined to 31,800 (Народное хозяйство Азербайджанской ССР, 1980). It should be noted that the restoration of the territories devastated by the war began before the liberation of those territories. For this purpose, as mentioned above, considerable energy resources were required. But it is also true that by the end of 1942 many Azerbaijani oil industry departments had been moved to the area to organize the commissioning of new oil and gas deposits discovered in the eastern regions of the country. The severe economic and military conditions created by the war did not allow the organization of work in those areas as soon as possible. The Azerbaijani oil industry remained the main fuel phase of the country. If by June 22, 1941 the daily oil production in the Azerbaijan Oil Industry was 69,686 tons from 7237 operating oil fields using 216 drilling rigs, the total oil production would be 23.5 million tons. But in 1943 the situation was completely changed. So, by November 1, 1943, using 25 drilling rigs, the total daily volume of 5,015 mines was 34,430 tonnes, which was expected to be 12.7 million tonnes per year [1, p. 18-30], p. 7). In addition, during that period A.Mikoyan was secretly carrying out anti-Azerbaijani propaganda among the members of the USSR SDC, which it was aware the head of the Azerbaijani SSR M.J.Bagirov. Therefore, in November, 1943, in the most difficult and fateful moment of the war, the project of 42 pages "Letter to the name of Stalin and the resolution on oil of SDC (duties for 1944-1945)" to I.Stalin and, as well as a letter to the Council of Ministers of the USSR – to the name of L.Beriya by secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan M.J.Bagirov were sent for providing the front with uninterrupted fuel and saving the people of Azerbaijan doubtlessly [1, p. 18-30], p. 1-42). In the paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 11 of the section I "Geological exploration and drilling works" of draft resolution "On measures to increase oil production in the Azerbaijani oil industry in 1944-1945" adopted by the USSR SDC implementation of specific activities for commissioning of offshore oil fields in the Absheron peninsula was decided [1, p. 18-30], p. 16-17-18). To this end, the USSR SDC adopted a special decision on measures to increase oil production in Baku (ARPIISSA fund 1, list 232, file no. 3, p. 18-30). According to the decision, Azerbaijani oil workers will not only increase the production capacity of the oil industry of

the republic, but also rebuild pre-war infrastructure in these areas, particularly in the Ukraine, RSFSR's North Caucasus, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Turkmenistan SSR and other oil regions, they had to discover and put into operation new oil fields. To this end, volume of allocated funds in the five-year plan for the recovery and development of the oil industry in Azerbaijan was 4740 million, this was 20.7% of total capital investment in the former USSR oil industry [7, p. 94-96]. The issue of discovering and using new oil fields to meet the country's needs in oil products was in the focus of government agencies. In the territory of the Azerbaijan SSR, both onshore and offshore oil fields explored and put into operation as Buzovna- Mashtaga in 1945, Gurgan Sea in 1947, Hovsan, Umbaki in 1948-1950, and Oil Stones in 1948-1949, Darwin Bank in 1950-1951. In order to expand the scope of geological exploration and commissioning of new oil and gas fields, the Union of "Azneftkeshfiyyat" (Azneft intelligence) was established by the decision of the USSR government in late 1947 [7, p. 94-96]. As shown above, the geological prospecting in the 1944-1947 section of the Caspian Sea Oil Rocks, of engineer-geologist Agagurban Aliyev was successful, and in February 1948 a group of oil workers was sent here. After Aghagurban Aliyev, Baba Babazade, Sabit Orujov, AliAmirov, Suleyman Vezirov, Yusif Jafarov, Anvar Alikhanov, Alekper Suleymanov, Fuad Samadov and other specialists proved scientifically the presence of rich oil deposits in this part of the sea, the government of the republic provided comprehensive assistance to oil workers. In fact, the main purpose of the Caspian oil fields operation was to create a powerful fuel base for the rehabilitation of the devastated territories of the country, which had suffered severe losses from the war, and the creation of new economic areas. Despite the strong forecasts of Azerbaijani oil scientists and geologists, at the level of the leadership of the former USSR Ministry of Oil Industry, claims were raised that had no scientific or substantive basis, to prevent the creation of a new and promising economic sector in the Azerbaijan SSR. The main premise of the allegations is that the Absheron Peninsula and the Caspian sector of Azerbaijan do not have oil and that there is no need to create new oil industry fields. The nature of this groundbreaking claim, and why it has become a subject of debate at the highest level of government, has been of particular interest. Acquaintance with archival documents confirms that, on the eve of the commissioning of the "Oil Rocks", the adviser to the former Minister of Petroleum of the USSR N.R.Baybakov in 1948 A.G.Helkvist (August Germanovich Helkvist, a Soviet citizen of Sweden, worked in various positions at the Azneftkombinat in the 1940s. Since 1947 he has been the referent of N.K.Baybakov. He is assumed to be associated with the Nobel family – J.B.) invites Azneft's chief geologist, B.G.Bazazade, to Moscow. At a meeting with the senior officials of the oil industry in Baku on July 29, 1954, with the participation of N.R.Baybakov, Minister of Oil Industry of the USSR, Mr. Babazade remembers his meeting with A.G.Helkvist in 1948: "We focus our attention on the offshore fields, because we did not have any other resources besides the Absheron fields. I would like to bring to your attention an important issue at a meeting of activists held here. For reasons unknown to me, A.G.Helkvist opposed the use of offshore oil fields and wanted to stop the work at sea and in Absheron. I met with him while in the ministry in Moscow and he asked me how we were doing. He was no longer the chief geologist, but was the minister's assistant. He invited me into his office and said during a conversation with me that I have said so long and I repeat that there is no oil in the sea. Let's write a letter to Baybakov, the minister, to destroy the work on the sea, because nothing is there. That was in 1948. At the time, the development of offshore exploration was on the agenda. I told him that I could not do this because I fully believe that there are rich offshore oil fields. Helkvist told me that the rich oil fields are in Kirovabad (Ganja – J.B.) and Shamakhi. Why do I say this? Because for a long time, Helkvist was trying to forward Bagirov to Kirovabad and Shamakhi." [2] It is necessary to say that the head of the republic takes up this issue and called the Minister N.K.Baybakov and demanded that he not "put his nose" in the oil business of Azerbaijan, expressing very harsh words. In June 1949 preparations for the first well drilling on the island began; For this purpose (for the purpose to create an operating site for drilling on the island – J.B.) the ship "Chvanov" has been brought to the island and submerged at the required point. In 1949-1951, six additional ships, removed from the balance of "Khazartanker"

(Caspian Tanker) and “Khazardonanma” (Caspian Fleet) enterprises (it is assumed including the well-known Zoroaster ships of the Nobels among them), were brought to the island and submerged in half to protect the island from wind and waves and artificial gulf was created. Boats and warehouses of ships are used as a dining room, medical center, bedrooms and other purposes for drill brigade members. Thus the artificial “Seven Ships Island” is being created here. In the following years, this work is still underway and the total number of ships sinking around the island reaches 20. On August 24, 1949, for the first time in the world, the first well began drilling on a small island in the middle of the open sea 60 km away from the coast by the brigade of master Mikhail Kaverochkin. On November 7, 1949, a well with a depth of 1,100 meters gush an oil fountain with a daily oil output of 100 tons [9]. The second well drilled by another oilman Gurban Abbasov, the Socialist Labor Hero, and with the same production figures, was put into operation in the first half of the 1950s. Thus, in 1949, the legendary Oil Rocks field was discovered, which gave impetus to the development of offshore oil production not only in Azerbaijan but also in the oil producing countries of the world.

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