

Russia Calls for International Coalition Against Afghan Drugs

by Rachel Douglas

June 12—At the International Forum on Drug Production in Afghanistan: A Challenge to the International Community, held June 9-10 in Moscow, Russian officials called for the speedy formation of an international coalition to stop narcotics production and trafficking, in and from Afghanistan. Russia, currently losing 30,000 young people annually to death by Afghan heroin, would lead the coalition. President Dmitri Medvedev, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and Federal Narcotics Control Service chief Victor Ivanov addressed the meeting.

New violence in Kyrgyzstan, a Central Asian country affected by Afghan drug flows and related criminal and terrorist activity, broke out just as the Drug Production in Afghanistan event was ending, and as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit took place in Uzbekistan.

U.S. economist Lyndon LaRouche's greeting and memorandum to the Moscow event (see *EIR* Online, June 11, 2010) was released in Russian translation for circulation among Forum participants. In the memo, LaRouche explained that an end to the Afghanistan drug plague, and the British perpetual imperial war strategy of which it is a part, depends on nations making a decisive break with thousands of years of imperial monetarist practice, and the past 250 years of British imperial domination, in particular.

Indeed, Russian patriotic forces who have rallied to the fight against the heroin onslaught are impelled to-

wards being anti-British, but crucial aspects of Russian policy remain trapped in City of London schemes.

International Security Threat

Victor Ivanov, who headed the organizing committee for the Forum, and was a keynote speaker, brought out the strategic dimension of the Afghanistan drug boom, recounting not only the impact of drug consumption on the population, but the drug-money financing of terrorism worldwide. Russia's North Caucasus and the Uighur-populated regions of China are especially affected areas, Ivanov pointed out.

Ivanov had given the Forum an early start on June 7 by addressing a Germany-Russia webcast teleconference from Berlin, where he was attending a related event on Central Asia and Afghanistan. In the teleconference and in Russian TV interviews, Ivanov hammered at the need for Afghanistan-origin narcotics to be declared an international security threat. Afghanistan today produces double the amount of opium which the *entire world* produced ten years ago, said Ivanov, and these drugs have become a destabilizing factor for Russia and Europe. Ivanov warned that Europe, with narcotics consumption of 711 tons opium-equivalent annually, is in the same boat as Russia, which consumes 549 tons. He underscored the death toll: 1 million people in the past decade, one-third of them Russians.

The teleconference was chaired by Svetlana Miro-



Presidential Press and Information Office

Russian President Dmitri Medvedev addresses the International Forum on Drug Production in Afghanistan. The conference also received greetings and a memorandum from Lyndon LaRouche.

nyuk, senior editor at RIA Novosti, which also operated the International Forum. Presenting the concept of the event, Mironyuk agreed with Ivanov that “the solution lies in the system of international relations, in the positions different nations take.”

Medvedev, speaking June 9 at the Moscow Forum, called the “globalization of criminal flows” of drugs a danger to the whole world, also citing the role of drug money in funding terrorism. Lavrov presented the Russian policy he had laid out in testimony to the State Duma several weeks earlier, saying that Afghan narcotics should be declared a threat to international peace and security. “We consider it absolutely necessary,” Lavrov added, “to include in the mandate of the international security forces in Afghanistan, the duty to fight the drug business more effectively, including by destroying opium poppy plantings and heroin laboratories.”

Another Russian government official, Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, took the Afghanistan dope campaign to the Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore, a June 6 conference sponsored by the British International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). In the presence of U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and officials from around Asia, Ivanov called narcotics production and trafficking in and from Afghanistan “a threat to world

peace and security,” and stated that international forces present in the country “ought to deal with this directly, and move to actively fighting this threat.”

International Alliance Needed

Among the international speakers at the Forum were Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Hamid Ghodse, chairman of the UN International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). Former UNODC head Pino Arlacchi, an expert on organized crime and drug trafficking, told Novosti that Russia and Europe are suffering the most from Afghan heroin, and should cooperate on a “plan aimed at halting opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, including not only crop eradication, but also creating a special program, giving Afghan people living sources, different from producing narcotics.” Arlacchi said he agreed with Victor Ivanov on this, adding that “Russia is not only a vital power in maintaining world stability and international dialogue, but it can play a leading role together with Europe in implementing change in Afghanistan. . . . Such a shift should have been done ten years ago, specifically, halting drug production in the country.”

