

Afghan Opium Pleases Taliban and Soros

by Ramtanu Maitra

Some in Washington have now begun to speak out against the explosion of opium production in Afghanistan, following the U.S. invasion in the Winter of 2001. These individuals have begun to demand the eradication of opium, in order to weaken the enemy and stabilize Afghanistan.

Campaigning against this view are two familiar voices—NATO, with Britain in the forefront, and the drug-liberalization lobby led by George Soros. Among the many Soros-funded drug-liberalization groups that operate in various parts of the world where drugs are produced, or trafficked in, the most omnipresent one in Afghanistan is the Senlis Council.

Although it has branches in London, Brussels, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Ottawa, and Kabul, the Senlis Council is often viewed as a French outfit, which it is not. It is entirely British, and the name is probably derived from Simon de Senlis, the First Earl of Northampton and a Holy Crusader of the 17th Century. Like a number of other U.K.-based drug-legalization outfits, such as the Beckley Foundation, Release, and DrugScope, among others, Senlis is funded by Soros's Open Society Institute.

In 2005, Senlis proposed the creation of a licensing system in Afghanistan which would "allow cultivation of opium for the production of essential medicines such as morphine and codeine." In putting forward its pro-opium argument, Senlis cites what it calls the "facts": "Since the early 1970s, despite four U.S. "wars on

drugs" and billions of dollars spent on the issue, narcotics production and consumption have been on the rise. Narcotics production has risen in Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Central America, and consumption has followed. Between 1972 and 2002, in the United States alone, the number of heroin users increased over ten-fold. While a similar phenomenon has been observed in Western Europe, drug consumption is no longer exclusively a Western problem. New markets are now emerging in places such as India, China, and the former Soviet bloc. The consumption of opium and its derivatives (morphine, heroin) is today one of the most intractable global problems."

The prime objective of the Senlis Council, and its benefactor George Soros, is to legalize opium production. It is obvious that the legalization of this vast 8,000 tons of opium, annually, would not only prevent any possibility of Afghanistan becoming an agro-industrial nation in the future, but would turn it into a full-fledged narco-state, as the "leaked" opium would be of large-enough quantity to generate vast sums of money, which could then be used to corrupt individuals in power.

The Georgian Experience

What is described above is not an abstract scenario. Take, for instance, the role of the Soros-led drug-legalization groups in the troubled nation of Georgia. The Beckley Foundation, mentioned above as one of

many Soros-funded pro-drug outfits, is based just outside of Oxford, England, and, a report, "Drug Control in Georgia: Drug testing and the reduction of drug use?" it issued in May, said the former Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze was an old-fashioned tough enforcer against drug production and drug trafficking. It said: "The former First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, initiated harsh legal measures and public campaigns against drug users in the 1970s." The report quoted another Soros-funded outfit, Human Rights Watch, based in New York. The Beckley Foundation in its report said there were promising changes under President Mikheil Sakaashvili, who has "announced the possibility of shifting the focus of drug policy away from the predominantly law enforcement orientation." In other words, the beneficiary of the "Rose Revolution," Sakaashvili, in essence, promised Soros an eventual legalization of drugs in Georgia.

It is not difficult to understand what such legalization would accomplish. Since Soros, who, along with his love for drug proliferation, misses no opportunity to use human rights and the Jacobin form of democracy to undermine sovereign nation-states. The purpose of his drive to place Saakashvili in power, a man who would legalize drugs in Georgia, is to undermine Russia by pushing drugs into that country.

Observers point out the phony premises on which the Senlis Council has built its arguments. To begin with, there is no market in developing countries, where the Soros-backed drug-legalization lobby claims the need for morphine-based painkillers is greatest. In 2005, the visiting scholar of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Frederic Grare, in his article, "Anatomy of a Fallacy: Senlis Council and Narcotics in Afghanistan," said: "In the present situation, the Senlis proposals would, on the contrary, speed up the transformation of Afghanistan into a narco-economy (which it already is to some extent) by legitimizing the position of the current drug lords who have succeeded the warlords in holding power in the country. The Senlis proposals would, moreover, fail to address the issue of trafficking..."

Soros Money Talks

Grare is right, but his understanding of how Soros's drug legalization groups operate is less than adequate: They seize upon concerns about the disastrous effect of drugs, then claim that eradication is impossible be-

cause drugs can generate so much cash, that no farmer would opt for an alternative. This argument is perhaps the most dangerous weapon; an outright lie, it is propagated by corrupt officials of international institutions, bankrolled by George Soros.

Take, for instance, the opposition by Joanna Nathan of the International Crisis Group, a Soros-funded outfit, to aerial eradication of poppies in Afghanistan. She lies straight through in a report claiming aerial eradication can be too indiscriminate and would enrage a large sector of the population, possibly driving them into the arms of the insurgents.

Another well-known case is that of Mike Trace, former deputy drug czar of Britain, and the co-director of the Beckley Foundation. Under Soros's influence, in January 2003, Trace was made head of Demand Reduction at the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime in Vienna. He was forced to resign from his post within eight weeks, following the release of information from documents obtained by the Hassela Nordic Network, a Swedish-based group opposed to liberalization of drug laws. The documents showed that Trace was involved in an operation, funded by Soros, to undermine the international conventions on drug-trafficking, which were to be reviewed at a UN meeting in Vienna in April 2003.

