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Item 5 of the agenda

ABOLITION OF OPIUM SMOKING IN THE FAR EAST

Report by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland for Sarawak, Singapore and Brunei

The Secretary-General has the honour to communicate to the members of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs the report for 1950 on the abolition of opium smoking in the Far East which has been received from the United Kingdom for Sarawak, Singapore and Brunei.

SARAWAK

Report on the Suppression of Opium Smoking in 1950

1. The Customs Department continued its vigilance at all ports resulting in the detection of 5 attempts to smuggle opium. In all cases the offenders were prosecuted and all were convicted. The heaviest sentence being a fine of \$5,000 or in default 2 years' imprisonment.
2. The reduction in offences as against 1949 is thought to be due to the increased activities of the Singapore authorities thus making it more difficult to smuggle out of Singapore. In all 4,851 kilogrammes of opium were confiscated and destroyed.
3. The total number of convictions for offences of all sorts against the Opium Ordinance amounted to 46.
4. Two persons were treated in the Colony's hospitals for opium addiction.

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SINGAPORE

Report on the Suppression of Opium Smoking in 1950

The general background of the problem has not changed materially during the year under review and remains as set out in the opening paragraphs of the corresponding reports for 1948 and 1949.

Number of Addicts

2. It has not been possible to obtain data upon which a reliable estimate of the number of addicts can be based.

Sources of Illicit Supply

3. Most of the opium found in Singapore during the year came by sea from China ports, but imports from Indian and Persian Gulf ports were also detected.

4. In a number of cases opium was found hidden in ships the structure of which had been damaged in order to create places of concealment. In other cases considerable quantities of opium were discovered in course of import secreted in packages of what purported to be legitimate merchandise.

Seizures of Illicit Opium

5. During the year 6,346.79 lbs. (2,878.86 kilogrammes) of raw opium and 232.38 lbs. (105.4 kilogrammes) of prepared opium were seized. Of the prepared opium seized only 30.95 lbs. (14.04 kilogrammes) were found on board ship and from this it may be deduced that the quantity of prepared opium imported as such is not great. It appears that almost all the opium which reaches Singapore does so in its raw state and that its preparation for smoking is undertaken only after it has reached the hands of the middlemen who supply it to consumers. This is an interesting change from the practice of the smugglers of a decade ago who preferred to handle opium in its more concentrated prepared form.

Measures to Combat the Illicit Import and Distribution of Opium

6. Every effort is made to prevent the import of illicit opium into the Colony. Ships likely to be used for the smuggling of opium are met at sea by Customs launches and escorted into port, to restrict the chances of buoyed packages of opium being jettisoned in surroundings by members of the crew, to be recovered later by confederates from the shore. The use for this purpose of fast, but outwardly innocent, powered craft such as are common around the shores of Malaya provides a difficult problem for the Preventive Service.

7. Customs guards are placed upon vessels on arrival in the port and suspect ships, in particular, are thoroughly rummaged by experienced Customs searchers. Sometimes precise information as to hiding places is available and enables rummagers to recover concealed opium quickly, but the majority of the opium discovered on board ship comes to light as the result of patient, skilled and arduous searching. Seizures resulting from ship-board rummaging were greater during the second half of the year than in its earlier months.

8. The discovery of substantial quantities of opium ashore during the year indicates that, despite the utmost efforts by the waterguard, illicit landing of opium still goes on.

9. In this connexion it must be remembered that Singapore is a great entrepôt, not only by virtue of its free trade policy, but also on account of its geographical position which makes it a natural centre for the trade of Malaysia, both legitimate and otherwise. There is evidence that opium is smuggled ashore in Singapore not only for consumption in the Colony but for re-export to neighbouring territories particularly to Malayan hinterland.

10. The Preventive Service of the Colony plays, therefore a part in keeping down the quantity of opium available in those territories and thereby assists in the suppression of the opium habit in all the territories for which Singapore serves as an entrepôt.

11. Once again however, it is necessary to emphasize that, while the action which can be taken here against illicit traders in and consumers of opium is of value in suppressing the opium habit, effective action by the countries in which the opium poppy grows, to keep production of opium down to the quantity for which there is a legitimate demand, is the only fully effective means of stamping out opium addiction.

Measures Taken to Combat the Illicit Consumption of Opium

12. The measures which can be taken to combat the illicit consumption of opium, unlike the steps taken to prevent the import and distribution of opium are necessarily of local application only.

13. They fall into two categories, those involving direct action against addicts and those of a general nature which by attaching unsatisfactory living conditions and the diseases which those conditions breed, will gradually reduce the temptation to resort to narcotics as a means of escape from misery.

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14. In the first category came the increasing round of visits to all places where facilities for the smoking of opium are known to exist and the seizure of any opium and opium smoking apparatus found there.

