Mass Emigration from Denmark to the United States 1868–1914

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I. International aspects of mass emigration

Migration of population forms an essential part of the history of mankind. Most of the great cultures in the world arose after periods with great mobility that brought different tribes and peoples together. These ethnic 'melting pots' produced new civilizations in different areas. The greatest melting pot in modern times is North America where more than 50 million emigrants from other parts of the world met and formed a new world. The study of human migration through time is therefore an important field of research.

The present article examines a detail in the mass emigration, the Danish emigration before 1914, in the context of the larger patterns of European migration and analyzes the motive forces of that emigration by comparison with migration from other countries, especially from the rest of Scandinavia. The tool for this analysis is a statistical material built up by computer-processing of personal dates of 172 000 Danish emigrants leaving for overseas countries within the years 1868–1900. The basic material is drawn from the preserved registers of the Copenhagen police authorities stating the content of contracts made up between the individual emigrant and the shipping line agents in Copenhagen. Also included in the material is information on 7 000 Mormons and 6 500 Danish emigrants from the northern part of Schleswig conquered by Germany in 1864.

According to the official statistics the number of Danish overseas emigrants leaving in the period 1868–1914 was 287 014. For the period

from World War I up to the new Danish emigration law of 1932 there were 80 584; and from 1932 to 1965 there was a total of 114 700. Emigration from Danmark seems to have been minimal in the years before 1868. Immigration statistics in the USA show only some 14 000 Danes who arrived during the years 1820–1868.

The computer-processed data for the years 1868–1900 reveal for the first time *the distribution of Danish emigrants among the various provinces according to their last place of residence.* The number of emigrants 1869–1900 per 1 000 of the average population in the same period is shown for each county (amt) on the map (p. 28). Until now it has been the general supposition that the bulk of Danish emigrants came from the northern part of Jutland, north of the Limfjord. The map shows another picture. The areas of heavy emigration were in the southwestern part of the country, Lolland-Falster and Bornholm. The figures for Jutland may be slightly higher than indicated, however, because a number of emigrants from the southern part of the peninsula may have gone directly to Hamburg without a Danish contract. It is noteworthy in any case that there is no relation between the intensity of emigration and the poverty or richness of the individual areas. The southern parts of Zealand and Lolland-Falster were economically rich counties, whereas the northern and western parts of Jutland were poor.

The distribution of the emigrants according to their *urban* or *rural origins* provides essential indications about the background of the emigration. It must be strongly emphasized that mass emigration is not an isolated phenomenon: it has to be seen as one element in the great mobility of population which became significant on the Continent from about 1850 on—the large-scale movement of people from country to towns. Consequently, it is interesting to find that Danish emigration was, in proportional terms, mainly an urban phenomenon. It is true that out of every 100 emigrants in the 1868–1900 period, 56 came from the countryside and 44 from the cities. But, seen in relation to the distribution of the population, the average yearly emigration per 100 000 inhabitants was 342 from towns and only 186 from rural areas. This seems to indicate that the towns had difficulties in absorbing the influx of boys and girls from the countryside. The background of these difficulties was the slow growth of industrialization: the demand for unskilled labour did not keep pace with the inflow of people to the towns. Comparing the proportions of rural and urban emigration in Denmark to those in Sweden and Norway one finds that urban emigration was relatively much stronger in Denmark than in the latter two countries. This seems to have been due to the fact that the urbanization process went much faster in Denmark than in the countries farther north. This in turn leads to the conclusion that, when Danish emigration as a whole was of a relatively modest scale compared to Swedish and Norwegian emigration, the explanation is to be found in part in the fact that, as early as the 18th century, Danish towns were larger, more numerous and more familiar to the rural population. Industrialization came sooner to Danish than to Swedish and Norwegian towns, and thus internal migration became more dominant in Denmark than emigration. In Sweden and Norway the large towns were almost as distant and unknown to much of the rural population as was America.

