

Why the Opium Conference Failed

THE refusal of Great Britain and France to agree to the proposals of the American delegation for the complete prohibition of opium production throughout the world has been followed by the withdrawal of the American and Chinese delegations, which brings to an end the Opium Conference at Geneva. The counter-proposals of Britain and France would have postponed the prohibition of opium production for so many years that they could only have been put forward with a view to defeat the project. The British Government refused to prohibit production in India until the other producing countries did likewise.

Great Britain's attitude on this question was not unexpected. In 1839 the British Government went to war with China because the Emperor ordered the destruction of 20,000 chests of opium, which had been brought into the country by British traders in contravention of the laws of China. British warships bombarded and captured Canton, and in the terms of peace the British Government obtained an indemnity of \$21,000,000 and the island of Hong Kong. Fifteen years after another war took place, and China was forced to pay another indemnity of 3,000,000 dollars. By the Treaty of Tientsin the sale of opium in China was legalised in 1858. In the bombardment of Canton, "field pieces loaded with grape shot were planted at the end of long, narrow streets crowded with innocent men, women and children to mow them down like grass till the gutters flowed with their blood." The "Times" correspondent recorded that half an army of 10,000 men were in ten minutes destroyed by the sword, or forced into the broad river.

In her book on "The Opium Monopoly," Ellen N. La Motte says: "India is the source and fount of the British opium trade, and it is from Indian opium that the drug is chiefly supplied to the world." It is a Government monopoly. "Cultivators who wish to plant poppies may borrow money from the Government free of interest, the sole condition being that the crop be sold to the Government. It is manufactured into opium at the Government factory at Ghasipur, and once a month the Government holds auctions at Calcutta, by means of which the drug finds its way into the trade channels of the world—illicit and otherwise." In the year 1916-17 there were 204,186 acres devoted to the cultivation of poppies. The direct revenue from opium for the same year was £3,160,000, but there was also an indirect revenue in the form of excise. We thus see the British Government fostering and reaping revenue from the production of opium, while, at the same time, professing a desire to abolish its use.

British Colonies in the East derive a steady income from opium in one way or another. In Mauri-

tius, in 1916, the duty on opium was 227,628 rupees. In North Borneo the Government has taken over the sole control of the sale of chandu (smoking opium), owing to the falling off in the receipts. In Singapore there are several hundred Government licensed opium shops and opium dens, a large part of the city's revenue coming from this source. In the Straits Settlements 50 per cent of the total revenue comes from opium. By the Treaty between Siam and Great Britain in 1856, the import of opium into Siam is free—no import duty is allowed. There are over 3,000 retail opium shops in the country, from which much revenue is derived. In Hong Kong "about one-third of the revenue is derived from the opium monopoly." In the colony of Sarawak "the principal sources of revenue are the opium, gambling and pawn shops, and arrack," producing in 1913 \$492,455, just about one-half of the total revenue.

Shanghai, being a Treaty port, is of two parts—the native city, administered by the Chinese, and the International Settlement, administered by the Shanghai Municipal Council, controlled, of course, by the British. In 1907, China enacted and enforced drastic laws prohibiting opium smoking and opium selling on Chinese soil, but was powerless to enforce these laws on "foreign" soil. In the foreign concessions the Chinese were able to buy as much opium as they pleased, merely by stepping over an imaginary line where Chinese laws did not apply. The result was that whereas in 1907 there were only 87 licensed opium shops in the International Settlement, in 1914 there were 663, while the monthly revenue from these shops rose from 338 taels in January, 1908 to 10,772 taels in April, 1914. As fast as the production of opium in China was suppressed, the exports of British opium from India into the Treaty ports were increased, their value rising from £1,031,065 in 1906-7 to £3,242,902 in 1912-13.

We think these facts are sufficient proof of the contentions of the American press that the British Government took part in the Opium Conference merely to prevent its success. And when we read in a daily paper that a Chinaman has been sent to prison for keeping an opium den in East London or Liverpool, let us remember that the opium was produced with the assistance of British capital and sold by a British official in India.

We have never advocated legal prohibition in any shape or form, but simply wish to point out the hypocrisy of the British Government, whose action at the Conference was supported by the representatives of the French Government, whose hands are also soiled by the traffic in opium in their Eastern territory.

—Freedom, (London).

THE POSITION OF TROTSKY

(Concluded from last issue.)

