

THE IMPACTS OF INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ON THE AMERICAN SOCIAL LIFE IN THE 19TH CENTURY: THE JOHN BROWN CASE

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Endüstriyel Devrimin 19. Yüzyıl Amerikan Sosyal Hayatı Üzerindeki Etkileri: John Brown Hadisesi

Özet

Bu çalışma, endüstrileşme sürecinin Amerikan sosyal hayatı üzerindeki etkilerini, endüstriyel devrimin gerçekleştiği bir zamanda, (ki Amerikan tarihinin en karışık devirlerinden birini oluşturan bir dönemdir), yaşamış olan John Brown'ın hayatını incelemek suretiyle ortaya koymayı amaç edinir.

Sıradan bir Amerikan vatandaşı olarak hayat mücadelesi vermiş olan John Brown, başarılı bir işadamı olmak için yapmış olduğu uzun ve yorucu çabaların sonuç vermemesi üzerine bunun sorumlusu olarak gördüğü kapitalist güçlere karşı harekete geçmiş ve bunun neticesinde de Amerikan kölelik sistemine karşı ilk silahlı ayaklanmayı başlatmıştı. Brown'un isyanı 16 Ekim 1859 yılında Virjinya eyaletine bağlı Harper's Ferry kasabasında meydana gelmişti. Ancak, iki gün sonra Amerikan deniz piyadeleri tarafından kanlı bir baskından sonra yakalanmış ve mahkemeye çıkarılmıştı. Sonuç olarak, John Brown, Amerikan İç Savaşına çeyrek kala, Virjinya'da ölüm cezasına çarptırılmış ve cezası da 2 Aralık 1859'da idam edilmek suretiyle infaz edilmişti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: John Brown, endüstriyel devrimin etkileri, ABD'de sosyal ve ekonomik hayat, Amerikan iç savaşı, kölelik.

Abstract

This paper scrutinizes the effects of industrialization on the life of ordinary American people through examining the life of John Brown, who lived in one of the most turbulent times in the US (United States) history, at a time when the industrial revolution took place in the first half of the 19th century.

John Brown was an ordinary American citizen, who first long engaged in trade and commerce for being a successful businessman, but his failure in business turned him against the expanding forces of capitalism at the time, and caused him to wage a war against the slave system. Ultimately, he embarked a rebellion against the slaveholding South, and biased North on Harper's Ferry, Virginia on 16 October 1859. Two days later however he was captured by the US marines and then brought to trial. John Brown was charged with criminal conspiracy and treason against the state of Virginia, and he was eventually hanged on 2 December 1859, just prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War.

Keywords: John Brown, impacts of industrial revolution, social and economic life in the US, American civil war, slavery.

The Impacts of Industrial Revolution on the American Social Life in the 19th Century: The John Brown Case

Historians have long debated the reasons behind John Brown's activities against slavery. Conventional historians have tended to focus on the roles of Christianity, moral and social influences as the main reasons for John Brown's raid. While some historians, namely William Elsey Connelley and Oswald Garrison Villard, believed that Brown was a martyr who sacrificed his life to free the slaves, others such as Allan Nevins and C. Vann Woodward took the view that he was simply an insane murderer.¹

This paper, however, argues that the primary reasons behind John Brown's insurrection were economic and social factors although other reasons (e.g. religious and cultural) also played some part in it. The negative impact of industrialization process, which affected many Americans at the time, also made a mark on John Brown, and directed him to start a war against slavery. The paper will also touch on the general historical events and circumstances surrounded John Brown's environment in order to understand him better in the context of his time.

The start of the 19th century, with the establishment of a new political system, marked the beginning of revolutionary changes in the history of the US. It was about during the childhood years of John Brown's father (Owen), when Americans rejected the traditional social and political order inherent to

¹ See CONNELLEY, William Elsey (1971), *John Brown* (New York: Boks for Libraries Pres); VILLARD, Oswald Garrison (1910), *John Brown: A Biography Fifty Years After* (USA); NEVINS, Allan (1970), *History of the American People From 1492* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); WOODWARD, C.Vann (1983), *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North South Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

monarchy and aristocracy, by seeking to create a new society based on the republican principles of liberty and equality.

This century in which John Brown had lived can also be characterized as one of the most complex and controversial times in the US history. This was the age of the industrial revolution and the expansion of market capitalism in the North. The economic and particularly the industrial development had also negative impacts on the wide sections of society. The American people confronted many economic, social and ideological conflicts, such as the conflict between traditionalism and modernism; the struggle between freedom and slavery; feudalism and capitalism; as well as intense controversies on other issues like racism, nativism, feuds, corruption, labor movement, and gender problems.

By the end of the War of Independence, the individual states and the nation established republican constitutions that provided free elections and representative government. For the American people the Revolution meant; first, gaining their freedom from the British domination and second, instituting equality for all the people, rich and poor, black and white, privileged and unprivileged. However, this promise of social and political equality was never really fulfilled for the population in the post-revolutionary era. This was because several states imposed property requirements on candidates for higher elective offices. Also most of the states required some property qualification on the right to vote. In short, except white wealthy males everybody else; women, blacks, Indians, poor, small farmers were excluded from the political life of America as becoming socially inferior in the post-revolutionary era (HENRETTA/NOBLES, 1987: 171-173).

