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Source: *Current History (1916-1940)*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (APRIL, 1921), pp. 108-110

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45325996>

Accessed: 08-02-2025 22:11 UTC

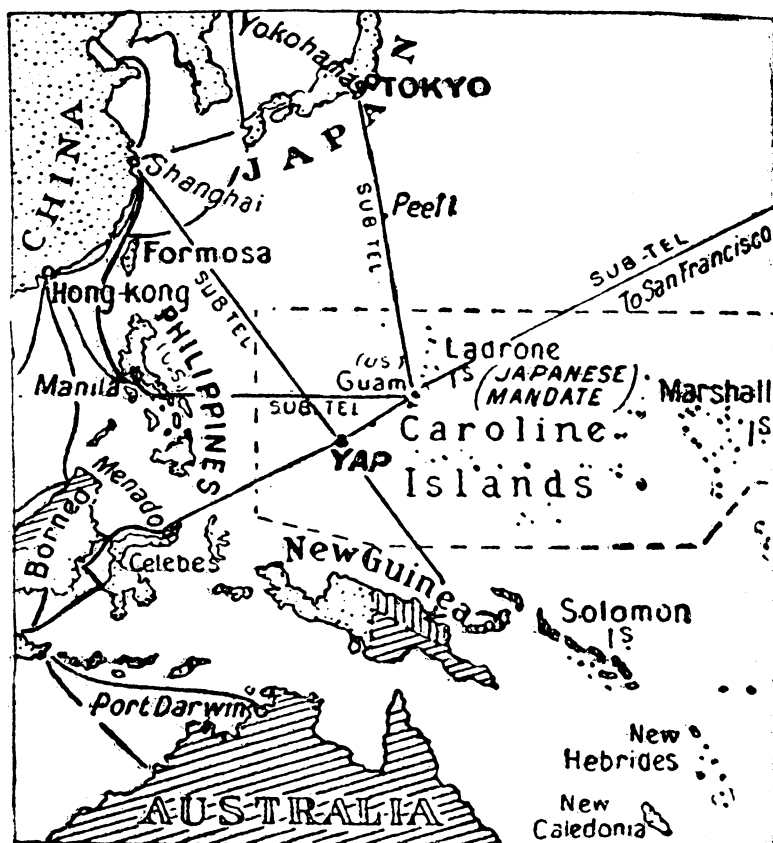
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THE CONTROVERSY OVER YAP ISLAND

Summary of the dispute with Japan, due to the Allies' action in giving away the sovereign rights over a Pacific island in which the United States has vital cable interests

THE dispute which has arisen between the United States and Japan over the question of cable rights in the Island of Yap, the former German possession in the South Pacific Ocean, was originally but a part of the whole problem of dividing up the ex-German cable lines. It has rapidly broadened, however, into the much more important matter of the United States Government's efforts to establish its rights to consultation on all mandates assigned by the Supreme Council or defined by the Council of the League of Nations.

The history of the case goes back to the Peace Conference in Paris, when the allied

diplomats were drafting the plans for mandates over the former German colonies. It was later alleged by President Wilson that when the question arose of granting a mandate to Japan over certain former German islands north of the equator, he was particular to move an exception in the case of the Island of Yap, on the ground that it represented the terminus of important cable lines necessary to the United States for uninterrupted communication with China and the Far East. It was the President's understanding that the validity of this exception had been admitted, and that Japan would not be given the sovereignty over

Yap when she received the mandate for the other German islands north of the equator.

This was the situation when the international Congress of Communications was called in Washington during the last weeks of 1920. The main function of this congress was to determine the disposition to be made of the cables taken from Germany during the war. The five main powers concerned—Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States—were represented by official delegates. The sessions of this international conference, it soon developed, were destined to be stormy, subject to repeated interruptions, and, so far as actual achievement up to the present time is concerned, virtually sterile of results, except that of accentuating the discord among all parties concerned.

CRUX OF THE CONTROVERSY

The difficulties that arose were due to the insistence of the American delegates, supported by the Washington Government, that the two former German cables connecting New York with Emden, Germany, lines which had been cut and diverted by Great Britain and France during the war, should be returned to the possession of this country, and that the cable lines to the Far East, via the Island of Yap, should be internationalized. One of the two Emden cables had been cut and diverted by France to Brest; the other had been cut and diverted by Great Britain to Halifax. As for the Far Eastern cables, it had been supposed that these would be internationalized in view of President Wilson's reservations at the Peace Conference; to the surprise of the American delegates, however, it appeared that Japan had no intention of internationalizing these cables, and insisted on her right of absolute sovereignty over Yap. This, combined with the refusal of both Great Britain and France to restore the two Emden cables, led to a situation which had in it the possibilities of a very animated quarrel.

