

Drug Trade Targets Four-Power Agreement

by Ramtanu Maitra

Dec. 19—Behind the huge flow of drugs into Russia from Afghanistan is a geopolitical effort to block the emergence of a Four-Power Alliance of Russia, the United States, India, and China. Russian initiatives, especially since October, to forge collaboration with India and China to stabilize and develop the Eurasian landmass, have made it the target of the British and other free-trade forces, and assault by the drug mafias and Britain's "Islam Brigade" is neither unexpected, nor coincidental.

In October, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao signed agreements covering a gamut of activities to ensure infrastructure development in China and the eastern part of Russia. These accords included cooperation in the oil and gas sector, as well as nuclear power. Russia has capabilities to supply oil, gas, and nuclear reactors, and China needs them all. But what Russia wants most from China is the assistance of its skilled manpower to help build infrastructure in Russia's mineral-rich Far East.

As a result, as *EIR* has reported, China and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding on "organizing and developing high-speed rail service on the territory of the Russian Federation." The routes specified for cooperation on high-speed rail are Khabarovsk-Vladivostok (in the Far East), Moscow-Sochi, and Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod (the latter two are in European Russia). They were already part of the "Strategy for the Development of Rail Transport in the Russian Federation to the Year 2030," which was adopted in 2007-08, and which includes a rail line to the Bering Strait and a potential tunnel to Alaska.

In early December, when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Moscow, it became evident that, beside the arms and nuclear power-related deals between the two countries, Russia is keen to strengthen and further Russia-India scientific and technological relations generally. Russian involvement in India's space research goes back decades.

The India-Russia nuclear agreement that was signed

in Moscow will ensure importation by India of as many as twenty 1,000-MW or larger nuclear reactors from Russia. The pact also has provisions for transfer of technology for uranium enrichment and other nuclear technology.

Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said the nuclear agreement opens the way for greater cooperation beyond Kudankoolam, where Russia is building two 1,000-MW reactors and will be installing four more of the same capacity in the coming years. "The nuclear cooperation between the two countries has a very good future. We are satisfied with the cooperation and I hope today's agreement will pave the way for greater cooperation in this field in the years to come," Prime Minister Singh said.

The Drug Threat

No other nation has spoken out more strongly than Russia against opium production in Afghanistan. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, at a recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization conference in Moscow, said, "Of special significance is the fight against the traffic in drugs, from which the proceeds go to finance terrorist activities. . . . Afghan drug trafficking has become a major security threat for the countries of Central Asia and the Russian Federation. Efforts that are being made to combat this evil are so far insufficient."

Lavrov's attack on drug production and trafficking has surely stirred up the hornets' nest, especially as Russia is now "in league" with two other Asian giants, China and India.

The link between drugs and the banking system is now well established, and was pointed out once again on Dec. 16 by Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. He said that the proceeds of organized crime were "the only liquid investment capital" available to some banks on the brink of collapse last year, and that most of the \$352 billion (£216 billion) of drugs profits was absorbed into the economic system as a result. Costa said evidence that illegal money was being absorbed into the financial system was first drawn to his attention by intelligence agencies and prosecutors around 18 months ago. "In many instances, the money from drugs was the only liquid investment capital. In the second half of 2008, liquidity was the banking system's main problem and hence liquid capital became an important factor," he said.