

Britain's legalized drug policy, from the Opium Wars to the KGB

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Below is an excerpt from a paper entitled "The Drug Traffic: A Problem of National Security," which was submitted to the Statutes Revision Committee, Legislative Department, Wellington, New Zealand, in August 1980.

One of the authors, Edward (Ned) Haliburton, is a Scot who worked in the drug field in Britain for 15 years as an investigator and counselor. In 1968 he and his wife Grace converted their home into a rehabilitation center for those afflicted with drug problems. He is one of the few laymen to be elected to the Society for the Study of Addiction, an international body of inquiry into addiction problems. His outspoken criticism of the British government's high drug consumption policy made him so unpopular that in 1975 he decided to emigrate to New Zealand. The co-author, Reuel A. Lochore, a former member of the prime minister's and external affairs departments of the New Zealand government, was ambassador to West Germany in 1966-69, and after his retirement, specialized in Southeast Asian affairs.

Although the document we excerpt from here is nearly a decade old, much of the information and analysis it contains have not become public beyond New Zealand, and it seems to have exceptional relevance today, when the cry for legalizing drugs is going up throughout the West. For reasons of space, the second half of the paper, dealing with the British and Soviet intelligence services' work to spread the drug problem into Australasia and New Zealand, is omitted here.

. . . Britain's leadership of the world drug trade grew out of the cloud of romance attributed to the use of opium by writers such as Coleridge and de Quincey, and with the advantage of hindsight it is perhaps significant that de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* was made a set book for English school certificate in the 1960s as part of what could be seen as a plan to popularize drug taking among the young. Also in the 1960s English rock groups like the Beatles (decorated by the Queen) massive promotional outlays, becoming cult leaders amongst Western youth.

Returning to 1830: From romance opium quickly passed into commerce. The production of opium in South India for sale in China, the objective of the two Opium Wars, was carried through by the British Government in defiance of Chinese and world opinion and, in Britain itself, the stubborn opposition of a small body of enlightened Christians and

radicals. . . . Long afterwards, in 1896, the *Royal History of England, for Schools* still maintained in a stiff footnote:

"The war originated in an edict of the Chinese authorities forbidding the importation of opium, the use of which is very injurious to the natives. The edict was resisted in the interest of British merchants. Peace was concluded in 1842, and England gained Hong Kong."

In 1857 Prime Minister Palmerston acted again on behalf of the drugs lobby in Parliament when a Chinese patrol burned a Chinese junk carrying opium, which for the smuggler's protection, had been registered under the nominal captaincy of an English seaman. By what is known historically as the "Arrow Incident," the British government declared a second war on China, this time forcing the legalization of the sale of opium throughout the country. Opium sales from India to China rose from 30,000 chests annually to 57,000 in the year following decriminalization and by the late 1860s had attained 100,000 chests annually.

The incorrigible greed of British merchants being thus publicly vindicated, for the next hundred years British governments led the world's opium trade as covertly as possible but without a qualm, constantly soliciting markets in new countries and enforcing decriminalization where necessary.

In the late 1950s, British spy scandals (Burgess, McLean, Philby, etc.)

and upper-class opinion, traditionally conservative, had been won over to the ideological support of Soviet communism. There is today serious evidence to suggest that about 1955 the British and Soviet intelligence services, coming to grips after extensive mutual infiltration, found a way out by seeking tacitly what ground they could hold in common. Britain ceased to question the Marxist dogma that the ultimate definitive victory of Soviet-type communism throughout the world was inevitable. In return, the Soviet Union agreed to facilitate British control of many of the world's drug markets and the supply of heroin to particular countries which the Soviet was planning to attack. The first of those countries was Britain itself.

Operation SIDEWALK

In pursuance of that accommodation between the two intelligence services, the heroin trade in Britain was decriminalized in 1967 after an intensive ten-year campaign by a small group of ideologically motivated medical practitioners,

called "junkie doctors," who by their prescribing policies literally created a heroin problem where no problem hitherto existed. (In 1958 there were only 68 known heroin addicts in the United Kingdom, all middle-aged or elderly people who took the drug to relieve intolerable pain. By 1967 there were over a thousand, two-thirds of whom were under 24.)

