

FROM EXCLUSION TO INTEGRATION: SEARCH FOR POSTWAR HEGEMONY AND REPEAL OF THE ORIENTAL EXCLUSION ACTS*

DAIZABURO YUI

I. *World War II as a Race War*

World War II had a variety of aspects, for example, Anti-Fascist war, imperialist war and a war for the liberation of colonized peoples. But it had another hidden aspect which has been rarely examined, that is, a race war. As John W. Dower pointed out in his provocative book, *WAR WITHOUT MERCY*, World War II was "a race war. It exposed raw prejudices and was fueled by racial pride, arrogance, and range on many sides. Ultimately, it brought about a revolution in racial consciousness throughout the world that continues to the present day."¹

It is well known that the Axis powers committed many crimes of genocide based on racial prejudices such as Nazi's Anti-Semitic Holocaust. But the Allied Powers were also hard to proclaim their innocence in this aspect of racism. In Asia and Africa even in wartime the British, French, and Dutch tried to maintain their colonial rules, justified by the logic of "White Supremacy." The self-appointed anti-colonial power, the United States of America, also turned a blind eye toward its own domestic racism manifested in the Jim Crow system of segregation throughout the South and the internment of Japanese Americans in wartime "relocation center."

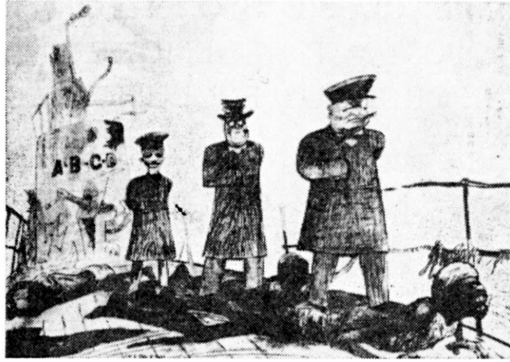
American racism and Western colonialism were, therefore, the Achilles' heel of the Allied Powers particularly on their ideological front. Figure 1 shows a Japanese cartoon that appeared in *Manga* in mid-1942, criticizing the Allied leaders as Napoleonic megalomaniacs, trampling the oppressed natives of Asia underfoot. By contrast the Japanese depicted themselves as a "liberator" of Asian colonized peoples in their plan of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" as seen on the cover of a wartime pamphlet for Japanese children (Figure 2).

The weakpoints of the Allied Powers on the ideological plane were typically shown in Anglo-American debates over the Atlantic Charter. In the third article of the Charter,

* This paper was presented to the Second Research Conference on Ethnic Factors in US-Japanese Relations (Research Projects of the National Institute for Research Advancement) held at International House of Japan on July 17, 1993.

¹ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race And Power in the Pacific War*, Pantheon, 1986, p. 4.

FIGURE 1



Source: John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, Pantheon, 1986, p. 192.

FIGURE 2



Source: YUI Daizaburo, *Mikan-no-Senryo Kaikaku (The Unfinished Reforms in Occupied Japan)*, Univ. of Tokyo Press, 1989, p. 94.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill agreed that “they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”

But in his address to the House of Commons in early September 1941, Churchill denied the applicability of this article to the British colonies, declaring: “At the Atlantic meeting, we had in mind, primarily, the restoratoin of the sovereignty, self-government and national

² W. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: 1941–45*, Oxford, 1977, p. 130.

life of the states and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke. . . . So that is quite a problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown."²

The Churchill's rationalization of the British imperial rule soon encountered criticism from leading officials and opinion makers in the United States. Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, proclaimed the universality of the Atlantic Charter in his Memorial Day address in 1942, noting that "The right of a people to their freedom must be recognized, as the civilized world long since recognized the right of an individual to his personal freedom. The principles of the Atlantic Charter must be guaranteed to the world as a whole—in all oceans and in all continents."³

Many American press also supported the universality of the Atlantic Charter as shown in the political cartoon (Figure 3). Similar tendencies could be found among American intellectuals, particularly Asian specialists. American members of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), a non-governmental international organization of Asian-Pacific specialists, were particularly concerned not only with this colonial question, but also with problem of racism. At IPR international conference held at Hot Springs, Virginia in January 1945, they proposed the following supplementary statement with a view to having it adopted by the United Nations.

- "1. The United Nations emphatically reject the theories of 'master races' who claim to have inherently superior qualities entitling them to rule over or to act as guardians of other races or peoples.