Alexander Rahr of the German Council on Foreign Relations, which had hosted Sergei Ivanov at the June

6-7 German conference in Potsdam and Berlin, was another participant from Europe. According to on-the-scene reports, the highest ranking Americans at the Forum were an acting deputy director for supply reduction from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, and U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle. Russian press played up a Novosti interview with the latter, who once again tried to justify not destroying the opium crops. Russia's Ambassador to NATO Dmitri Rogozin attacked this position during his speech, as an "illogical" contrast with successful U.S. eradication efforts in Colombia.

Besides eradication, there are other steps the United States could take, for which Russian officials indicated the Obama Administration has shown scant zeal. In concluding remarks on June 10, Victor Ivanov reiterated that he has handed American officials (he met drug czar Gil Kerlikowske May 23 during the latter's Moscow airport stopover) lists of drug traffickers known to be in U.S.-controlled areas of Afghanistan, as well as the locations of drug-processing labs. "We are now waiting for information from our American colleagues," he said. RIA Novosti, in an overview wire about the International Forum, said that participants were in agreement that "NATO's refusal to destroy opium poppy plantings in Afghanistan . . . is blocking the process of combating the threat from Afghan narcotics, which are killing hundreds of thousands of people and helping to finance world terrorism."

Obama's Treachery

The lack of response from the Obama Administration to the Russian offer for an alliance against the drug trade, an offer first made in the Winter of 2009, can only be explained by the British control over the U.S. President.

It is no secret to anyone in the U.S. military or Administration, that the burgeoning opium trade in Afghanistan is the prime source of financing for the Taliban, and the insurgency generally—not to mention the international banking channels which launder the proceeds. Nor is it unknown that the drug lords, who have been predominantly located in the British stronghold of Helmand Province, and have been protected by the British, run a brutal dictatorship over the local farmers, forcing them to produce the opium crop, or face punitive consequences.

Why, then, would a U.S. President turn a blind eye,

or even facilitate, the continuance of a drug trade that is financing the death of his own troops? Isn't the only proper name for such a policy, *treason*? Look at the cascade of death now hitting U.S. and NATO forces in the area. How can any patriot, not to mention a true President, fail to take the weapon out of the enemy's hand?

Destabilization Spreading

Military and economic dimensions of the anti-dope fight came into focus at the International Forum, as well as the SCO summit in Tashkent.

Riots broke out June 10-11 in Osh, in southern Kyrgyzstan, killing at least 60 people and injuring hundreds. The area is the home region of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, ousted in April. Speaking at the SCO summit, the acting Kyrgyz foreign minister described the clashes as gang warfare. They involve a clan element, as well as ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. The region has been cited as a drug transshipment route, as well as an expansion area of the radical Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

On June 12, Acting President of Kyrgyzstan Roza Otunbayeva asked for Russian military assistance, though so far, Russia's special envoy for Kyrgyzstan, Vladimir Rushailo, has pledged only humanitarian help. At the same time, Russia's close attention to its interests in Central Asia was also emphasized in military terms at the Forum on Afghan Drug Production, where Victor Ivanov said Russia should move to return its armed forces to the Tajik-Afghan border, because current policing is inadequate to stop the drug traffic.

The SCO also discussed the Afghan drug threat, the global economic crisis, and regional infrastructure projects.

The International Forum, too, heard a vigorous appeal for radically changing the economic model in the region. Yuri Krupnov of the Institute of Demography, Migration, and Regional Development (IDMRD),¹ one of the Forum co-sponsors, called for developing a new economic model for Afghanistan. He said that an international team of economic development specialists should put together such a program, including "serious consideration of building a science city," and developing the country's eastern and southern provinces, not only the capital city of Kabul.

1. Excerpts from an IDMRD pamphlet on the infrastructure development of Afghanistan and Central Asia appeared in *EIR*, Feb. 27, 2009.