The junkie doctor operation, codenamed SIDEWALK by the two intelligence services, proliferated under the National Health Service with the gross over-prescribing of barbiturates. No attempt has ever been made in Britain to control the prescribing volume of this highly addictive drug which by 1969 had supplanted heroin in the forefront of the government-sponsored drug consumption program. By a doctors' census of patient habituation taken at the time, there were already then a quarter-million barbiturate addicts in the United Kingdom, fed from a supply of 2,000 million pills from 25 million prescriptions—enough to give every man, woman, and child 40 tablets. There are today [1980] over 2 million barbiturate addicts and an estimated 40-50,000 heroin addicts in the country, from 68 heroin addicts to almost as many thousands in 22 years. It is the greatest example of mass drugging since the Opium Wars. But whereas that war was fomented by Britain against the nationals of a foreign state which it proposed to exploit, the British government, foisting barbiturate and heroin addiction on the population of Britain, forebore to act in defense of the health of its own people. Britain justified decriminalization on the ground that it would bring the drug traffic under control and diminish addiction, although the British government knew full well since 1857, from forcing decriminalization on China literally at bayonet point, that the reverse was true, and that the Soviets' intention in urging decriminalization was to debilitate the British people to the point of passive acceptance of the communist revolution.

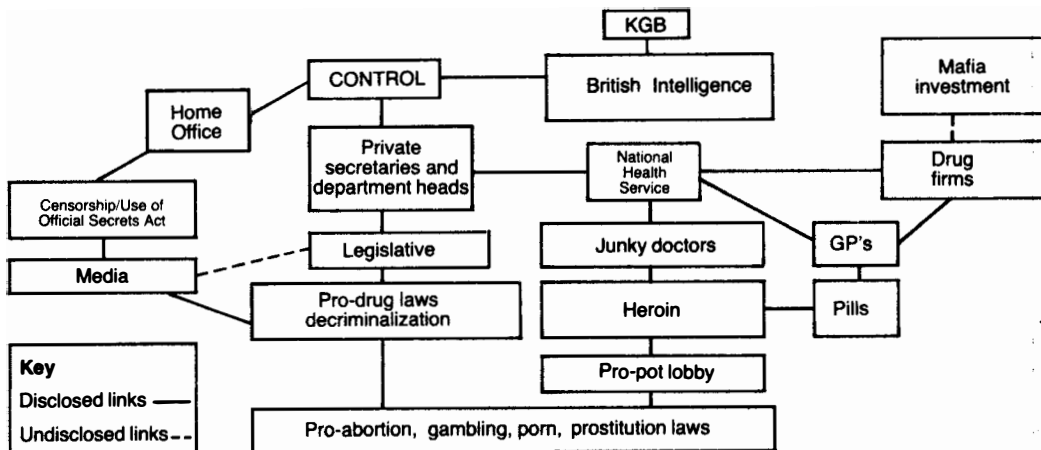
Official Secrets Act coverup

All details of Operation SIDEWALK were kept from the British public by use of the Official Secrets Act and service of D-notices [censoring news under the Official Secrets Act] on those sections of the media tempted to disclose any matters critical of the doctors implementing the program. Editors were reminded that it was "not in the public interest" to discuss matters which would undermine confidence in the medical profession and in the government's own measures to cope with addiction problems by decriminalization. This conspiracy of silence was buttressed by Home Office publication of false statistics which were deflationary in effect by severely understating the number of known addicts. The British drug addiction problem was presented in an extremely favorable light compared with that in other countries, especially that of the United States whose Narcotics Bureau was unable under the Freedom of Information Act to deflate statistics even if it wished to do so. In this way the British public was persuaded to ignore its own national drug problem while large sections of their population became submerged daily in a drugged stupor.

That a nation should be persuaded to embark on a course of self-destruction must confirm suspicion that the infiltration of the British Security Service by Soviet agents had already reached out to departmental level, and by now included some senior civil servants who in turn instructed the politicians. The further British spy revelations of 1979-80 have given substantial corroboration of this pact between the two intelligence services. . . .

So far Britain is believed to stand alone in the world as the one instance of a country which has decriminalized heroin to the position that it is prescribed free to addicts on medical prescription at the expense of the taxpayer. . . .

FIGURE 1
**Operation Sidewalk, the junkie doctor network:
 How Intelligence controls the British drug traffic**



According to this report, Operation Sidewalk is a KGB orchestrated operation formulated in 1955 to foist drug addiction onto the West by manipulation of the health services of those countries through the junkie doctor network.

Source: Copyright Ned Haliburton, 1979.