15. In the second category special mention may be made of the Colony's ten year plan for the very great expansion of its medical and health services, the activities of the Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association, (a voluntary body complementary in its particular field to the Government Medical Department) and the five year education plan, designed to bring free compulsory education to all children. These are the spearhead of the attack. The haft of the spear is the fostering of any activity, be it sport or entertainment or thrift or co-operative societies or any other movement which will encourage the needy sections of the population to rise above the tenement and hovel existence which breeds the opium habit.

APPENDIX A

SEIZURE OF OPIUM OF 50 POUNDS AND OVER ON BOARD
VESSELS IN THE PORT OF SINGAPORE DURING 1950

Date	Name of Steamer	Nationality	From	WEIGHT		Where Found
				Lbs.	Tahils	
12. 1.50	"Diplodon" (tanker)	British	Persia	54	648	Hidden in Spare Officers cabin.
17. 5.50	Motor Sampan No. 1906			330	3,960	Hidden in Sampan
12. 6.50	M/V "Produce"	British	China	332	3,984	Concealed in coffer-dam between fuel tanks beneath main boiler.
21. 6.50	M/V "Hoegh Silvermoon"	Norwegian	Bombay	242	2,904	Concealed in five cases out of twenty cases of Turmeric.
4. 7.50	M/V "Yochow"	British	China	88½	1,062	Concealed under two wooden ventilator covers in a cupboard in the cabin.
8. 8.50	M/V "Van Heutsz"	Dutch	China	370	4,440	Concealed in Twenty cases out of sixty cases of tea leaves.
21. 8.50	S/S Tonjer	British	China	104	1,248	Concealed in tunnel-shaft and coffer-dam in stoke hole.
22. 8.50	R.A.S.C. "Charles McLeod"	British	China	107½	1,290	Concealed in lubricating storage tank in after-diesel flat.
20.10.50	"Malvina" (tanker)	British	Suspected Persia	200	2,400	Concealed in chain locker forecastle.

APPENDIX B

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT, SINGAPORE

STATEMENT OF RAW AND PREPARED OPIUM SEIZED DURING 1950

	In Vessels in Singapore Harbour		On Land		Total	
	Opium Tahils	Prepared Opium Tahils	Opium Tahils	Prepared Opium Tahils	Opium Tahils	Prepared Opium Tahils
January	747.00	4.63	569.00	295.27	1,316.00	299.90
February	30.00	30.84	3,168.85	173.17	3,198.85	204.01
March	18.00	12.32	483.80	290.45	501.80	302.77
April	397.00	138.85	26,316.00	181.89	26,713.00	320.74
May	564.00	123.34	5,054.00	422.38	5,618.00	545.72
June	7,649.00	3.17	42.00	231.89	7,691.00	235.06
July	1,398.00	7.40	757.00	204.46	2,155.00	211.86
August	7,002.00	15.60	1,836.00	199.74	8,838.00	215.34
September	378.00	12.88	2,325.50	74.33	2,703.50	87.21
October	2,689.00	8.00	521.00	129.82	3,210.00	137.82
November	24.00	2.30	13,718.80	161.75	13,742.80	164.05
December	-	12.00	473.50	52.04	473.50	64.04
Total in Tahils	20,896.00	371.33	55,265.45	2,417.19	76,161.45	2,788.52
Total in Lbs.	1,741.34	30.95	4,605.45	201.43	6,346.79	232.38

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Total in
Tahils 30,583.95 / 356.49 / 24,644.55 / 3,352.79 / 55,228.50 / 3,709.28

Total in
Lbs. 2,548.66 / 29.71 / 2,053.71 / 279.40 / 4,602.37 / 309.11

/STATE OF

STATE OF BRUNEI

Report on the Suppression of Opium Smoking in 1950

During the year there were 9 seizures made resulting in the confiscation of 24 tahils 7 chees 2 hoons of prepared opium and 4 tahils 3 chees of dross. The circumstances were as follows:

- (a) In January a Chinese entered the State by bus from Miri in Sarawak. A search was made and at the bottom of a tin of biscuits 10 tahils of prepared opium were found cunningly concealed wrapped up in packets designed to resemble packets of biscuits.
 - (b) In October a passenger aboard one of the British Malayan Petroleum Company's launches was found to have in his possession amongst his personal belongings 1 chee 2 hoons of prepared opium.
 - (c) The other cases were the result of raids made in labour lines at the oilfields and in private houses.
2. All prepared chandu, dross and apparatus were confiscated and destroyed and all offenders sentenced to rigorous imprisonment.
 3. The draft Enactment to suppress opium smoking referred to in my report dated 20 June 1950 was not passed by the end of the year.