

# The 'Soviet connection': Heroin from Afghanistan reaches the West

from *Investigative Leads*

On May 27, 1986, in the Dutch port of Rotterdam, the Soviet cargo ship *Kapitan Tomson*, coming from the Soviet Baltic port of Riga, steered for its berth at the Unitcenter dock in the Waalhaven section of the harbor.

The ship had made this journey many times, attracting little notice, except from the merchants and businessmen awaiting their freight. But this time, the Narcotics Squad of Rotterdam's harbor police anxiously awaited its arrival. Two containers the stevedores would remove had papers showing that they contained raisins. But among their contents, the police found at least 220 kilos of heroin that had come from Soviet-occupied Afghanistan.

That heroin was the largest seizure in the history of European anti-narcotics work. From Afghanistan, the heroin had traveled through the Soviet Union to the Baltic port of Riga, where it was placed aboard the *Kapitan Tomson*. On May 30, the ship's crew  
The Soviet origin of the ship was never mentioned in the Dutch—or any other—press.

The hardest evidence yet of Soviet involvement in narcotics trade did not come to light for over two months. The story did not come out until a German magazine, *Krieg dem Rauschgift (War on Drugs)*, stirred up a hornet's nest in the Netherlands, while following up a report issued by Italian High Commissioner for Investigating the Mafia, Riccardo Boccia, on the Soviet connection to this drug seizure.

The story was then picked up by the Amsterdam *De Telegraph*, the largest-circulation daily in the Netherlands, Aug. 18. The appearance of this story then prompted Dutch Christian Democratic parliamentarians Hans Gualtherie van Weezel and Dr. van den Bergh to submit a series of parliamentary interrogatives, demanding to know why information was withheld from the public, and calling for the government

to come forward with whatever information it had about Soviet involvement in drug trafficking in the Netherlands, as well as in other Western European countries.

But no international inquiry has been called. And few journalists have deemed the incident a subject worthy of "investigative journalism." The Dutch police have told the press that they have no Soviet citizens under investigation, nor do they suspect any Soviet involvement in the heroin shipment, claiming the shipping containers had been sealed in Afghanistan by the smugglers without the knowledge of Soviet authorities.

Why this conspiracy of silence? Why the need to deny even the hint of Soviet participation, when there is enough information to trace the *Kapitan Tomson* directly to Soviet secret intelligence services.

## Golden Crescent to Red Square

The story begins in the sparsely populated mountains of Afghanistan, a region that forms, together with its neighbors Pakistan and Iran, the so-called Golden Crescent, the source of hundreds of kilos of heroin that end up in Western Europe and the United States.

The Soviet Union has 125,000 troops in Afghanistan, who have been conducting a Vietnam-style war of attrition against stubborn mountain tribesmen. It is reported by investigative journalists that these same tribes resisting the Soviets are responsible for opium trafficked into Pakistan, where it is refined into heroin or morphine base and shipped out via Karachi, or via a complex overland route through Iran and Turkey, then to Bulgaria into Italy, or into Northern Europe on Bulgarian TIR trucks. Arms and ammunition travel the same route, in reverse.

Yet the maps of the hills and valleys of the opium-grow-

ing regions along the Hilmend and Kuna rivers, show that the areas are deep inside the lines of the Soviet mechanized rifle divisions, and, in some cases, the areas border the Soviet Union itself.

According to a Dutch journalist who recently returned from Afghanistan, poppy production in the province of Mangahar has increased from 4,200 kilos to 17,500 kilos. And, according to a report in the French daily *Le Figaro*, these regions are not far from poppy-growing regions in the Soviet Union. The same report indentifies the Soviet Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tadzhikstan, as well as further west in the Transcaucasian republic of Georgia, as the two major Soviet domestic poppy-growing regions.

Golden Crescent heroin is trafficked to the major international cities by criminal organizations that are neither Afghani nor Pakistani. In many cases, as many as two or three different organizations are responsible for securing shipments as large as the Rotterdam haul.