In the years after 1903 public statistics give information about both place of birth and last residence of Danish emigrants. An analysis of these data shows that emigrants-to-be were much more mobile in general than the rest of the population. Apparently the emigrants to a large extent were people with difficulties in adjusting to social conditions in Denmark. Emigration by stages seems to have been very common—from the countryside to the nearest town, from there to Copenhagen or to America—in each case in order to get an economic foothold.

A close examination of emigrants from parishes in northern Jutland and southern Funen reveals that the highest rates were found in the areas most distant from the larger towns—evidence of what geographers call urban fields of influence.

An essential related problem is that concerning the rhythm of external and internal migration. Brinley Thomas has maintained that the two streams alternate—internal migration is low during times of high emigration, and vice versa. This is discussed in the light of the British source material on which Brinley Thomas bases his theory and of corresponding material for Copenhagen. The conclusion is that, due to defects in both the Danish and British material, we still lack proof of the theory of alternation between external and internal migration. Both sets of statistics are based on the evidence of net gains in the urban population. Too many unknown factors are hidden in these net figures.

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Thus, during a boom in emigration from the towns the net gain in the population will seem smaller than it is, because the influx to the towns merely fills out gaps left by those who emigrated before the growth in population could be registered.

The distribution of emigrants according to their *ages at departure* also reveals much about the background and structure of the mass emigration. As in all European emigration the ages between 20 and 24 were strongly represented among Danish emigrants: 25 per cent came from that group; and more than half the total number were between 15 and 29 years old when they emigrated. There was, however, a significant difference in average age between urban and rural emigrants. Those coming from towns were somewhat older at departure. Emigrants from Copenhagen were especially noticeable by their relatively high average age. This seems to be indirect evidence of migration by stages. Many of the urban emigrants originated in the countryside and had spent some years attempting to find their living in towns before they gave up and emigrated. A striking feature is that the average age of Danish emigrants tended to fall in the course of the period after 1868. The age group 15–19 increased from one tenth of the total number of emigrants in the 1870's to almost one fourth in the years around 1900, while the age group 25–29 declined. This contributes to a general impression that the emigration movement changed its character in the course of the period—beginning as a measure of emergency during the very poor social conditions of the 1870's and 1880's and turning into a movement of young adventurers in the 1890's and later.

A comparison between age distributions in Danish and Swedish-Norwegian emigration shows that Swedish emigrants seem to have been more equally distributed over all age groups than the Danes. Norwegian emigration, on the other hand, was even more concentrated in the 15–24 age group than Danish emigration.

Men and women were not equally represented in Danish emigration. The predominance of men was substantial and had significant effects. Of 1 000 emigrants of more than 15 years of age only 367 were women. This unequal distribution raised problems on both sides of the Atlantic. It contributed to an imbalance in the proportion of men and women in the Danish population, and not until after World War II was a natural balance between the sexes re-established. In the United

States and Canada it helped to produce a great demand for girls as wives and farmhands on the homesteads. This may have been one of the reasons for an increasing number of young female emigrants after about 1892. Particularly during the last years before 1914 women constituted about half the emigrants. The majority of these women came from the towns, especially Copenhagen, where the labour market was overcrowded with female workers in industry and domestic service. Women had played an important role in the early stages of industrialization, but later, from the 1890's onward, men took over the role as the predominant element in the labour force.

Seen in the light of the preponderance of men among emigrants it is interesting to note that women played the dominant role in internal migration within Denmark. This provides new perspectives on the discussion about the rhythm of internal and external migration suggesting that the two sorts of migration may be parallel phenomena.

Women were generally older at the time of departure than men. The average age of adult emigrants (over 15 years) was 28 years for women, but only 26 for men.