At this time, the social and family life of New Englanders (people from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut etc.) also started to change. After 1770's, because of economic and social factors women started to marry at older ages and had less children. They started to independently own and manage their own incomes. The old large family structure did not economically fit with the current social system anymore. With a large number of family members, it became even harder to divide inherited land, which was no longer plentiful. For these kind of economic reasons, family size began to decline and the Northern farmers started to move westward to survive.

There was a shift from patriarchal traditions in the marriage relationships to more egalitarian ones. Later on, the enhancement of the role of the woman in the family led to more responsibilities for women in the society. Upper class women started to found some women organizations for the protection of

widows with small children and orphans, after the 1800s (FISHER, 1977: 77-112).

During, and after the American Independence War, the economic life underwent considerable changes. American people were confronted with high prices, scarce goods and depreciated currency from 1775 onwards. These sort of problems were also faced by the priests in Torrington, Connecticut (CT) where John Brown was born. The author of History of Torrington, Samuel Orcutt, described these hardships in the following sense: the Reverend Noah Mervin, who was the priest of the Torrington Congregational Church in 1781, complained that he was being paid in worthless money and he asked the community to pay him with hard currency. Reverend Mervin suffered for the lack of hard money as many and small farmers did. Unlike this, some people such as merchants however obtained huge profit from the military supply contracts while poor had hard times from the post-war economic depression. At this time, some of the state governments forced farmers to pay their taxes and debts with hard currency. Because of the lack of the hard currency, the rural people could not pay their taxes and debts. This resulted in a general economic crises and public rebellions such as Shay's rebellion in Massachusetts. Thus these social, political and economic problems emerged after the war continued thorough the 19th century.

The new political and legal order was to be created during the years between 1790 and 1820. American political leaders formed a strong national government and stressed the establishment of a modern capitalist economic system, the development of financial and transportation infrastructure (such as banks, canals, turnpikes). Moreover, during these years wealthy Americans, in general, obtained considerable power over the new political and economic organizations, leading to the emergence of a new notional elite. Thus, the potential ground for social, political and economic conflicts for the common people was created by American politicians (HENRETTA/NOBLES, 1987: 185-191, 196).

The social and economic life of Northern farmers in the pre-Revolutionary era was largely determined by the particular land ownership relations. Free hold tenure provided for the rural people economic security, personal and moral independence and the respect of one's neighbors. As historian Paul E. Johnson put it; 'New Englanders trusted the man who owned land; they feared and despised the man who did not'.³ However, in the late 18th century this started to change. Cultivated fields became scarce when larger number of family members inherited the same plots of land every generation. For that reason, people of the North started either to move westward to survive or to seek jobs outside of agriculture becoming craftsmen, businessmen and

laborer. These displacements had also deep consequences for many people who lost the social stability and economic independence provided by the land ownership status. Traditional and cultural values were starting to break up (JOHNSON, 1982: 491).

These general changes in the economic, politic and social conditions in New England were also reflected in the life of the small Torrington community. The shortage of farming land determined also many people of Torrington to engage in crafts such as shoemaking, tannery or commerce selling masts for ships, boards barks for tanning, timber or apples. The local historian, Orcutt, (who knew well John Brown's life and even met him in North Elba, NY, in 1857), characterized the inhabitants of Torrington as being hardworking, energetic and more industrious. Therefore, a shift from the farming system to commercial-industry and crafts began to take place in Torrington during the post-Civil War period (ORCUTT, 1878: 77, 263).

Also in this period, the traditional family system started to change. In the traditional family system, the man was the head of the family while the wife had no other role in the family except to submit to the rule of her husband. The idea that husband is the head of the family -meaning that he has to provide for, to care for, and to protect all its members- was commonly accepted and honored. However, during 1770's this family structure was criticized and many women started to reject the relations of married life and started to retain their money and independence. In the new structure of the family, there was a more respectful approach between husband and wife instead of the slave-like submission to the master.

Moreover, the community of Torrington was well known for its religious people. Many churches were built in this period, such as the Congregational, the Baptist, and the Methodist Churches. The oldest one, the Congregational Church, established the Congregational Society and increased the number of its numbers in 1786 in Torrington. In 1799, there was a community joining at the Congregational Church that was deemed as the 'Great Awakening' when 31 persons united with the Church. That was just before John Brown was born. As Orcutt stated, 'many young people were devoted to religious life, benevolent enterprise and moral culture' (ORCUTT, 1878: 69, 263).

In addition, the education life also well developed in Torrington especially during the 1820's when a number of new schools were founded. Especially the Torrington Academy, built in 1823, became well known and appreciated by the community for training a large number of men and women teachers. In short, during the post-revolutionary era, Torrington seemed to show

similar economic and social life experiences which were occurring, in general, in New England.