The American contention was that the United States could not consent to lose control over its only undersea communications with Germany and the Scandinavian countries, on the one hand, and with China and the Far East, on the other, and that this would be the result if the three lines in question were allowed to remain in the actual ownership of the three other nations

involved. In the first case the British and Italian delegates were inclined to favor the American contentions, but the French and Japanese delegates fought shoulder to shoulder against the demands of the American representatives. After weeks of discussion the congress reached its first decision on Dec. 14, a decision which amounted to declaring that no agreement could be reached at that time; the cables were to be administered jointly until an understanding was reached.

CONFLICT OF RIGHTS

The Congress continued, with adjournments and resumptions, until February of 1921, and still the deadlock could not be resolved, both the French and Japanese delegates refusing to alter their position. The dispute with Japan took on a more serious aspect when the Tokio Government announced its intention to stand upon its rights in Yap as defined in the mandates under "Class C," the third mandate type laid down by Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles. The Washington Government refused in any way to modify its demand that the Yap cables be internationalized; in this it had the full support of the Senate and its Foreign Relations Committee. The Administration took its stand squarely upon the ground that, as one of the belligerent countries, it had won the right of consultation on all mandates to be conferred; that the mandate had been offered to Japan without consulting the United States, that President Wilson had specifically excepted the Island of Yap at the Paris Peace Conference and that the granting of complete sovereignty to Japan could not be admitted.

These contentions were all embodied in the note of protest sent by Secretary Colby to the Council of the League of Nations on Feb. 21. After referring to the note that had been sent to Lord Curzon, Nov. 20, 1920, laying down the American conception of how mandates should be administered, and demanding the "open door" in Mesopotamia, the American note took cognizance of the fact that the Council of the League on Dec. 17, 1920, at Geneva, had approved the mandate to Japan over the Pacific group of islands, and proceeded to give notice that the United States had never given its consent to the inclusion of the Island of Yap in this Japanese mandate; on the contrary,

President Wilson had stipulated that the question of the disposition of Yap should be reserved for future consideration. Secretary Colby also pointed out that the United States Government had given notice of its understanding of this exclusion in official notes sent to the Governments of the other powers involved, in view of which the alleged agreement said to have been reached at the Peace Conference on May 7, 1919, under which Yap was to be included in the mandate of Japan, could not be sanctioned by the United States. This nation, therefore, as one of the "allied and associated powers," which had not agreed that Japan should receive the mandate under Class C for all the islands stated, requested the Council, which had "obviously acted under a misapprehension of the facts," to reopen the question in order that it might have proper settlement.

THE PRESENT STATUS

The reply of the Council, received at Washington on March 2, was conciliatory, and admitted the American contention regarding the right of consultation on all mandate drafts. With regard to Yap, however, it declared that the right of allocation pertained only to the Supreme Coun-

cil, and that the function of the Council of the League was limited to the definition of the mandates allocated. This left the whole question pending either between the United States and the Supreme Council, or between the United States and Japan directly. Neither the Government headed by President Wilson nor the Imperial Government of Japan showed any intention to modify its position. Japan has pointed out that, in the procès-verbal of the 1919 meeting of the Supreme Council, it has found no evidence of any exception made by President Wilson. The former President insists that the exception was made and clearly understood. The whole attitude of the United States as repeatedly set forth by the press has been that it would be intolerable for Americans to have to submit their cable dispatches to the Philippines and to the countries of the Far East to the official censorship of the Japanese Government. Japan is equally convinced that her right to the sovereignty over Yap is incontestable, inasmuch as it has been conferred by the Supreme Council of the allied and associated powers. The whole problem is one of the many which President Harding will have to solve. [For the documents in the case, see article on "Mandates."]

NINE MILLION AUTOMOBILES IN THE UNITED STATES

FIGURES compiled by the American Automobile Association show that there were 9,180,316 passenger and commercial motor vehicles used in the United States during 1920, of which 8,234,490 were passenger cars. The receipts from registration totaled almost \$100,000,000. This means that there is now one motor vehicle for about every eleven persons.

New York, which for many years has led all the other States in the number of automobiles owned within its boundaries, maintains its motor supremacy with a total of 683,919 vehicles, of which 559,521 are passenger cars and 124,893 commercial vehi-

cles. In motor truck use New York is also in the lead. Ohio and Pennsylvania are strong competitors for second place, Ohio leading with 620,600 cars and Pennsylvania coming third with 570,164. Ohio, with 82,600 trucks, is also second in the commercial list. Illinois takes fourth place with 568,914 cars, very close to Pennsylvania, but in the use of commercial cars both Illinois and Massachusetts exceed Pennsylvania, Illinois having 64,674, Massachusetts 51,386, while Pennsylvania's number is 48,329. California is the fifth State in motor use, with a total of 568,892 cars; Iowa sixth, 437,030; Texas seventh, 427,693; Michigan eighth, 412,717.