Among Swedish emigrants there was near equilibrium between men and women in the 1880's (75 women to every 100 men). But it is important to point out that the proportions of men and women emigrants changed over time in all Scandinavian countries. In the first stages (Sweden in the 1850's and Denmark in the 1870's) men were in the majority, but the distribution tended to equalize later on. When mass emigration started from Finland in the 1890's, 90 per cent were men. Men naturally went out ahead as pioneers of emigration. The same *pattern* can be observed in the minor fluctuations of emigration. During the great emigration booms (such as those of 1871–73 and 1881–85) men predominated in the first stage of the boom, but women and children at the culmination point and during the declining phase.

With regard to the share of *family groups and individuals* in Danish emigration it is found that the movement to overseas countries started around 1870 mostly among families with children. It changed in the following decades, however, to become an emigration with a great majority of young, unmarried men and women. Sweden experienced the same pattern of change, with a high rate of family groups in the 1850's and 1860's but very few such groups later on. Furthermore,

it is noteworthy that the average number of children which married couples took with them on emigrating from Denmark tended to decline in the course of the period up to 1914—especially after 1900. This must be seen in conjunction with the fact that the average age of adult emigrants also tended to fall during the period. For men of rural background it decreased from about 28 years in the 1860's to about 25 years around the turn of the century.

The average age of brides and grooms was relatively high in the 19th century—in the 1870's grooms were around 30 years, brides 28. Not until that age were couples able to find sufficient economic resources for marriage. The fact that the number of marriages per 1 000 of the whole population tended to decline in years with a high emigration rate but to increase when emigration was low, may perhaps indicate that many young couples emigrated with the intention of marrying in the USA or Canada.

There was a considerable influx of Swedish citizens to Denmark from the 1860's onwards. In the 1870's the great majority of these were young unmarried people. But by the 1890's the Swedish immigrants to Denmark consisted to a large extent of families with children. This phenomenon seems to support the conclusion that the main cause of the falling rate of family groups among emigrants was the break-through of industrialization in the towns. Generally it can be said that an emigration with a high proportion of family groups is a sign of severe economic distress in the country of departure, the decision to leave home is more difficult for a whole family than for a young independent man or woman. An exception, of course, is the Italian emigration of married men who go abroad—for instance to Argentina—only to return after a short period.

The 165 000 Danish emigrants of 1868–1900 have been classified according to *occupation* into 99 different groups. Those in agricultural occupations were almost exclusively male and female labourers (*tyende*). Very few independent owners of land emigrated. On a rough estimate 10 out of every 1 000 agricultural labourers would emigrate every year during the period, a fact which indicates the difficult social situation in the rural areas. An increase in population had created a class of poor labourers, often younger sons of farmers who could not expect to get farms of their own. For this class of people it was often more

Table 1.

Occupational distribution of emigrants, Denmark and Sweden. Per cent.

	Denmark 1868–1900	Sweden 1871–1900
Landowners	4.2	25.4
Skilled workers	18.5	16.3
Commerce	7.8	1.6
Shipping	0.7	1.6
Unskilled labourers	68.8	55.1
	100.0	100.0

attractive to get homesteads on the American prairie than to try to adapt to urban life in a Danish town.

A comparison of Danish and Swedish emigration in terms of occupational structure shows in part the differences in economic structure between the two countries (Table 1).

The extraordinarily low proportion of farmers among emigrants from Denmark, however, may help to explain the fact that Danish emigration did not reach the high level of that from Sweden. There was no serious agricultural crisis in Denmark. The man who owned a piece of land, big or small, could make a living from it even if economic cycles at times made profits very low. The mass influx of cheap wheat from Russia and America after the 1860's caused a crisis in all the Scandinavian countries. But the crisis in Sweden was aggravated because the average size of farms was too small, as the result of an intensive process of subdivison of land during the first half of the 19th century. In Denmark, on the other hand, the development of small holdings began at a later stage, after about 1855. The crisis caused by the fall in grain prices was mitigated by a far-reaching reorganization of Danish farming from cereal production to production of butter, cheese and pork, supported by the agricultural co-operative movement (*andelsbevægelsen*).