Under these general economic and social circumstances Owen, John Brown's father, was born in 1771 in the village of West Simsbury (now Camden), CT. His parents John and Hannah were hardworking farmers with Dutch and British ancestry. When Owen came into the world, like many other New England farmers, Owen's family owned and operated their farm. This farm provided for their economic security, social status as well as earning and respect among their neighbors. However, the revenue of the farm became insufficient, when Owen's mother had to raise eleven children by herself (ELSEY, 1971: 1-6).

Owen became an orphan, along with ten sisters and brother at the age of five. Owen's family turned extremely poor after his father died. Life became very hard for Owen's mother who was not sure whether she could manage to survive along with her many children. Life became miserable and dreadful for Owen, too. Land was not enough for him anymore to survive, so Owen had to set out to work on his own. This was a sign for Owen, that he would face poverty and misfortune as happened to many New Englanders at that time, who had to look for jobs outside the agricultural sector, because of insufficient land. He learned to make shoes and, at the same time, Owen took strong religious guidance and instruction from his mother. He also attended the church meetings and thoroughly followed the pious commandments of the religious community (OATES, 1984: 1-4).

In 1793, Owen married Ruth Mills, a deeply religious girl, in West Simsbury. Right before the 'Great Awakening', (the religious mobilization that swept through the Torrington community making many people such as Owen's family to join the Torrington Congregational Church), Owen moved his tannery and shoe making business from Norfolk, CT to Torrington in 1799. One year later, John Brown was born in the midst of a strongly religious environment. However, at this time, Owen had been unable to make a successful business in Torrington where all the profits were captured mainly by the lumber industry. As many New England farmers had done, Owen decided to move West for him and his family to have better life conditions. Then, Owen moved to Hudson, Ohio (Oh.), and opened his tannery in 1805. Thus, John grew up under hard economic conditions but in a stringent discipline. Owen raised John to follow his trade and religious convictions (OATES, 1984: 4-6).

John's most difficult times started in 1808 when his mother died at childbirth, and when he was only 8 years old. John met for the first time a slave boy during 1812's, after he had completed one of his cattle drives. He observed

that the Negro boy was 'badly clothed' and 'poorly fed'. Seeing the master beat the slave boy in front of him with an iron fire shovel made a strong impression on little John. This made him understand what his father had taught him about the evil of slavery and felt a deep disgust towards that cruel institution. Comparing the hopeless condition of the 'fatherless and motherless' slave boy with his own, John might have felt close to that young slave boy, since he had also lost his mother as a child. This made very deep impact on John's mind and on his future convictions against slavery (ORCUTT, 1878: 320-321).

John Brown's school years were not very successful either. During school years he engaged in some hard and rough games such as wrestling, high and long jump and snowball fights. Also, Brown learned quickly how to lie and cheat and picked up some other bad habits in order to evade punishment. Later on, he had to start working at his father's tannery instead of going to school because of the economic hardships his family was confronted with. About the same time, John became a member of his father's church, at the age of sixteen (VILLARD, 1910: 5-12).

By the time he was twenty, young John married his neighbors daughter, Dianthe, in Hudson, Oh. After marrying, John respected his wife and always tried to treat her like an equal, unlike the old puritans fashions. Dianthe had even a good influence over him, especially during the early years of their marriage. They always attended the Church together; and during the nights she read the Bible to him, after he came home from the tannery. In 1821, Dianthe gave a birth to their first son, whom they named John Brown, Jr.

At this time, when the economic and industrial developments began to expand in the North, John became very ambitious and chose to work for himself, as an independent craftsmen, rather than working for his father or for anyone else. John dreamed of himself as being of a model for Christian businessman and a community leader (OATES, 1984: 8-18).

During the 1820s, the growing economic and industrial developments and changes in the textile, garment, iron and mining industries, in particular, started to spread in the Northern part of the United States. Emerging Northern capitalists established their private enterprise which developed into big companies and corporations. The expanding market economy affected the traditional relations within families and communities and resulted in even larger social changes in New England. Capitalism brought about individualism and selfishness by promoting the myth of the self-made-man. Children left families to work in the cities, giving a boost to urbanization. The movement towards the West also came with this expansion. The structure of the society changed from the farming system to industrial capitalism. These industrial developments and

economic changes which continued through 19th century transformed the society's common -moral and social- values generating also a multitude of social conflicts (CARMAN, et.al, 1961: 457-500).

In 1825, John Brown moved together his family from Hudson to Randolph, Pennsylvania (Pa) and opened another tannery, which was the first local handicraft industry in Randolph town. He gained a good reputation as a honest businessman by refusing to sell leather unless it was completely dry, saying that he 'did not mean to sell his customers water by the pound and reap an unjust gain'. He also dismissed any customer who tried to sell him moist stock.