The shipment could pass through as many as 10 countries. This drug traffic is intimately tied into the illegal arms trade, terrorism, and other types of smuggling. In this traffic, a crime organization does not send a buyer to Afghanistan or Pakistan to buy heroin. According to sources in an international anti-narcotics agency, they "put in an order," apparently with an intermediary organization. These same sources claim that this crucial intermediary link has yet to be discovered.

The Rotterdam police who have investigated the *Kapitan Tomson* case claim they have no knowledge of how the heroin was transferred from the isolated mountain-based laboratories to Kabul, where it was put into shipping containers with 30 tons of raisins. But, a review of the route of the *Kapitan Tomson* shows that the Dutch heroin smugglers managed to make a direct connection, and to ship "express" through the Soviet Union, via a "normal" state-directed trade route.

Unlike the normal commercial shipping route, through Karachi or overland through Iran, Syria, or Turkey (which could become very complicated and dangerous, for a cargo worth nearly \$20 million), this route is exceedingly simple. Everything is handled by Soviet state transport companies, since no foreign transport companies are allowed to operate inside the Soviet Union. Moreover, within Afghanistan, all commercial shipments by rail or truck are guarded by the Soviet Army, or if air freighted, flown on military aircraft.

Statements by shipping agents contacted in Rotterdam conflict with the claim of the "normalcy of this route." Rather, it is said that freight transshipped through the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, must pass through Leningrad, where it is put onto cargo ships and directly expedited to Rotterdam.

And, according to Lloyds Ship Information, the *Kapitan Tomson* had only recently been on a route that took it from the European ports of Riga, London, Rotterdam, and Aarhus, northern Denmark, to the Greek port of Piraeus, the Syrian

port of Latakia, to Beirut and the Turkish ports of Mersin, Iskenderun, as well as the Cypriot port of Limassol. The route corresponds with one of the most notorious guns-for-drugs routes known by security experts.

Did this, the largest heroin shipment ever seized in Europe, travel nearly 5,000 kilometers through the heart of Mother Russia, unbeknownst to Soviet authorities?

We have no fingerprints to prove official Soviet involvement, since no Western drug-enforcement agency has a liaison with Soviet authorities, but we do possess a motive for Soviet involvement—the destabilization of the "decadent West," as commentator Peter Gillies of the conservative West German newspaper *Die Welt* wrote in August 1986:

Free nations have become accustomed to a lot in the way of East bloc "exports": Spies, disinformation, terrorism, peace movements, and weapons are "exported". . . . In South America, communist terrorists work together with drug dealers. . . . At the same time, pro-détente politicians in the West are anxiously trying to prevent anyone from getting the impression that a destabilization led by a dictatorship is under way. . . . It will be interesting to see how Soviet authorities try to justify their smuggled heroin wares. Is state terrorism, which has left so many tracks in blood, to take on a new dimension?"

### Italy breaks the story

Riccardo Boccia, Italian High Commissioner for Investigating the Mafia, was the first to publicly reveal Soviet involvement in the Rotterdam case when, in early July 1986, he released a report before a joint U.S.-Italian anti-terror and anti-narcotics commission that included U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese.

Boccia made a very clear case for Soviet involvement, revealing not only that "for the first time, we have proof that drug traffickers of Soviet citizenship" were involved, but also the existence of a top-secret KGB directive "M-120/00-050," outlining Soviet plans to use the drug trade to destabilize the West. A copy of this directive, plus 399 other Soviet KGB-related documents, was handed over to Western intelligence services on Feb. 10, 1971, by a former high-ranking officer of the Bulgarian Secret Services, codenamed Stefan Svedlev, after he escaped from Bulgaria in 1971.

Commissioner Boccia explained that the Soviet drug war started in 1967, the year Yuri Andropov took over the KGB, at a meeting in Moscow of the Warsaw Pact Security Service chiefs, whose purpose was to develop plans to "exploit and hasten the inherent corruption of Western society."