Four factors can be mentioned as the main preconditions for the acceleration of internal migration after 1850: the agricultural reforms in the last decades of the 18th century, the demographic expansion,

the marketing conditions of Danish farming products and the improved transport system. The liberal reforms in agriculture after 1780 encouraged among individuals in the rural population what could be called a social buoyancy—an ambition for better living conditions —and a parallel to that feeling of political self-consciousness which later led to the great popular political movements of the 19th century. The demographic 'explosion' created a sort of proletariat in the rural areas. The livelihood of this group was dependent on the development of new small holdings. Such a development was in progress in the 1860's and 1870's, but from the early years of the 1880's it apparently slackened until about 1899. This may have contributed to the particularly high emigration rates during the same period. The situation in Jutland was a special case. Here the reclamation of the great heath areas provided a living for the surplus population. The fact that emigration from Jutland did not reach its peak until after 1885 may well have been because only then had all the new holdings on the heath land been occupied.

It is a notable feature that rural emigration was highest from the areas where the yield of crop per acre was richest and the prices of land were highest. In these provinces peasant boys saw no chance of becoming independent farmers, and many consequently preferred to emigrate. It is also true that the same areas were dominated by great estates where the number of servants per unit was high.

On the islands south of Zealand the cultivation of sugar-beet, a highly industrialized agriculture that needs much manpower, was started shortly after 1870. But these islands had the highest emigration rates of all Denmark. This caused a sort of labour 'vacuum', with the result that great numbers of labourers, mostly girls, were brought over from southern Sweden and later from Poland. There was no scarcity of jobs for the native population, but the wages were considered too low by the Danes—though not by the Swedes and the Poles. This must be regarded as a typical sign of 'buoyancy', both among the Danes and among the foreign labourers.

The *destinations* of 285 000 Danish emigrants of 1868–1914 show that by comparison with emigrants from other Scandinavian countries the Danes scattered more widely throughout the world. It is true that most of them went to the United States, 89 per cent in all. Among Swedish emigrants, however, the corresponding figure was 98 per cent, and

among Norwegians 96 per cent. As to the distribution inside the USA, it is significant that Danish immigrants were spread over a vast area, whereas the Norwegians especially were concentrated in a relatively narrow area in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Being rather widely scattered, the Danes in the USA seem to have assimilated quickly to the American environment and to have readily adopted the language and habits of their new country. The tendency to more rapid assimilation of Danish immigrants as compared with other Nordic minorities in America can be established in other fields. According to American statistics Danes in America preferably married natives or people from other national minorities (often Germans). This was also partly due to the small proportion of women among Danish emigrants. It is significant, moreover, that only a relatively small proportion joined the Danish church organizations in the USA. The Danish Lutheran Church in America was split for several decades by internal quarrels between two parties representing the Danish ecclesiastical groups of Grundtvig and Inner Mission. One of the controversial questions was whether the church should maintain the Danish language and nationality among the immigrants or encourage the process of assimilation.

What was the reason for the greater dispersion of Danish immigrants in America as compared with the Norwegian and Swedish settlers? Many circumstances seem to indicate that the date of the earliest migration from each particular Scandinavian country was the key factor. Those who left during the first stages, before 1860, went in relatively large groups, which settled together. Thus by the beginning of the mass emigration after 1865, a network of Swedish and Norwegian settlements already existed in north-western America and attracted new immigrants from Europe. But the number of Danish immigrants in the United States before 1860 was extremely low, and only a few weak settlements had been established when Danish mass emigration started after 1870.

The statements of destination given by the Danish emigrants in their transport contracts are of little value as statistical sources, as it is not very probable that the majority stayed in the towns or settlements mentioned on their tickets. Yet some main tendencies may be extracted from the statistical material. The majority of Danish settlers who gave Wisconsin and Michigan as their destinations, about 17 000 Danes, originated from the islands of Zealand, Lolland-Falster and Funen. On the other hand, the greatest part of those who first went to Minne-

sota, Iowa and Nebraska came from Jutland. This is not surprising, for in the early period 1868–1885—when free homesteads were still available in Wisconsin and Michigan—emigration was highest from the eastern part of Denmark. After 1885, when emigration from Jutland predominated, free land was to be found in Iowa and the Dakota Territory.

