

Afghanistan Plants A Bumper Opium Crop

by Alexander Hartmann

British Prime Minister Tony Blair argued before the Parliament last year in favor of British participation in the war against the Taliban, saying that finally something could be done to eradicate opium poppy cultivation there, once the Taliban regime were replaced. After all, 95% of the heroin consumed in Europe comes from Afghanistan.

Now, only a few months after Blair succeeded in getting his troops deployed to Afghanistan, Britain's *Financial Times* and *Daily Telegraph* are reporting that heroin production in Afghanistan, rather than being eradicated, is exploding, and that this Summer's opium harvest alone will suffice to cover European heroin consumption for a full three years.

With the Taliban regime gone, its former soldiers have gone back to their farms to plant poppy, while the Northern Alliance—partners of Blair and George W. Bush in the conquest of Afghanistan—never stopped using opium to finance their wars. A record area was planted with poppy this Winter, promising a record harvest by June. On Feb. 18, the *Financial Times* quoted Western intelligence services' estimates that "Afghanistan's next opium harvest may reach 4,500 tons, which is equivalent to some 450 tons of heroin, compared to 150 tons of heroin entering the European market, annually."

The United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) had already warned about an opium boom in Afghanistan, in a report issued on Dec. 28, 2001, which was played up by the British Broadcasting Corp. and Switzerland's leading financial daily, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

According to the *Daily Telegraph*, "Dr. Thomas Pietschmann, a senior researcher with the UNDCP in Vienna, says bumper opium harvests in Afghanistan in 1999 and 2000 mean that stockpiles of heroin and opium worth between £30 billion and £50 billion [\$45-75 billion] are still held by Afghan, Pakistani, and other groups."

Afghan Dope Finances Balkan Wars

Beyond the fact that a flood of heroin will threaten the lives and health of Europe's youth, what is alarming European governments, is that most of this contraband passes through the hands of Albanian mafia gangs, which have taken control of heroin markets in at least six European countries, and are using the proceeds to finance a massive re-armament of the "former" Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) bandits. *EIR* exposed these operations last year, in the context of the Anglo-

American geopolitical drive to re-draw the map of the Balkans (*EIR*, June 22, 2001).

Writes the *Telegraph*: "Western intelligence officials in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Switzerland say Albanian gangs have used at least £3 billion [\$4.5 billion] of their heroin profits since October last year to buy weapons to re-equip rebels in Macedonia who gave up their weapons to NATO troops last Autumn. . . . The rebels in Macedonia, former KLA freedom fighters in Kosovo, and extremist Albanians in southern Serbia are all part of the network of Albanian and Kosovar Albanian families who control criminal networks in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and elsewhere."

The *Telegraph* continues: "Arms trade experts who have followed some of the deals say up to 20 SA-18 and SA-7 shoulder-held anti-aircraft missile systems are among the weapons. The missiles could tip the balance of the dormant conflict in Macedonia by giving rebels the ability to shoot down the MI-24 Hind helicopter gunships and Sukhoi Su-25 ground attack jets bought from the Ukraine by the Macedonian forces. . . . Military experts believe that this is enough equipment to arm a force of up to 2,000 strong."

Thus, the current relative lull on the Balkan fronts, which has been praised by the "international community," is coming to a bloody end soon—as *EIR* forecast—to the horror of many European analysts.

Anglo-American Policy

The *Financial Times* puts the blame for the proliferation of Afghan heroin on the U.S. government and the United Nations: "British officials—backed by the German, Spanish, and Italian governments—want a more vigorous logistical support to be offered to a new aid program in the poppy-growing areas which would include construction work and crop substitution. . . . Tony Blair identified the opportunity for eradicating opium production in Afghanistan when justifying British military involvement with the U.S. bombing campaign last year. But now British officials say that such early optimism was misplaced with the U.S. government showing little interest in evidence that opium is being cultivated. . . . The U.S. and United Nations have ignored repeated calls by the international anti-drug community to address the increasing menace of Afghanistan's opium cultivation, threatening a rift between Europe and the U.S. as they begin to reconstruct the country."

But, while these British newspapers point the finger at the Bush Administration, they are also putting Tony Blair on notice. After all, historically, Great Britain was defeated three times in Afghanistan. Now, Blair has gotten British troops back into the Afghanistan mess, while the United States is preparing to withdraw and leave its allies to deal with it, under the cover of continuing the "war on terrorism" in Iraq or other places. Some quarters in the United Kingdom are clearly upset about this, and want Blair to do something to change the policy.

In Memoriam: John Erickson (1929-2002)

by Mark Burdman

In October and December of last year, my colleague Michael Liebig and I had the honor of meeting Prof. John Erickson in Edinburgh, for two extended discussions. The density and intensity of these discussions was, for both of us, awesome. The range of themes was enormous.

Among those, was his constant stress, conveyed to us as an impassioned plea, that informed people in the West, have got to take the ideas of Russian military planners seriously, and reject the opportunism and linear thinking so characteristic of “Kremlinology.” Another theme that was striking, was his view of the events of Sept. 11. He was one of those rare individuals who had a real comprehension of what had happened on that date. He would frequently shake his head and say, “Someone shut down the system; they just down the system!” He was sure that an “inside job” was involved, that the “Osama bin Laden did it” line was a crude myth concocted to draw attention away from reality, and that the events of Sept. 11 were a decisive moment, in a “vast geostrategic re-configuration” that was taking place in the world.

Perhaps most startling, were his insights into the famous telephone discussion on Sept. 11, between Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia and George W. Bush of the United States. Erickson was one of the few people in the world with intimate knowledge of the nuclear command-and-control systems in both the United States and Russia, and was intimately aware of how sensitive and intricate such matters are, of how close the world could have been, that day, to an unimaginable strategic disaster, had the coup-in-process succeeded, and had such an unusual phone discussion not taken place.