In Russia the revolution was "saved" by Lenin, who overruled Zinoviev, but in those other countries where there was no Lenin to overrule him the attempts to bring about a Bolshevik revolution failed. Says Trotsky:

We have had in the last year (1923) plenty of convincing proof that our October experience (the Bolshevik revolution of October 25, Old Style; November 7, New Style) has not sufficiently entered into the blood and marrow of even those Western countries that have fairly ripe Communist parties, that it is in fact unknown to them in its most fundamental aspects. We have suffered in the past two years severe defeats in Bulgaria. At first the party, because of its doctrinaire fatalistic mode of reasoning, overlooked an exceptionally favorable moment for revolutionary action (the uprising of the peasants after the famine appeared in June). Then, trying to correct the mistake, the party threw all its energies into the September revolt without sufficiently preparing the political and economic essentials for such an uprising.

The Bulgarian revolution was supposed to serve as a sort of a wedge for the German revolution. Unfortunately the ineffective Bulgarian attempt was paralleled by an even worse state of affairs in Germany. We saw in Germany in the second half of the past year (1923) a classic demonstration of the fact that it is possible to lose a very exceptional revolutionary situation of world-wide historic significance. Nor have we yet given ourselves an adequate and concrete account for these revolutionary failures in Germany and Bulgaria.

Zinoviev and Kamenev are not the only Russian Communist leaders who come in for condemnation by Trotsky in his book "1917." Most of the members of the Executive Committee of the party, he declares, were, on more than one occasion during the months before the coup d'état, at odds with Lenin over his policy and tactics, thinking them too rash and fearing that this recklessness would invite disaster rather than success. Trotsky implies that he was the only one who fully grasped the workings of Lenin's mind, agreeing with and upholding him in every crisis.

Lenin on his arrival in Russia (from his exile in Switzerland) made a quick survey of the situation and decided what course the Russian revolution must take. He was for the unconditioned overthrow of the Provisional Government. But for several months he kept this slogan to himself waiting to spring at the moment when it would find the greatest number of adherents. . . . Following such an overthrow of the Provisional Government, Lenin's policy was to take immediately the reins of government through the Soviets, to institute a revolutionary peace policy and to set in motion the program of a Socialist overturn within the country and of international revolution abroad.

Again and again, Trotsky asserts, Lenin had to bring pressure to bear upon the members of the Executive Committee of the Communist, or Bolshevik Party, as it was then known, to adopt his views, the majority of the committee having been inclined to be much less daring and determined in the revolutionary advance than was Lenin. If this revival of the Zinoviev-Kamenev "mistake" intensified the breach which had long existed between them and Trotsky, the version given by the War Minister of the disagreements, if not actual clashes, between the entire Central Committee of the Communist Party and Lenin lost for him nearly every friend he had ever had among the "Old Guard" of the revolution.

For months Trotsky's "1917" has been the object of a denunciation to which few books have been subjected. Endless columns have been filled with articles in the Communist newspapers—and all newspapers in Russia are Communist—for the purpose of minimizing Trotsky's statements and charges. The book has been variously characterized. Its brilliancy is conceded, but a correct statement of events, it is emphatically asserted, the book is not. Kamenev answers Trotsky by charging him with trying to substitute his own ideas for those of Lenin. Zinoviev accuses Trotsky of undermining Bolshevism. Others charge the War Minister with trying to place himself on a pedestal beside Lenin, with trying to take the mantle of the dead leader. The most critical and yet a far from uncomplimentary picture of Trotsky has been given by Stalin, the third of the triumvirate with Zinoviev and Kamenev, who is originally a Georgian revolutionary, and whose real name is Djughashvili. Says Stalin in the Pravda of Nov. 26, 1924:

Let us now go over the legend about the special role of Comrade Trotsky in the October revolution. Trotsky's followers very actively spread rumors that Trotsky was the inspired and sole leader of the October uprising. These rumors are spread most energetically by the so-called editor of Trotsky's works, Comrade Lentsner. Trotsky himself, by his systematic overlooking of the party, of the Central Committee of the party and of the Leningrad (Petrograd) Committee, by keeping silent about the preponderant leadership of these organizations in the uprising, and by persistently putting himself forward as the central figure of the October uprising—intentionally or unintentionally—helps in spreading these rumors about his special role in the uprising. I am far from attempting to deny the indisputably important role of Comrade Trotsky in the uprising. But I must say that any special role in the October uprising Comrade Trotsky did not and could not play, that, being the Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, he carried out the instructions of the Soviet. The Soviet was thus the directing power behind every move Comrade Trotsky made.

Thus far Trotsky has not answered the charges made against him by individuals or by the party. He is described in turn as too sick to answer and as setting his answer down in a new book. Meanwhile, parallel with the attacks on him, a Trotsky "legend" is arising, and becoming ever more widely spread—a legend embodying the view that Leon Trotsky is one of the greatest leaders of the Russian revolution and one of the greatest figures of his time.

—Current History Magazine (N. Y.)

MANIFESTO

of the
SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA
(Fifth Edition)

Per copy..... 10 cents

Per 25 copies..... 25

Post Paid.