The statistical analysis of Danish emigration has shown patterns in the movement that provide evidence of social conditions in Denmark at the time. The composition of the emigrants in terms of age, sex and other characteristics seems to support these theories which point to certain tendencies of 'migratory selection' in a population: emigrants are no random cross-section of the population but are drawn disproportionately from particular groups that are 'squeezed' by social and economic changes in society. Another main point needs to be stressed, however: mass emigration is not an isolated phenomenon but goes together with an even larger movement of population by internal migration, which started in the first part of the 19th century and still continues today. Consequently, the 52 million Europeans who emigrated in the period 1845–1914 were only a fraction of those people who left home during the same period. In many respects the structural features of internal and the external migration are the same. As in emigration, there are also effects of 'pull' and 'push' in internal migration. Push is the factor common to both—here expressed by the term 'social buoyancy' in the rural population. The general trends in Danish migration follow the famous 'laws on migration' of Ravenstein (1885), who extracted his general rules from studies of migration in 20 European countries. It could seem, however, that Ravenstein paid too little attention to long range emigration.

The comparisons between the Scandinavian countries seem to suggest that most national emigration movements pass through certain stages. The first phase is characterized by group emigration, by a great majority of men among the emigrants and a relatively high average age—apparently evidence of very severe social troubles in the country of departure. In the course of the following decades there is a gradual change towards an emigration dominated by young unmarried boys and girls seeking their fortunes and probably often returning after a few years overseas.

Why was Danish emigration relatively modest in scale compared to

the Swedish and Norwegian exodus? There seem to have been three main reasons. The first relates to differences with respect to urbanization. Danish towns (købstæder) were somewhat larger, and there were more of them in the provinces, separated by relatively short distances, than in Sweden and Norway. Industrialization was more advanced and consequently better capable of absorbing the great migrational movement from the rural areas. One sign of the converse is the high proportion of women in Swedish emigration. The second reason relates to differences in agricultural structure. The general productivity of farming in Denmark was high enough to keep most owners of land on their property. In Sweden, on the other hand, the decline in grain prices caused farmers to leave their properties. The third reason arises from the fact that when the preconditions for mass emigration came about in the 1860's—with the end of the Civil War in the United States and the growth of steamship traffic—Sweden and Norway, in particular, already had strong minorities of settlers in America. The pull of these minorities on people in their countries of origin accelerated the movement of emigration, a precondition which did not exist to the same extent in the case of Denmark.

II. The pull-function in mass emigration

In the previous chapter the main 'push factors' were examined: the sources of emigration within Denmark. Another approach to the migration is to consider the attraction exerted by the overseas countries and by institutions, interested in encouraging emigration. This 'pull effect' in migration is a highly complicated mechanism, consisting of hundreds of small and large factors operating in very different ways. It is possible, however, to distinguish two main sets of factors in the pull effect: (1) personal contacts between immigrants already settled overseas and their relatives and friends back in the native country; (2) the organized encouragement of emigration undertaken by public bodies and commercial interests.

Personal contacts to and from Europe were maintained chiefly in three ways: (1) by letters sent home describing conditions in the USA or elsewhere, perhaps more or less directly inviting relatives to join the writers; (2) by transfer of money from immigrants to families or

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friends at home; or (3) exerting a 'pull' of migration by prepaid tickets sent home.