In 1827, in spite of her emotional troubles, Dianthe brought another child to the world, Frederick I. Afterwards, Ruth and Frederick II were born. Brown, in terms of having more children, regarded marriage like the old fashioned puritans as a duty of childbearing, a commandment of God, and that was why he wanted to have more children. However, he was different from the old Puritans by respecting his wife and treating her with dignity. Moreover, like his father, Brown insisted upon discipline with his children and taught them good ethic and religious habits. From 1831 onwards, Brown became sick and his business fortunes began to go bad. He lived also thorough some family tragedies; his four years old son died and one year later, he lost his wife with his newborn child.

In 1833, John got married again with Mary Ann Day. His new wife was an old fashioned puritan women believing that a woman's task was to raise children, care for the house, and obey her husband. A year later the Brown's had their new daughter named Sarah. At this time John altogether had six children. He started to have difficulty providing for their food, clothes and other living expenses (OATES, 1984: 20-43).

Moreover, during these times, the expansion of the national and international market began to wipe out local handicraft industries. It threatened to reduce skilled artisans and craftsmen to wage earners or simple laborers hired in large establishment by nascent manufacturers who were better equipped to use new technologies and faced new sources of competition.

Reacting to the same changes, John Brown returned to Ohio which was closer to the planned transportation lines between East and West. He invested his money on a section of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Canal that ran from Akron, Ohio to Hudson, Oh. John borrowed \$20.000 from his partners in addition to \$6.000 loan from the Western Reserve Bank and engaged heavily in land speculation. At the same time he founded a Franklin Land Company together with 21 other businessmen. Like many other land speculators, Brown was convinced that the area which would soon be connected by canal to the

trade routes towards the East coast would be a profitable location for new businesses. The small company of Brown and his partners invested heavily in building some constructions along Cuyogora river, counting on an agreement with the big Ohio and Pennsylvania Canal Company. However, the canal company did not keep its agreement and ruined the hopes and business of the small investors that John Brown went into partnership with. Then, John and his partners continued on land speculation and eventually, he prospered as a businessman in Randolph. But his prosperity, like that of most people of the country at that time was largely fictitious and temporary since it was built on the fast expanding credit opportunities which were far outstretching the rapid industrial development (BURGHARDT/BOIS, 1962: 30-40).

At this time, Brown purchased a tract of land in Hudson and moved his family there in 1836. Then, the general economic crisis of 1837 threw the financial situation of John Brown into bigger troubles. Moreover, that crisis caused increasing poverty and humiliation among the population. Over six hundred banks failed, ten thousand employees were thrown out of work, money was scarce and prices down to ridiculously low levels. During these times, John Brown's loss-making land speculations and his failing tannery business left him on the verge of bankruptcy. This failure made him spiritually restless and hopeless. For four years he could not make any new plans for his work.

Meanwhile, many of John's creditors sued him for loans that he could not repay. John struggled about in a financial jungle which devastated him. And he never fully recovered so he could pay his debts. For instance, one of John's partners, Amos Chamberlain asked John to transfer to him some land that he had purchased before the economic disaster on account of his debts. Brown however refused to do that and resorted to violent measures to get rid of Chamberlain's pressures. Chamberlain called the Sheriff and finally Brown and his two sons were put in jail in Akron. After Chamberlain secured the land the Brown's were released (BURGHARDT/BOIS, 1962: 40-47).

However, these financial disasters never weakened Brown's ties with God and the Church. In 1838, John, his wife and three of his sons joined the Congregational Church as John's father (Owen) had done thirty eight years ago, and when John was born in Torrington. During this time, Brown still was running his tanning business in Hudson. He also asked for some financial support from his wealthy friends, Heman Oviatt and Marvin Kent, to carry out some of his projects and to pay off his debts. At one time, Brown was so poor that he could not even buy postage to send a letter to one of his friends. Meanwhile, his family had hard times even in getting food. In addition, four new children were born between in 1835 and 1840.

Simultaneously Brown had to struggle to survive and provide for his wife and eleven children. The older boys attended school in Hudson for a while, but after the dreadful economic disaster, except John jr., all of them dropped out in order to help Brown in his tannery business. Also, only one of his daughters, Ruth, attended school regularly, during these years of trial.

In 1841, Brown started a sheep farming venture near Hudson, keeping his own and a rich merchant's sheep and also buying wool on commission. Then, Brown bought land in Virginia and moved his operations there. During this time, he grew more and more ambitious, yearning to be acknowledged as a rich and successful businessman. As he stated in one of his letters, he liked the inhabitants of Ripley, Virginia (Va) because they were industrious people who knew how to become rich (BURGHARDT/BOIS, 1962: 47-52).

However, the business situation went from bad to worse for John Brown. His ill fortune never stopped following him in business matters. The renewal of the panic in 1839 overthrew all his business dealings and left Brown broke and bankrupt in 1842. He lost his entire property, worth more than \$20,000. Bankruptcy, the dreadful consequence of his accumulated failures, gave a terrible blow to Brown's pride as a businessman. Brown was lured by the opportunities offered by technical and technological developments, canals, banks, companies and corporations, in short, by the world of business as many other ordinary men did. He thus became a victim of the harsh capitalist competition of those years, which ruined many other small businesses, in the fast race of industrial progress.