FIGURE 3



Source: YUI Daizaburo, *Mikan-no-Senryo Kaikaku (The Unfinished Reforms in Occupied Japan)*, Univ. of Tokyo Press, 1989, p. 97.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

2. The United Nations proclaim the fundamental equality of all peoples. They pledge themselves to unceasing efforts to enable all peoples to enjoy the benefits of that equality.
3. They further proclaim the principle of universal international accountability for colonial and dependent peoples and all peoples or groups within any country who do not enjoy full social, economic and political rights.
4. They favor the adoption of regional Councils under the general responsibility of a General Assembly as envisaged in the Proposals adopted at Dumbarton Oaks."⁴

This draft was a product of a compromise between American and British members of the IPR. On the colonial question they took pains to use the vague expression, "international accountability", instead of using more explicit "independence of colonial peoples." This compromise, however, invited such fierce criticism from other members, namely the Canadian and Chinese, that the proposed draft could not be adopted even at the IPR's international conference.

If even non-governmental organizations in the Allied camp faced great difficulties in taking clear position on colonial and racial questions, how much more difficult was it for its governmental bodies to deal with this questions? In fact, no supplementary statement to the Atlantic Charter on colonial and racial questions was ever announced by the Allied governments in wartime. Racial and colonial questions, therefore, remained the Achill's heel of the Allied Powers on their ideological front.

II. *The Repeal of the Filipino and Indian Exclusion Acts*

On March 7, 1945, Representative Emmanuel Celler of New York, a sponsor of a bill to grant a quota to East Indians and to make them racially eligible for naturalization, addressed at the hearings before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization.

"Tokyo, Burma, and Malay radios hammer harder than ever at India. They shout: 'Come over to our side. You have nothing to fear from the Japanese.' They taunt the people of India with the gruesome assertion that according to Churchill the Atlantic Charter does not apply to them. . . .

Unless we amend out of our statutes the bar sinister against East Indians, Hirohito will call us hypocrites and will screech 'Don't be fools, you good people of India. These tartuffes of America and Britain prate of brotherly love, but they only pretend good will. . . .' "⁵

A "barred-zone" provision of the 1917 Immigration Act excluded immigrants from India, along with other Asian except the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese who were excluded by other means. In 1922 the Supreme Court judged unanimously that East Indians were ineligible for naturalization.

⁴ Rapporteur's Report, Round Table B—Topic V—Dependent Areas, Ninth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, January 1945, p. 6, The Collection of the IPR, Univ. of Hawaii.

⁵ U.S., Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Hearings on the Bills to Grant a Quota to Eastern Hemisphere Indians and to Make Them Racially Eligible For Naturalization*, GPO, 1945, pp. 5-6.

But even after other Asian immigrants were excluded immigrants from the Philippines maintained a peculiar status. Because the Philippines was an American colony until 1946, they were neither aliens who subject to exclusion by American immigration laws nor citizens of the United States. After passage of the Philippine Independence bill in 1934 they became 'aliens' and the minimum quota of 50 a year were eligible for admission to the United States, but they were ineligible for naturalization.

Following the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, the Filipino and East Indian peoples in the United States, naturally began to demand the same status as the Chinese.

In the mainland of the United States during early 1940's there were almost 84,000 Filipinos and 4,000 East Indians. Many served in the American armed forces or engaged in production of essential war materials. Moreover, their mother countries cooperated militarily with the Allied Forces, further impressing the American people. Whether as Filipino guerrillas fighting against the Japanese army in the Philippines or as Indian volunteers (numbering almost 2 million) on the battle fronts of Burma, Italy, and North Africa, they aided the Allies war efforts.

In November 1944 the hearings on the bill providing for the naturalization of Filipinos were held by the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. Dr. Diosdado M. Yap, representing 37 Filipino organizations in the United States and the Territory of Hawaii, testified that "In the Battle of the Philippines the Filipino people sealed with their blood their loyalty to America and to the very ideals and principles for which Americanism symbolize . . . the whole world has been watching with envious eyes and admiration the Philippine-American experiment and many have viewed it as a model for post-war international relations between nations and their colonies."⁶

"Loyalty to the United States" and a "model for the postwar American Asian relations" were common arguments used by Filipinos and Indians to persuade American congressmen and public opinion to repeal the Exclusion Laws. Interestingly, just how effective these arguments were shown by the following statement of an ex-national commander of the American Legion, formerly one of the major Anti-Oriental groups:

"India has made a great contribution toward winning the war. Hundreds of thousands of her citizens have fought in Africa, in Italy, and on the Burma front. That great country is host to hundreds of thousands of Americans. Her men are fighting side by side with our forces against a common enemy. She is the only remaining major ally in this great war to preserve democracy whose citizens are denied the right to attain American citizenship no matter how worthy they may be. I respectfully submit that the granting of citizenship to Indians would create no race, labor, or other problem in this country; it would correct an injustice and relieve a hardship on deserving producers on the food front."⁷

No opposition was voiced at the hearings on Filipino naturalization bill. Acting Secretary of State, E. R. Stettinius, Jr. and Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes sent favorable letters to the Committee.