A subsequent meeting of Bulgarian Secret Service officials in Sofia, Bulgaria established a three-year "action plan" to implement the "exploitation." Defector "Svedlev" said that Directive M-120/00-050 was issued in June 1970, in assessing the progress of the plan to "destabilize Western

society through . . . the narcotics trade."

Boccia's report again fingered Bulgaria as "a big open door for the narcotics traffic." Bulgaria, one of the Soviets' most obedient satrapies, implicated in the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in May 1981, is acknowledged by U.S. agencies as a key to the dope-for-arms business.

According to a report from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bulgarian government's export-import agency Kintex, founded in 1968, is the KGB-directed "umbrella organization which orchestrates the trafficking of narcotics and weapons contraband through Bulgaria." Kintex was involved in the big Stipam arms-for-drugs bust in Milan on Nov. 23, 1982. The Stipam case provided a map of the intersection of anarchist/leftist and neo-Nazi terrorism, Iranian gun-running, and drug traffic into Western Europe.

### Russia's Kintex?

A key link in the chain of the Rotterdam case is Transworld Marine Agency Company, the Benelux shipping agent of the *Kapitan Tomson* and agent responsible for two containers from Afghanistan to Rotterdam. Transworld Marine links Soviet state shipping companies to leading trade interests in Antwerp, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam, Europe's most cosmopolitan and wealthiest ports.

The workings of this company will reveal the other motivation for the drug trafficking: the prospect of wealth and the power that such wealth provides.

Transworld Marine was founded in 1969 as a joint venture between two of the Soviets' most important freight-shipping companies, the Moscow-based Sovfrach and Sov-

inflat. Also involved are the Latvian Steamship Co. of Riga, the Baltic Steamship Co. of Leningrad, the Murmansk Steamship Co. of Murmansk, and the commercial empire of Pierre Stoop of Antwerp.

Transworld Marine manages an empire, particularly within the port of Antwerp, whose most vital role is to supply all the needs of Soviet ships entering Benelux ports. This is no minor task since, each year, nearly 1,300 Soviet ships enter the port of Antwerp and the same number enter the port of Rotterdam. The Soviets are the third most important user of these ports in tonnage, as well as number of ships.

Transworld Marine also appears to service the needs of Soviet intelligence, since at least three employees of Transworld Marine and other Soviet companies in Belgium were expelled for espionage in the 1970s.

The key man in Soviet-Benelux business relations is Pierre Stoop. In addition to representing shipping interests, he was president of the First Class Soccer team of Braschaat-Antwerp, sponsored by the Soviet-Belgian oil company Nafta.

The Stoop family was crucial in putting together a "closed circuit" of companies that gives the Soviets independent control of all aspects of their shipping. With offices on Italielei, where many of the leading harbor companies are headquartered, Pierre Stoop and family have created; in addition to Transworld Marine, the following nexus of Soviet entities:

Allied Stevedores, storage and stevedoring, one of the largest in Antwerp; Belgium Bunkering and Stevedoring, which fuels all Soviet ships; Nafta NV, the Soviet oil company; Teveco NV, trucking and container repair; Sobelmarine, a ship-chartering agency.



*Opium from Afghanistan (shown here) makes its way to the cities of the West, like the port of Rotterdam, where a Soviet ship was recently seized, carrying 220 kilos of heroin—the largest bust in the history of European anti-drug efforts.*

These firms are linked to:

Ferchimx NV, the sole distributor of Soviet chemical products; Elorg-Belgie, the Soviet electronic distributor, whose former director, Vladimir Khlystov, was expelled from Belgium in 1976 for alleged spying.

The Soviet-linked diamond company, Russelmaz, is also based in Antwerp, the heart of the international diamond market, where the commodity often is used to pay off agents.