John never understood why he was on the verge of bankruptcy even though he worked very hard with his endless zeal and strong ambitions. As he later confessed, during these difficult years, he often wished to die and to be united with God in Paradise. But, mocking John's longings, death took his children instead. In 1843, an epidemic of dysentery killed four children of the Brown family.

After his bankruptcy, John Brown lost his credit worthiness in the eyes of the business community. Then, he turned to care more for his family's comfort and security. In 1844, Brown moved his family to Akron, Oh. During this time, his son John Jr., and daughter Ruth enrolled at the Institute of Austinburg, Oh., and Brown sent them some money. His other sons were still at home to help with the chores and sheep farming while Brown traveled to the east to sell wool and buy more sheep. As a sheep-owner, Brown gained the respect of farmers and other shepherds in the area because of his dedication to his work. As Samuel Orcutt put it: 'when he became a shepherd, in his late years, his eye was so discriminating that if a strange sheep got into his flock of two or three

thousands, he could select the intruder without difficulty. A shepherd and herdsman, he learned the manners of animals and knew the secret signals by which animals communicate' (ORCUTT, 1878: 320-324).

By 1845, the wool business became more favorable, as the United States was entering a period of full industrial expansion. The manufacturing of hosiery and carpets increased the demand for domestic wool continuously. Thus, Brown, expecting the wool business to become even more profitable, entered into a business partnership with Simon Perkins, a wealthy man of Akron, Oh., and bought together a herd of sheep. The only apparent threat to the prosperity of the Western wool producers was the increasing market power of the manufacturers and their desire for cheaper wool. The manufacturers' agents offered very low prices to the sheep owners who were actually supplying high quality wool. This obviously meant the impoverishment of sheep-owners; while manufacturers earned huge profits from the processed wool products, they allowed the farmers to get only a small share of these profits.

In 1846, while in the midst of his occupations as a wool grower and wool dealer, John Brown came back to New England and set up an office in Springfield Massachusetts (Ma). During this time, the Northern wool buyers and manufacturers dishonestly graded wool so they could purchase fine graded wool at low-grade wool prices. They earned thereby large profits. In order to prevent these unfair gains of manufacturers, John Brown went to Springfield as the agent of the sheep farmers and wool merchants of Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia, who had already approved of his plan. Brown introduced a system of grading wools of his own before the wool was passed on to the manufacturers, trying to stop the unfair pricing. Actually, Brown did not go into this project to make money, but to correct the wrong system. Brown's system was, initially successful, but the manufacturers were more powerful than the farmers. They pressured farmers into paying them less money for the good grade wool (BURGHARDT/BOIS, 1962: 52-55).

However, during this time, even though Brown and his sons worked very hard, events occurred beyond John's control. The Walker tariff of 1846 lowered the custom duties for imported wool and woollens, as Southern politicians wanted it in order to provide cheap clothing for the slaves. This tariff hit hard the wool market in Springfield. The price of saxony fleece in which Brown was especially interested, fell from 75 to 25 cents per pound. Also, the war with Mexico, which had already begun, caused the wool market to collapse. Thus, the decisions taken by American politicians had given a blow, once more, to the small wool businesses such as that of John Brown, making their economic survival even harder. Only white wealthy people and the bureaucratic elite profited from these new regulations.

In 1847, Brown moved his wife and most of his children from Akron to Springfield, lodging them in a small house. In the meantime, John Jr. graduated from the Grand River Institute in Austinburg and married a wealthy girl, and then moved to Springfield, close to his father's agency. Only Ruth and Jason remained in Ohio. Jason also married and wanted to stay in Ohio, far away from his father's influence. Presumably, Ruth was still trying to complete her education at the same institute in Austinburg.

The ordeal for Brown began in 1849, when he bought 130,000 pounds of wool, paying \$57,884.48. His sales amounted to \$49,902.67, leaving him with \$7,981.81 in debts and still some stock of wool left over in the warehouse. He then set off to England to sell his wool surplus, but his trip still did not bring him any profits. These failures affected Brown considerably, as he confessed in his letter to his son, saying that he could not adapt to the modern business system, although he tried hard and was striving to be a successful businessman (BURGHARDT/BOIS, 1962: 57-63). Under these severe circumstances, therefore, Brown ended his business career after the venture in England.

By the 1850, John Brown's vocation changed his direction from business matters to the militant activities for the abolition of slavery, in order to deliver his Negro friends from the chains of servitude as he wanted to free himself from the constraints of a system that was never kind to him. During this time, Brown settled with his family in North Elba, NY., on a piece of land donated by the rich New York abolitionist Gerrit Smith (MORISON, 1965: 518-521).

John Brown had shown some interest in abolitionist activities ever since 1820. In any case, up until the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the activities against slavery were conducted mainly by small gangs of agitators. Meanwhile, industry was expanding in the North, demanding more and more cheap labor, while slavery was still predominant in the South, keeping captive an important labor supply source. After the invention of the cotton gin and of other machines, the advance of agricultural techniques stimulated cotton production very rapidly. Cotton growing became more and more profitable and hence, these new developments in cotton production required more slaves and land for the Southerners (MORISON, 1965: 500-510).

