

OPIUM AS AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM

THE GENEVA CONFERENCES

BY

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PREFACE

Although not official in character, the present volume is in the nature of a report upon the work of the two Opium Conferences recently held in Geneva, Switzerland. In this respect the volume resembles the one published by the author in 1922 under the title *China at the Conference*, in which an account was given of the work of the Limitation of Armaments Conference at Washington in so far as it related to political conditions in the Far East. In that Conference the author served as Technical Expert to the Chinese Delegation and, therefore, had full opportunity to become acquainted, in detail, with the work of that important international meeting. So, also, in regard to the two Geneva Conferences reported upon in the present volume, the author has been able to study their proceedings from the inside, since he served the Chinese Delegation as Counsellor and Expert.

Being in the nature of a report, the policy has been pursued of reproducing textually the more important statements made by the several Delegations.

Honorable Stephen G. Porter, who had led the fight in the United States for the control of the use of opium and habit-forming drugs, and who so ably represented the United States as its chief delegate at the Second Geneva Conference, has kindly permitted the author to use as an introduction to the present volume portions of an address delivered by him in the House of Representatives.

It is to be noted that many of the quotations from the proceedings of the Geneva Conferences are from the original mimeographed sheets, and not from the printed reports. These latter were not fully available at the time this volume was prepared. However, in one way, the use of mimeographed reports has been of advantage, since they give a more nearly exact statement of what was actually said than do the printed, and somewhat revised, proceedings.

In conclusion it should be said that the author has attempted to incorporate in this volume all the information that is needed for an accurate understanding of the subject. He hopes, therefore, that it will serve as a guide or handbook to all those who may need to know the situation as it now exists. Especially is it hoped that the volume will be found of value in case other Conferences upon the subject are held.

June 1, 1925.

W. W. W.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

By the Treaty of Versailles the supervision of the execution of The Hague Opium Convention of 1912 was transferred from the Netherlands Government to the League of Nations. In pursuance of the task thus imposed upon and assumed by it, the League created a division of its Secretariat, which, together with the matter of the international traffic in women and children, is known as its Social Section. The League has also created an Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium.

In connection with these agencies the Secretariat of the League has issued, in mimeographed or printed form, a series of documents serially numbered under the initials O. C. In addition the League has printed and distributed Minutes of the meetings and reports of the Advisory Committee and also an abridged report of the work of the Preparatory Committee which was created to draft provisional proposals for consideration by the Conferences. The discussion of the reports of the Advisory Committee and the action taken thereupon by the Assembly and by the Council of the League are of course to be found in the various official publications of the League.

The secretarial work of the two Opium Conferences at Geneva, which proved to be a very heavy task, was performed by the Secretariat of the League. Besides the minutes of the meetings of the First Conference and the verbatim report of proceedings of the Second Conference, the Secretariat issued in mimeographed form two hun-

dred or more documents. These documents were serially numbered. For the First Conference they were issued under the initials C. O. P.; and, for the Second Conference, under the initials O. D. C. They will be so referred to in this volume. Some of these documents also appear as Annexes to the printed Minutes and Records of the Conferences.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: THE PROBLEM

On February 26, 1923, the House of Representatives of the American Congress having before it a Joint Resolution requesting the President of the United States to urge upon the Governments of certain nations the immediate necessity of limiting the production of habit-forming drugs and the raw materials from which they are made to the amounts actually required for strictly medicinal and scientific purposes, Mr. Porter, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, said, in part:

“Morphia, codeine, and heroin are obtained from opium, which is the coagulated juice of the opium-producing poppy. It is produced in paying quantities from the poppy cultivated in India, Persia, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and China. The growth of the plant depends upon peculiarly favorable soil, which is especially found in small areas of India, Persia, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and China and a very wet and hot climate until the capsule is formed; afterwards a very hot and dry climate during the flowering season. With the exception of the opium produced in China, all the commercial opium produced in the world results from the cultivation of between five and six hundred thousand acres of land in India, Persia, Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia. This confines the growing area to small acreage which makes control of production, unlike that of wheat or corn, practicable

and comparatively easy of accomplishment; in fact, the quantity produced in India has been for many years entirely controlled by the officials of the British India Government who administer the affairs of that possession.