Most scholars of emigration agree on the importance of personal contacts across the Atlantic as a pull factor, but so far no one seems to have produced a concrete quantitative estimate of this effect or to have examined its possible influence on fluctuations in emigration. The Danish source material provides opportunities to measure the extent of these personal communications. It is possible to derive estimates of the exchange of letters and the forwarding of money from the yearly reports to the government made by the Danish postal authorities. From 1872 onward the annual number of letters between the USA and Denmark is known. It began with a yearly total of approximately 150 000 letters each way and increased, particularly after 1900, to culminate in 1913 with nearly 1.8 million letters from the USA to Denmark and about 1.4 million letters westwards from Denmark. Over the years, however, there were considerable fluctuations in the stream, and these seem to have followed the economic cycles. Thus the number of letters from the USA was extremely low in 1885 and 1893, when there were great economic panics. This may suggest that letters home contributed to the annual fluctuations in emigration. Assuming that the letters from America really had all been written by Danish immigrants, each immigrant would have sent home an average of 3–4 letters per year during the 1880's. After 1900, however, the annual number of letters per immigrant doubled. But this increase might have resulted from the fact that extensive commercial activity between Denmark and USA began at that time.

The amount of money sent by postal orders to Denmark is known from 1879. The yearly amount sent from Denmark to North America remained at about the same level throughout the period. But in the amount going eastwards there was a rise after 1887. During the years 1893–1897 the sums involved declined (from 800 000 Danish kroner a year to about 500 000 kr.), only to increase again from 1900 to 1914 (from 500 000 kr. a year to about 2.4 million kr.). The latter rise does not reflect increased commercial activity, as payment of exports and imports generally went through the international banks and not through post offices.

The most striking evidence of the pull effect from the European immigrants in America, however, is the number of prepaid tickets sent home to Scandinavia. According to lists compiled by all emigration

agents in Denmark, between one fourth and one third of all Danish emigrants travelled overseas on prepaid tickets. Even more surprising are the corresponding figures from Norway and Sweden, where 40–50 per cent travelled on prepaid tickets. This is a point which deserves closer attention, because it brings us to the heart of the pull mechanism in emigration. Here, too, economic cycles had a significant influence. During years of acute short-term crisis in the USA, such as 1885, 1893 and 1908, it is surprising to see an extraordinarily high percentage of prepaid tickets. As to the difference in proportions of prepaid passages between Denmark on the one side and Sweden and Norway on the other, it is tempting to suggest that the size of the national minorities in America to a certain extent determined the pull effect indicated by this measure. As the minority grew the number of prepaid tickets sent home increased. It can thus be assumed that there was a self-accelerating effect of overseas migration, perhaps particularly strong among ethnic groups in America that tended to assimilate slowly.

The approach to pull-push problems has been based on the observation of Jerome and Dorothy S. Thomas that fluctuations in emigration followed the American economic cycles more closely than they did the European cycles. Just a few months after a turn in the economic trend in the USA a turn in the inflow of emigrants would often be registered. This leads to the question as to how the population in Europe, very often illiterate and isolated ethnic groups, could know so quickly about economic conditions in America more than 2 500 miles away. Letters and prepaid tickets contribute to the answer, but only in part. There is, however, a 'third' factor which seems hitherto to have been neglected in the approach to emigration dynamics—the system of transport across the Atlantic. This represented a very powerful economic chain, with links from the American prairie to the smallest villages all over Europe, a network of agents for railway companies and steamship companies all interested in the same purpose—to increase the number of passengers across the Atlantic. This economic system was also sensitive to economic cycles, in Europe as well as in the overseas countries, and the effects of cyclical fluctuations spread to European populations through the network of agents and their supply of propaganda material of all kinds. An essential and powerful link in the chain was the steamship company. These companies were integrated into the economic life on both sides of the Atlantic through their passenger

agencies, a system which had great effect as a pull factor, partly in consequence of the vigorous competition between the Atlantic lines.

The preceding account represents a hypothesis that will be approached in the following in three ways: (1) through an analysis of the development of economic conditions in Atlantic transport; (2) by a demonstration of the co-operation between Atlantic shipping and those organizations in the USA which worked to encourage further immigration; and (3) by an investigation of the origin and development of emigration agencies in Denmark, their ways of operation and their importance in internal competition.