The Missouri Compromise allowed the southern states to preserve the slave system. After the Missouri Compromise, however, the South insisted that new states should be admitted in the United States Confederation only in pairs: one slave-state and one free-state. This new determination of the South in upholding and extending the slave system provoked abolitionists in the North to oppose it. Nevertheless, not all the Northern people, under the republican government, did have the same approach towards free blacks. The vast majority

of the white people were racist and believed in white supremacy, considering blacks as incapable of civilized behavior. When Republicans came to power, they disfranchised systematically free blacks and denied them the same rights and privileges as the white people enjoyed (STOWE, 1966: 488-489).

This policy of the North and the expansion of the Southern slavery led the abolitionist movement to develop into a more formal kind of organization in 1833, when William Lloyd Garrison, Lewis Tappan and a group of businessmen formed the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. Some of the famous members of this new Society were Theodore Parker, Gerrit Smith, Charles Sumner and some others, drawn from the ranks of the clergy. These abolitionists or anti-slavery groups can mainly be classified into three categories: 1) the radical-Garrisonian abolitionists; 2) the moderates, and 3) the political abolitionists. The radical groups advocated immediate and unconditional emancipation by granting full rights to blacks. The moderate group proposed gradual and conditional emancipation, while the political abolitionists like Gerrit Smith and Theodore Parker believed in the necessity to use politics in order to bring about immediate and unconditional emancipation. Therefore, they founded the Liberty Party in 1840 and its successors, the Free Soil Party, in 1848 and later the Republican Party in 1854 (STANGE, 1977: 20).

Therefore, American abolitionism threatened the shaky coalition between North and South by focusing intensively on the destruction of slavery. Sectionalism became the main feature of the period. Each section, North and South, tried to expand -besides social, cultural and moral principles- their economic interests, especially their own trade commodities. While the North tried to expand manufacturing and industry the South was to promote cotton production. By 1835, slavery was identified with the South, hence with its particular economic interests. Southern spokesman John C. Calhoun regarded any criticism of slavery as a criticism of the South. After the annexation of Texas, followed by the seizure of new territories during the Mexican war, Northerners came to believe that the federal government was being run by and for the South, and that all its policies were meant to guarantee the expansion of the slave empire. Hence, the new Free Soil Party (with the motto: 'Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free man') announced its determination to stop the expansion of the South by keeping the Southern slavery aristocracy from moving further into any of the new territories (FRIED, 1978: 234).

The advance of free labor ideology began to deepen the sectional dispute between the North and the South even further. The free labor was an ideology which advocated free blacks as a free labor, and promoted industrial progress, economic development and social mobility. For the agricultural South, however,

especially for the cotton plantations, slave labor was cheap and, therefore profitable because it did not require any special skills. For the industrially developed North, even though slave labor was sometimes used in small workshops before 1750, it proved to be less profitable than the skilled free labor. This reduced efficiency of slave labor in manufacturing made it easier for the Northerners to adopt a more moral approach towards slavery, revealing its wrongs from an ethical perspective as well. At the same time, this movement was also beneficiary for the capitalist development in the long run, since replacing labor with capital in the production process would provide for faster economic growth. The North-South conflict can be reduced, to some point, to an economic competition between an agricultural system and an industrial system developing separately in two geographic areas with different natural resources (MORISON, 1965: 500-510; 516-525).

The people of the Free Soil Party (Republicans) believed in the economic superiority of free labor to slavery. They claimed that the slave labor system failed socially, politically and economically, leaving the South a poor, less productive and miserable country. The Republicans thought that free Northern cities were in the lead against slave Southern cities by comparing them in terms of property values, manufacturing, industry, commerce, railroads, canals. According to them, slavery was both a moral and an economic evil (FONER, 1970: 1-10).

However, the Free Soil movement revealed some uncomfortable truths to radical abolitionists. It revealed that Northerners did not want the sudden and total emancipation of the slaves. They focused their attention on the actions of the South in the federal government. They insisted that slave system should not expand beyond its existing borders. Free Soilers stated that the slave labor prevented social mobility by taking the place of industry and thrift and degraded the values of free labor. Preserving the territories of the West for the free laborers required the containing of slavery within its existing borders. Because East and West were economically interdependent, the economic development of the West was necessary for the prosperity of the entire nation. Thus, the Free Soil movement was anti-slavery mostly because of economic reasons, in that slave labor was obviously standing in the way of industrial progress and the efficiency of free labor.

On the other hand, Free Soilers, (as many Northern people did), wanted to preserve the vast virgin Western territories solely for the white people, excluding the blacks. They were racist by asserting equal rights for all white males instead of for all people. In fact, the Northerners anti-slavery attitude was based on their economic standpoint rather than on any other aspects (FONER, 1970: 35-40).