“ No effort had ever been made to extract these derivatives by pharmaceutical chemists in the Orient until about two years ago, when a laboratory for this purpose was established in Calcutta and one in the Japanese possession of Formosa.

“ Cocaine is obtained from coca leaves, which are indigenous to Peru, Bolivia, and the Netherlands possession of Java, and the leaves likewise are exported to other countries, where the cocaine is extracted. Recently, however, a laboratory was constructed in Peru for the extraction of crude cocaine, which is shipped to Europe for further refining.

“ Morphia and cocaine are indispensable in the treatment of certain diseases; the former for a century or more has been used almost exclusively for the alleviation of pain, both acute and chronic. They are universally used by the medical profession. It has often been said that without morphia the practice of medicine would be an unhappy calling, indeed. If the object of this resolution were achieved, their use would be restricted exclusively to these humane purposes and continue to be the two greatest boons known to medical science.

“ The production of opium in India, Persia, and Turkey is approximately not less than 1500 tons, of which but a comparatively small amount is required by the peoples of the world for strictly medicinal and scientific purposes. This quantity of 1500 tons is exclusive of from 700 to 900 tons which is retained by these producing countries to

meet the domestic demands of native addicts and for medicinal and scientific purposes. These native addicts consume the product by smoking and eating it. In 1919, according to the report of the British India Government, 741 tons of provision opium were exported from India, and during the same year, through the licensing of opium shops in India, the natives of that country consumed 531 tons of excise opium.

“ Statistical records and the evidence of the witnesses appearing before your committee place the world’s consumption of opium for medicinal and scientific purposes to from 5 to 125 tons per year. The varying opinions of these witnesses prevent an accurate estimate of the amount actually required for these specific purposes, but assuming that the maximum amount of 125 tons is required to fulfill these strictly proper needs, the huge production of raw materials is greatly in excess of these requirements, thus releasing for immoral and illicit use approximately 1350 tons per annum of provision or export opium. If the principle stated in the resolution were concurred in by the producing countries, these proper requirements could be determined through various sources, such as individuals, firms, and corporations duly authorized to dispense them, who are required by a majority of the larger nations to keep an accurate record of the quantity so dispensed under severe penalty for infraction. The hospitals, sanitariums, penal and other institutions would also be very helpful in assisting in determining the amount actually needed for strictly medicinal and scientific purposes.

“ Even the opium producers of Turkey, Persia, and India cannot, in truth, deny that the medicinal and scientific needs of the world are [not?] more than 250 tons per

annum; therefore there would not be the slightest risk, so far as those requirements are concerned, in immediately reducing the production to that amount.

* * * * *

“ It may be of interest to note that all the self-governing dominions of the British Empire—the Dominion of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and British South African colonies—have stringent antinarcotic laws similar to those in force in Great Britain, Japan, and the United States which require a physician’s prescription before even a grain of opium or its derivatives can be purchased; nevertheless, a citizen of any of these self-governing dominions, in fact, a citizen of any country in the world, may journey to the Orient and buy large quantities at auction in the British possessions of India or in the markets of Persia and Turkey.

“ In strong governments, or wherever self-government exists, habit-forming narcotic drugs are outlawed, except for strictly medicinal and scientific purposes. The failure of certain European nations and Japan to give by law to the people living within their possessions the same protection against these drugs that they give to their own citizens, through antinarcotic drug laws, is largely responsible for the present deplorable conditions, notwithstanding the fact that reliable authorities agree that the oriental suffers the same harmful effects as the occidental from the use of habit-forming narcotic drugs. Professor Cushney, the eminent pharmacologist of the University of Edinburgh, has given his opinion that he is aware of no evidence to prove that orientals have a different reaction to drugs from occidentals, and that until such evidence is brought forward he is not prepared to accept it.