Socialism and Ethnic Problems in America

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The weakness of the socialist movements in contemporary America is symbolized by the fact that at the fourth annual meeting of the Socialist Scholars Conference held in September, 1968, a final session was devoted to exploring the preconditions for a “mass” Socialist party in the United States. There are many factors that explain the weakness of socialism in America, but this article concentrates on the “ethnic” factor among others.

There are some socialists, such as Friedrich Sorge and Otto Bauer, who had a fairly good understanding of the complexity of ethnic politics, but, generally speaking, the ethnic factor has been a stumbling block to many socialists including Karl Marx.

In my opinion, the racial and national diversity of the United States has prevented the spread of socialism in at least two ways. On the one hand, it has furthered the the growth of “artificial” nationalism by making the American people aware of the necessity of national unity and this “artificial” nationalism has worked to weaken the class consciousness of Americans, thus contributing to the decline of socialism in America. On the other hand, the racial and national diversity of the United States has hampered the progress of socialism by introducing tensions between ethnic groups into American society. Here it is to be noted that two factors, artificial nationalism and ethnic tensions, have worked “together” to discourage the growth of American socialism, rather than offsetting each other.

The ethnic tensions, which are the major subject of the present study, have worked to the disadvantage of American socialism in two ways. In the case where American socialists adopted negative
or hostile attitudes toward ethnic groups, they were bound to lose an important segment of their potential clientele. On the contrary, when American socialists tried to take positive or friendly attitudes toward them, they also suffered a severe blow from ethnic tensions. Typical of the former case was the policy of the Socialist Party of America toward immigrants and Negroes, while the latter case was typically represented by the policy of the Communist Party of the United States toward Negroes.

There may be other specific influences of the ethnic factor upon American socialism. For example, in the United States where universal suffrage for males had been established in most states by the 1830's, the political parties competed to organize the "political machines" in order to secure the votes of various ethnic minorities and these machines controlled by the bosses provided the needy members of ethnic groups with emergency support in exchange for their votes. In other words, the political machines functioned as "private" welfare agencies, toning down the appeals of socialism to these "downtrodden" people at the very time when they were most susceptible to such appeals. This article, however, does not deal with such specific influences of the ethnic factor upon American socialism.
The Blacks in the Ante-Bellum South

Yasuko I. Shinoda

To understand the southern society of the ante-bellum period, an objective study of the structure of the southern society is required. However, that section’s social and economic structure is so controversial and so productive of emotional reaction that the historical profession finds it no easy task to reach fair and unbiased conclusions on the subject. Students of the ante-bellum South cannot overlook the unpublished as well as published statistics of the United States Census as basic data for their objective analysis.

The second point of the study is that almost all of the studies on slavery have been done by white scholars, primarily discussing the economic profitability of the Peculiar Institution. In dealing with the institution of slavery, moreover, the important books and significant controversies have almost all assumed that the plantation and farm have been the special setting of the institution. Yet from almost the beginning slavery was an urban institution. In many important ways, slavery in cities was quite different from its rural institution.

In tracing the development of urban Negroes I have examined intensively the census records of nine counties in the State of North Carolina. By 1860, as the census figures outlined the story, the institution of slavery was in great disarray in the southern cities. Though the number of slaves rose in the South throughout the entire years, except one decade, the proportion living in the urban communities declined. The declining population of the urban Negroes moved along two lines. One was the reduction of the blacks in the cities partly by the tightening of emancipation procedures to concentrate the free Negroes in the cities and partly by the sale of
young male slaves to owners in rural areas. The second, and the 
most significant tendency in the ante-bellum cities was that southern 
cities developed a new system of segregation. Even before slavery 
had been abolished, a system of racial segregation had grown up in 
the cities. The de-urbanization of the Negroes in the days of slavery 
has had an effect on social as well as economic development of the 
blacks after emancipation.

The Yap Controversy

Yoshiko Nakamura

A dispute in connection with the Island of Yap became an issue 
between the United States of America and Japan soon after World 
War I. What is the Yap controversy, and what significance and 
what influence it had on the relations between both countries are 
discussed in this paper.

Yap island is a small island of 84 square miles and is western-
most in the Carolines group in the Pacific, which was owned by 
Germany since 1899. Yap had no economic value except that in 1919 
it was the cable communication center for the German-Netherland 
Telegraph Company. Soon after the outbreak of World War I, the 
Japanese Navy occupied all the German Pacific Islands north of the 
Equator including Yap, which later at the Paris Peace Conference 
became a Japanese possession as a Japanese Class-C mandate under 
the Covenant of the League of Nations. From Yap cables ran to 
Shanghai, Menado and Guam. From Guam, which was under the 
control of the United States, cable lines stretched further to the 
Philippines, Japan and the United States. These cable lines were 
then the only means of communication for the United States with 
the Far East. Because of significance of Yap, President Wilson at 
the Conference suggested its internationalization and requested that
it should be reserved for future consideration. The United States took it for granted that Yap Island was excluded from Japanese mandate, because of previous reservation on Yap and because of its importance. Japan understood that Yap Island was, of course, included in her mandated islands.

About a year and a half after the decision, the United States protested that Yap should be excluded from the Japanese mandated islands and should be internationalized at the Preliminary Conference on Electric Communication, which was held in the autumn of 1920 at Washington attended by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Japan was convinced that she should maintain her mandate at any cost.

It was June 1921 that the problem moved to the stage of direct diplomatic negotiations between the United States and Japan, without obvious progress until then. Their eagerness to settle the problem quickly made it possible for them to reach an agreement in December, 1921, during the Washington Naval Conference. The United States and Japan formally concluded the treaty on February 11, 1922. Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, and the Japanese Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the United States, Kijuro Shidehara, contributed their strenuous efforts to its settlement. In the treaty Japan attained her primary aim—keeping Yap under her mandate and the United States secured all rights and privileges on the Japanese mandated islands that were accorded to League members.

The Yap controversy ended satisfactorily for both countries, and they could maintain friendly relations. This problem is not a major one for either country and it is a question which country gained something and which lost something. It has some meaning, however, for the settlement was one type of diplomatic negotiations between the two in the 1920's.
Many books and monographs on Benjamin Franklin have been published in the past decade after the appearance of my book *Benjamin Franklin* (1957), but the following are worthy of note.


Needless to say, (1) are landmarks in historical and biographical scholarship and (2) is the first thoroughly edited and adequately annotated version of Franklin’s memoirs faithful in every word to Franklin’s holograph. (3) is an excellent biography and the author has tried to reveal Franklin as a man first, as a universal genius second. He has avoided the temptation to place Franklin upon a hero’s pedestal and to make him appear superhuman. (4) is a systematic examination of the political and social thought of Franklin. (5) is a brilliant exposition of the educational ideas of Franklin.