The Hassela Nordic Network pointed out that, in a September 2002 letter to Aryah Neier, president of the Soros-funded Open Society Institute (OSI), Trace described his role as follows: "In terms of my involvement, I think it would be of most use in the early stages, providing advice and consultancy from behind the scenes, in light of my continuing role as Chair of the European Monitoring group, my association with the UK Government and some work.

"I am being asked to put together [a proposal] by the UNDCP [United Nations Drug Control Program] in Vienna. This 'fifth column' role would allow me to oversee the setting up of the agency (I already have good quality individuals in mind with whom I could work in confidence on this) while promoting its aims subtly in the formal governmental settings."

The "agency" Trace was referring to here was Release, a London-based group, which was fronting for Trace and OSI in running an initiative, privately referred to as Project X, or the London initiative, but officially called "Forward Thinking on Drugs," aimed at promoting alternatives to the UN drug conventions prior to the Vienna meeting.

Recently, Trace, who is now a full-fledged promoter of drugs, was reported to have told the *Sunday*

Herald newsweekly that Scotland, a part of Britain heavily affected by Afghan heroin, needs to be more “brave and creative,” and introduce controversial drug consumption rooms (DCRs) as part of its drug strategy. Trace is now chief executive of the International Drug Policy Consortium, an offshoot of the Beckley Foundation.

Let Them Eat Opium

One of the chief causes of the opium crisis in Afghanistan, is that the failure of the U.S. opium-eradication policy opened the door for the emergence of pro-drug legalization lobbies backed by Soros. Only recently, however, a few in Washington have begun to wake up and recognize the problem. It could be that a large number of American and NATO troops are being killed by the drug-funded insurgents there.

After years of dilly-dallying, the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, on Feb. 20, 2007, said there are no shortcuts to fighting opium production in Afghanistan. “Based on the experiences of other nations in this fight, the international community and the governments of Afghanistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States support a mix of deterrence, prevention, and economic development assistance to suppress existing illicit opium cultivation, production, and trafficking in Afghanistan.”

In a recent article in the *New Yorker* magazine, a former senior U.S. official, Thomas Schweich, has come out strongly in support of aerial spraying to eradicate poppies, to cut off this source of cash for the Taliban, and to save the lives of U.S. and NATO troops.

And, in a July 30 memo to the Social Sciences department at West Point, former U.S. drug policy czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey (USA, ret.) reported on the disaster in Afghanistan, following his July 21-26 trip to that country and to NATO headquarters in Belgium. McCaffrey wrote: “Afghanistan is in misery.” Sixty-eight percent of the population has never known peace, life expectancy is only 44, and Afghanistan has the highest maternal death rate in the world, he reports. The security situation, the economy (including agriculture, which is “broken”), governance, and the opium problems, are “all likely to get worse in the coming 24 months.”

There is no military solution, McCaffrey writes, arguing that, in addition to building up the Afghan security

forces, economic measures are also required. He calls for “a five year road building effort employing Afghan contractors and training and mentoring Afghan engineers,” adding that, “The war will be won when we fix the Afghan agricultural system which employs 82% of the population.” McCaffrey pointed to the tremendous growth in the poppy crop since the U.S. invasion in 2001 and warned that, “Unless we deal head-on with this enormous cancer, we should have little expectation that our efforts in Afghanistan will not eventually come to ruin.”

Alliance with the Oligarchy

Beside the tacit support of Kabul, the Senlis Council works hand-in-glove with the drug-using and drug-promoting powerful European oligarchy. Among them is a Swiss industrialist named Stephan Schmidheiny. Others include the Network of European Foundations, a group of charitable funds, and the King Baudouin Foundation (named after the former Belgian king), the Michigan-based Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Open Society Institute, and the Gabriel Foundation. The Network of European Foundations founded the Senlis Council in May 2002 with its Drug Policy Fund, which itself was founded only two years earlier.

In 2002, a group of former European politicians, ambassadors, academics, civil society leaders, and judges, including a former Portuguese President, a former German president of the Bundestag, and a former British ambassador to Colombia, met in Arrabida, Portugal as the Network of European Foundations’ Comité des Sages (Committee of Wisemen). The group issued a statement on Sept. 20, 2002, that called for a radical change in international drug policies to bring them into line with the Senlis Council.

Meanwhile, the Afghan-based anti-eradication lobby, which has the strong support of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, depends on the Senlis Council to prevent aerial spraying of poppy fields. In 2005, there were news items which suggested that Senlis was banned from operating in Afghanistan, but the Council is still very much there. At the time, the Pajhwok Afghan News reported on a Kabul press conference with Afghan Deputy Interior Minister Lt. Gen. Daud Daud. “In an order, the Interior Minister banned the activities of the Senlis Council,” Pajhwok quoted Daud Daud as saying. “Activities of the Senlis Council are not useful for our country; its work has created complex problems for us.” Senlis activities were “encouraging” farmers to grow more opium, he complained.