During this time, John Brown was observing the Free Soil Party and was in contact with antislavery leaders such as Gerrit Smith and Frederick Douglas. The developments occurred after the Missouri Compromise of 1850 which extended slavery to Kansas and Nebraska were crucial for Brown's decisions to join the antislavery movement and for his future actions.

After the Second Missouri Compromise, the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1850. With this, the Congress granted slave catchers the power to enter any free state and seize alleged runaways for immediate extradition. This law was, in itself, contradictory because black people that were living in the Northern states communities were not all slaves and there was no protective clause that would guarantee to discern between who was claimed as a fugitive slave and who was a free man by law. Further, it brought the slavery issue down to the local level. No longer could Northern people just consider it an issue for the Western territories. It now applied to them too, and such events provoked a deepening of the sectional crisis. The question of whether slavery should expand or die became a key issue (STOWE, 1966, 488-489).

The passage of the Fugitive Slave law determined many abolitionists, among them John Brown, to get involved in the underground railroad, by which slaves escaped to the North. Although he shared the values of the Free Soil Party and was in contact with many members of the party, John Brown started to realize that the movement would not take decisive action to completely end slavery. The Fugitive Slave Act signaled that the power of the Southern slavery was expanding towards West and North. Brown was convinced that the only way to end slavery was the use of force. To that end, Brown tried to organize the blacks to engage in armed, active resistance. Even though he organized a group of blacks into a guerrilla force, Brown could not finance them and thus, had to abandon his plan in 1851 (GOODE, 1969: 65-67).

Brown was driven to resort to violence because he recognized that neither the Northern people, nor the American politicians were fully committed to solve the problem of slavery. Northern people, in general, were racist and even though they supported the idea of freedom for blacks, they did not intend to grant them equal civil rights with the whites. He recognized well that the majority of the Northern people approached to the issue of slavery from economic stand-point. John Brown hence did not see much difference between being a captive of slave system and being a victim of ruthless capitalist system which brought by industrial expansion. Brown himself had already been a victim of big traders and industrialists as they all brought him into a state of bankruptcy.

In the light of the arguments and information presented thus far, three main social categories of people can be distinguished in the US at this time: first, there is a group of privileged people, namely the politicians, the bureaucratic elites and the wealthy capitalists, who enjoy the full range of civil rights and benefit the most from the economic and political system; second, inferior group who were the mass of poor, and middle income social categories such as small farmers, factory workers, women, small craftsmen and businessmen. Their economic situation is more or less precarious and they enjoyed limited civil rights, and their participation in the political life was practically inexistent. As happened in the case of John Brown, they were mainly struggling to survive, and were often struck by starvation and poor health; the third class was made up by the Negro slave population, who did not have any civil rights.

The above mentioned accounts on social and economic differences and inequalities among the American people can be seen richly documented in the works of numerous historians. The two chapters of Howard Zinn's book; 'The other Civil War', and 'Robber Barons and Rebels', which examine the Anti-Renter movement, the Dorr Rebellion, the railroad strikes, and workers' rebellions, gave some eloquent examples on these issues.²

In relation with the existing social and economic conditions John Brown, himself, after long struggles with the forces of capitalism, recognized that he had no chance to win against them. He identified his social conditions with that of the 'badly clothed' and 'poorly fed' slaves, sharing their revolt and sympathizing with their fate. If he would succeed in bringing freedom to the slaves, he would somehow accomplish his own freedom, feeling that, for once, he would defeat the evils of capitalism. In other words, resorting to violence on behalf of the slaves meant, for Brown, a way to express his own rebellion against the merciless forces of market capitalism. Thus, the only way to redeem his own freedom was, for Brown, to take matters into his own hands, even if it meant resorting to violence.

Brown remained a marginal figure in the anti-slavery movement until 1854, when the Act of the Kansas-Nebraska was passed. This act gave a new opportunity to the slavery power to expand to the new territories and revoked the Missouri Compromise of 1850, which limited the expansion of slavery to

2 See, ZINN, Howard (1980), *A People's History of the United States: From 1492 to the Present* (USA: Harper Perennial), Chapters 10-11: 206-289. See further works; WALLER, Altina (1988), *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change* (USA: The University of North Carolina Press); JOHNSON, Paul E, (1982), "The Modernization of Mayo Greenleaf Patch: Land, Family, and Marginality In New England, 1766-1818" *New England Quarterly*, 55: 488-516.

Kansas and Nebraska. This act resulted in a boost to the anti-slavery movement and gave rise to the founding of the new Republican Party in the North.

John Brown went out to Kansas in the early days of its settlement and engaged in land speculation, cattle trading and political feuding. Throughout the 1850s, a political struggle between two economic systems (slave labor and free labor) continued in Kansas. The Free Soilers hurried to send settlers to Kansas from the North to get the majority of the votes for the freedom movements. The decisive moment came with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act for John Brown, who favored direct action against slave owners. He tried to find aid in fighting with the pro-slavery forces in Kansas. He raised large amount of money from rich abolitionists, mostly from Gerrit Smith. Then, in 1856, John followed by the five of his sons was involved in a mission to kill five of the pro-slavery Southerners at Pottawatomic Creek in Kansas (FRIED, 1978: 242).