These Stoop-Soviet companies are primarily linked to Banque Bruxelles Lambert, as well as to Banque Paribas, two of the leading banks that represent many of the oligarchical interests that form the core of "Dope, Inc." in Europe.

According to a former member of the Soviet trade office in Brussels who defected in 1971, Anatole Tsjebotariiev, there were no less than 33 Soviet KGB or GRU agents operating out of various Soviet missions and related corporations based in Belgium—headquarters for NATO, SHAPE, and the European Community.

In addition to the expulsion of Khlystov in 1976, one Kroegliakov, a functionary of Transworld Marine, was expelled and declared persona non grata. In 1973, KGB agent Sjemetov was arrested in front of Transworld Marine offices on the Schoonbekeplein, near Falconplein—the latter known as "Red Square," because of all the Russian shops located there.

In 1976, it is reported that Transworld Marine transferred 40 million Belgian francs to the Soviet shipping agent in Lisbon, Liouty, as payment to the Portuguese Communist Party. According to Dutch security sources, the density of Soviet espionage operations in Belgium led the Dutch government to try to curtail the expansion of Soviet commercial action in Rotterdam and Antwerp. But Transworld Marine was able to open in Rotterdam, due to heavy pressure from the harbor companies eager to share in the profits.

Transworld Marine is now in the process of buying its own dock facility in Rotterdam, which would, in effect, give them "free port" status. Ships would not be subject to customs checks if the stated cargo was not being unloaded in Holland.

Thus, espionage is carried out through a network of commercial operations in which shipping companies provide cover for transferring funds and agents can depend on logistical support. Through the diamond trade (in which the Soviets, as the only producers besides South Africa, are key), payments are made to spies.

It is also from this base in Antwerp and Rotterdam (not coincidentally, NATO's most important ports of entry for military equipment), that the Soviets coordinate their efforts to monopolize international shipping—driving Western companies bankrupt by undercutting prices.

In the classic style that began in the 1920s, with Cheka chief Felix Dzerzhinsky's "Trust B" operation, these Soviet maneuvers are at the same time making many Western "capitalists" very rich, while forming an excellent logistical base for international drug trafficking.

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## Dope, Inc. in Ibero-America

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# Narcotics mob gains in Central America

by Gretchen Small

"Cocaine Sinks Its Claws In the Country" warned *La Nación*, the leading newspaper of San José, Costa Rica, on Nov. 23, 1986. The article opened a 15-part series on Costa Rica's drug connection, reporting the results of three months of investigation. *La Nación's* message is stark: The narcotics mob threatens to seize control of Costa Rica's economy and political system.

*La Nación's* series attacks any illusions that the narcotics empire is a secondary security threat in the Western Hemisphere, limited primarily to the Andean nations and the Caribbean. *La Nación* makes some mistakes in its analysis of the drug trade in the area, but the scope of the narcotics problem in Costa Rica that the paper presents must set alarm bells ringing in Washington. While the United States has hung its Central American policy on Nicaragua's Contras, the drug trade—in which both the Sandinistas and Contras are prominent participants—has been taking over Nicaragua's neighbors from within. Costa Rica is not alone; similar threats are felt in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The case of Honduras is particularly shocking. One of the Western hemisphere's top cocaine czars, Juan Ramón Matta Ballesteros, was freed from a Honduran jail on Nov. 28, 1986. He now brags that he can control the Honduran economy and pay off the country's debt. No agency of the U.S. government has yet commented on the matter, let alone demanded action against Matta Ballesteros, even though U.S. agencies identified him as the intellectual author of the 1985 assassination of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official Enrique Camarena.

Silence on the Honduran connection smacks of cover-up. The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters did not even mention Honduras in its 1986 *Midyear Report*.

In the case of Guatemala, that nation's military leaders have been warning Reagan administration officials since 1985 that Cuban-backed terrorists and the narcotics mafia have joined forces in their country. Despite repeated requests for U.S. technological and material assistance to defeat the nar-