I now grasp what an extraordinary privilege it was to have had such discussions with him. They were among the last in-depth discussions that he would have. On Feb. 12, we learned with immense sadness that on Feb. 10, Professor Erickson died in Edinburgh.

When meeting him, we were aware that he was struggling against monstrous health problems; he had nearly died over the 1999-2000 New Year.

We were also aware to what an extent, he was driven by a sense of *mission*: He would not “abandon the ship,” at his office at the Department of Defense Studies, at the University of Edinburgh. He knew that he was indispensable for making correct judgments and estimates on sensitive matters pertaining to Russia, and on other issues which are of great relevance to the future of humanity.

Making his sense of mission more urgent, was his justifi-

able alarm, that the generation of experts coming after him and others of the “World War II veteran generation,” is, to a very significant extent, *systemically incapable of thinking*.

One of his latter-day activities, he told us proudly, was an initiative to reactivate older academics and others who were languishing in retirement. His conviction was that these are the people who are now indispensable, for regenerating our corrupted society.

A Commitment To Truth

I think of John Erickson’s life and work on two levels. Most important, to me, was his ruthless integrity and commitment to *truth*, his refusal to compromise with cheap-shot fads. His student Christopher Bellamy summed up it in his Feb. 12 tribute to Erickson in the London *Guardian*: “John had little time for performance criteria, men in suits, political correctness, spin, or form over substance. . . . He once said that ‘good scholarship is good morality.’ ”

Having spoken to Erickson at least 200 times over more than two decades, I remember many occasions in which he lashed out at the recklessness, foolishness, and ignorance in much of what passes for “strategic thinking” in the Anglo-American realm, and in the policy of governments, particularly the British and American governments, today.

The other reality, is that over an academic career of close to 50 years, John Erickson became the leading Western expert on Soviet, and later, Russian military strategy. But his was not just an academic interest. With his in-depth knowledge of the Russian language and history, Erickson had, as Bellamy writes, “a unique insight into the heart, mind, and soul” of both Soviet Russia, and the nation of Russia that has succeeded it. He interpreted the Russians not only for the West, but most interestingly, often for the Russians themselves!

As several among the Feb. 12 obituaries document, and as various people, including Erickson himself, confirmed to me, he was perhaps the only Western academic/strategic interlocutor whom the Soviet military command *trusted*. The reason was not only his expertise in military engineering and his preference for seeing reality through the eyes of an engineer rather than, as he sneered, “a Kremlinologist.” More than this, they saw in him an honesty and integrity, and a commitment to tell the truth—even if that meant, on occasion, telling the Russians what mistakes they had made, or were making. They also knew Erickson to be somebody who absolutely rejected the nostrums of simplistic Cold War



Professor John Erickson of Edinburgh, Scotland passed away on Feb. 10. He was an internationally known authority on East-West military affairs, and an intellectual collaborator, in recent years, of Lyndon LaRouche.

thinking, and who hated the easily bandied-about stereotypes.

The ‘Edinburgh Conversations’

Hence, in the 1980s, when Western institutions, virtually across-the-board, cut ties to the Soviets, in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (which, itself, was in large part provoked by U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and his Anglo-American cohorts), he established his “Edinburgh Conversations,” as a meeting point between the Soviets and Western interlocutors. There were many in the Pentagon who seized the opportunity to meet their Soviet counterparts there.

Erickson trained many individuals who went on to assume senior posts in the U.S. military structure. Bellamy writes that Erickson “was more valued abroad, particularly by the two superpowers, than in his native Britain—a prophet with less honor than he deserved in his own country.”

It is only a slight exaggeration, to say that Erickson’s efforts were significantly responsible for preventing U.S.-Soviet relations from “going over the edge” at various points in the 1980s. As he told Michael Liebig and myself, he was very pleased with the manner in which Lyndon LaRouche conceived of the development of ballistic missile defense in the 1980s, as a *cooperative U.S.-Soviet venture*, because this helped outflank those maniacs in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, who were using the Strategic Defense Initiative as a war measure against the Soviet Union. This helped calm down a Soviet mood that, he assured us from inside knowledge, was often “paranoid and unpredictable.”

Because they knew they could trust him, and because he was honest, frank, and candid with them, some dozen Soviet marshals who were still alive in the 1960s and 1970s, had long discussions with him. These included Marshals Rokossovsky, Sokolovsky, and Zhukov. Such talks provided many of the insights for two of Erickson’s books—*The Road to Stalingrad* (1975) and *The Road to Berlin* (1983), accounts of the courage and sacrifice of the Soviet armed forces in their combats with the German armies—that have become classics about World War II.

Erickson also knew German, was fully versed in German-language sources, had fruitful discussions with individuals who had been involved in planning and directing the war against the Soviet Union, and had respect and compassion for the courage, dedication, and patriotism of many who fought on the German side, even if he detested Adolf Hitler and Nazi brutality, and had an intense opposition to fascism, in all its forms.

The passion with which Erickson took to heart the awesomeness of the combats and horrors of the Second World War, and his special approach on such matters, is evident in his contribution to the 1994 book that he co-edited, *Barbarossa: The Axis and the Allies*, a series of essays on the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union (“Operation Barbarossa”) that began in June 1941. His essay, “Soviet War Losses: Calculations and Controversies,” is a painstaking review of primarily Russian-language, and secondarily German-language studies, of exactly how many Soviet citizens died in the Second World War.

In the essay, Erickson frequently reminded his readers,