⁶ U.S., Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Hearings on the Bills Providing for the Naturalization of Filipinos*, GPO, 1944, pp. 15, 18.

⁷ Hearings on the East Indian Immigration Bills, p. 93.

In the case of the hearings on the Indian bill, several letters of opposition were sent by such patriotic organizations as the American Coalition, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, and the Daughter of America, all of whom opposed both naturalization and immigration of "people of color." But major anti-oriental organizations like the California Joint Immigration Committee and the Native Sons of the Golden West kept silent on this issue.

Among labor unions, the American Federation of Labor adopted a negative resolution at its national convention in November 1944, which demanded that "Our most pressing problem when peace comes will be to find full employment for our citizens, and when this has been established we can then, but not until then, give consideration to the lowering of our immigration barriers." Representatives of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the United Automobile Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, however, supported the liberalized immigration law.⁸

Top officials of the executive branch also showed positive support for the Indian bill. President Roosevelt sent a letter on March 5, 1945 in which he said that "I regard this legislation as important and desirable, and I believe that its enactment will help us to win the war and to establish a secure peace. . . . The quota for East Indian persons would be approximately 100 immigrants a year. There can be no real danger that this small number of immigrants will cause unemployment or provide competition in the search for jobs."⁹

Roosevelt's letter revealed that under the national origins quota system of the 1924 Immigration Act, immigration from India would be nominal (only 100 immigrants a year), whereas the Indian bill would substantially improve the postwar American-Indian relations. Representative Clare B. Luce of Connecticut, one of the proposers of the Indian bill, addressed this point more frankly:

"Admission of Indians on a quota basis acknowledges their partnership with us. We recognized the moral value of such an act in the case of China when we repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act. I think few Americans will fail to realize its equal justice with regard to India. It is seldom that a nation has the opportunity to obtain so great a profit at so little cost.

Indian good will, however, and our own moral satisfaction is not all we shall gain by the adoption of this resolution. Our position at the San Francisco Conference will be greatly strengthened in regard to discussing colonial policies of our allies. The criticism voiced frequently and widely in the United States against the colonial policies and imperialism of other nations has a certain degree of hypocrisy so long as, in our immigration laws, we ourselves refuse to treat all our allied on a basis of equality. We cannot successfully deplore a policy which we practice.

The practical aspect likewise should be taken into consideration. Next to Russia and China, India offers us the greatest potentiality for foreign trade during the rest of this century. . . ."¹⁰

On July 2, 1946, two days before the independence of the Philippines, President Truman

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-115.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

signed both the bill providing for the naturalization of Filipinos and the bill to admit Indians on a quota basis and permit them to be naturalized.

III. *Conclusion*

The bills were enacted for several reasons. First, at the level of congressional debates, diplomatic considerations in postwar Asia overrode racial prejudices against Asian peoples. In other words, the search for postwar hegemony made American leaders realize that racism was an obstacle impeding diplomatic strategy.

Second, Asian residents' tactic of emphasizing their loyalty to the United States in wartime strongly influenced not only American decision-makers, but the American public as well. Patriotic experiences of fighting together in the same war served to lower racial barriers as never before. Ironically, however, this response made American racial minorities more nationalistic and patriotic than ever before.

Third, under the national origin quota system of the 1924 Immigration Law, the number of aliens admitted each year was so small that the American public could easily accept them without fear of severe competition in the labor market.

Fourth, the fact that the targets of immigration and naturalization bills were not Asians in general, but limited to Asians fought in the Allied camp was also effective for the enactment. If the bill to repeal Asian Exclusion Acts applied to Japanese immigrants, the enactment would have been much more difficult in view of the strong anti-Japanese feelings among the American people immediately after the war as shown in the following remark of Representative Samuel Dickstein, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization; "As far as I am concerned, I would not want to see a quota for Japan for the next thousand years."¹¹

It took almost 6 years for all other Asians including the Japanese, to become eligible for both citizenship and immigration. The McCarran-Walter Act, enacted on June 27, 1952, gave these rights to all Asians, but this Act reaffirmed the national origins quota system and included the Asian-Pacific Triangle provision to exclude immigrants with Asian ancestry in the Western Hemisphere. The McCarran-Walter Act, therefore, still had a racially discriminatory character.

Moreover, the Act added a new exclusionist provision, that is, security provision to exclude suspected 'subversives' from the United States. This addition revealed that the repeal of the Japanese Exclusion Act was a product of Cold War diplomacy which added to American immigration policy a new strategy of exclusion based on ideological belief.

The remark by Representative Walter Judd of Minnesota, a leading advocate of all Asian quotas and naturalization including the Japanese, symbolized this fact. Testifying at the House hearings on Immigration and Naturalization in April 1948 he asserted that the repeal of the Japanese exclusion law was indispensable for the United States in order to make Japan an ally in the struggle against Communism.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.