After these decisive actions in Kansas, Brown became well known among the Northern abolitionists and gained their political and economic support. In the mid 1858, Brown came to Boston to present his plans for starting a guerrilla war against slavocracy to Gerrit Smith. Then, the five Massachusetts abolitionists (Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Samuel Gridley Howe, Theodore Parker, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, George Luther Stearns) joined with Smith and formed the Secret Committee of Six. They began collecting money to finance Brown's guerrilla warfare against slavery (CARMAN, et.al, 1961: 626-627).

The members of the Secret Committee of Six who were either of wealthy families or self-made successful businessmen, and were also the founders of the Free Soil Party. Initially, they had been convinced of the necessity to use political means to destroy slavery. The Six were zealous supporters of the free labor ideology believing that slavery was both unjust and unprofitable. However, as explained before, the majority of the northerners who supported the abolition of slavery was, in fact, racist and did not want the blacks to have the same equal rights as the whites had for themselves. They approached to the issue mostly from the economic point of view believing that the destruction of the slave system would provide for cheap labor to the industrial North.

Though the members of the Six initially adopted peaceful means to end slavery, later, they lost their hope in ending slavery by using politics, when the Slave Empire began to spread with the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Thereafter, they believed in the necessity to use direct action to destroy slavery. The violent campaign of John Brown in Kansas encouraged them to use force (FRIED, 1978: 245-249).

Eventually, the Six and Brown came to an agreement on the main point that slavery should be destroyed by force and this led John Brown to commit a raid at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Brown, however, never fully revealed to the Six about his plans of insurrection, namely when and where his attack would take place. This shows that Brown did not much trust the Six and did not share all of his beliefs with them. In the end, Brown with his twenty one followers including his sons and five Negroes put his plans into action and sized the government arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia on 16 October 1859. Brown, however, was unable to spread out his mutiny throughout the city and his insurrection came to end when American marines captured him by killing half of his followers. Then, he was found guilty for conspiracy, murder, and treason, and hanged on 2 December 1859 (CARMAN, et.al, 1961: 626).

CONCLUSION

This paper has dealt with the story of John Brown, as representing biographies for thousands of ordinary people of the 19th century America. His destiny was typical for all the honest and hard working people who wanted to achieve economic success in the new business world emerging at the beginning of the century, but their endeavors were hampered by the market capitalism which began to spread as a result of the industrial revolution. John Brown's experience shows that the American economic and political system, the way the politicians of the 19th century had tailored it, benefited mainly the elites and the wealthy people. The politicians never fulfilled the promises contained within the Republican principles, for social and political equality and liberty for all Americans.

The political realities reflect the fact that American industry was raised on the hardships of the mass of poor and exploited classes at the cost of losing their wealth, culture and traditions, as the argument is made by several historians.³

The analysis of John Brown's story shows that economic determination together with his religious convictions and social factors were the main motivations behind his works and actions. These can be grouped as: a) His poor economic background; b) His religious faith; c) The industrial developments and economic and social changes of the North; d) John Brown's economic

3 On these accounts see for WALLER, *Feud*; ZINN, *A People's History*; JOHNSON, "The Modernization of"; JOHNSON, Paul E. (1985), "Democracy, Patriarchy and American Revivals, 1780-1830" *Journal of Social History*, 24: 48-53.

defeats by the capitalist system; e) Brown's quest for freedom seen as deliverance from slavery.

Developing a little these five focal ideas, it can be said that John Brown did not inherit any land from his family, so he could not become a traditional farmer. He was born and grew up in a poor family, but in a very religious environment. His religious faith taught him to be fair and honest in business matters and also in relation with the people around him. He always tried to be honest in his trades, for instance, when he operated his leather business, or the time he went to Springfield. Brown went to Springfield, not for himself but rather, in order to stop corrupt manufacturers from gaining unfair profits.

Even though Brown was lured by opportunities offered by the fast technical and economic progress of the time, (the canals, the banks, the big companies, etc.), he never managed to deal with business matters within the capitalist environment, as he himself confessed in one of his letters to his son. He did not know, as the Springfield manufacturers did, how to get high profits with very little effort. He did not know how to resort to fraud, theft and exploitation of people. Although Brown was a very ambitious man and worked very hard in his entire life, he never got success in business. This is because his only fault was that he was perhaps too honest for the business life of his time. All these disappointments with the system brought him on the verge of suicide in the 1850s.

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that John Brown as an ordinary person finally faced his ratchet condition after economic struggle. The failure of John Brown's struggle in trade and business against the forces of market capitalism turned him to fight against slavery as he and the slaves had long suffered from the conditions of the same economic system. It can therefore only be guessed that the life of thousands of other ordinary people, who did not make a memorable mark in history as John Brown did, was mainly dominated by trouble, depression, misery and fruitless struggle to make a decent living in the 19th century industrial America.

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