The transition from sail to steampower in overseas shipping involved the introduction of regular services between European and American ports. This again led to economic concentration: small shipping firms amalgamated into large companies, particularly in Atlantic navigation. Great Britain predominated in this field after 1860 and held an especially strong position in transport to America from the Scandinavian countries. At times she was in hard competition with German companies. Independent Danish services to New York were organized between 1866 and 1874 and from 1879 to 1934, which also carried passengers from Norway and Sweden for some years during the 1880's with great success but were later haunted by shipwrecks and bad luck.

Many American organizations, particularly the railroad companies, tried after the end of the Civil War to gain influence or buy shares in the Atlantic emigrant traffic, in order to secure immigrant labour and settlers for their lines and land grants. The Philadelphia Railroad Company was very active in this respect. In 1871 it attempted to buy the great Scottish company, Anchor Line. When it failed, several railroads joined in founding the American Line in 1873. From the 1880's on American capitalists began systematically to conquer part of the Atlantic emigrant traffic. The International Navigation Company was a holding company which bought several European steamship lines—for example the Belgian Red Star and the famous Inman Line. The climax of American penetration in Atlantic shipping was the establishment of the International Mercantile Marine Company in 1902 by J. Pierpont Morgan, who also bought up the White Star Line, the Dominion Line and other well-known British companies. A parallel in Canada was the merger of the Allan Line with the Canadian Pacific

Railway. Many examples of individual agreements between American railroads and Atlantic lines could be given.

The American railroad trusts, each had its own propaganda system for attracting passengers and settlers to its land grants. When the great steamships arrived at Castle Garden, New York, the new immigrants were met by hundreds of agents representing railroads, land companies, labour bureaus, etc. Many of these organizations also sent agents to European countries to attract prospective emigrants. Often these agents were prevented from direct propaganda activity by the emigration legislation of European countries and therefore instead made agreements with the authorized shipping agents. A typical example of this was the promotion of emigration undertaken by the Northwestern Pacific Railroad in the early 1870's, an activity which became decisive for the great Scandinavian emigration to Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. The shipping agents welcomed the propaganda of the American railroads, both as an inducement to new emigration and as a source of income through commissions granted them on railway fares.

Analyzing Danish emigration to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South America seems to demonstrate two points: (1) Fluctuations in emigration to overseas countries other than the USA seem to have depended on promotion and propaganda from the individual states—Canada, Australia, Argentina etc. It seems evident from the Danish point of view that almost every wave of emigrants to these countries was preceded by a propaganda campaign in Denmark. It is impossible to prove the same thing in respect to emigration to the USA, because in that case so many trends were mixed up at the same time. (2) The emigration agents of the shipping companies were those who carried out the advertizing campaigns of the overseas countries. These agents possessed the necessary 'sales organization' in Europe through their subagents, offices, advertising systems, etc. The immigration authorities of the overseas countries made agreements with one or two shipping agents, who were paid a commission for each emigrant recruited. The emigration agents in Europe thus acquired a certain power over the recruitment of new emigrants.

In the so-called Dillingham report on emigration (41 volumes presented to the United States Congress in 1911) it was maintained that the

Atlantic shipping companies were the real 'simulators' of European mass emigration: " . . . they go through these countries with their agents and bring anybody as long as he is able to get the money to come over". Were these emigration agencies in fact an independent pull factor in the migration, or were they only the channels of information which brought to Europe the news of the great demand for manpower in the overseas countries?

The development of a sales organization for emigration was closely connected with the transition from sail to steam and the establishment of regular services between European ports and New York. The growth in the tonnage of steamers was enormous from 1860 onwards: between 1860 and 1880 the registered tonnage of steamers in the United Kingdom alone increased more than five-fold. This naturally created very intense competition among shipowners both in freight transport and passenger traffic. One result was the development of emigration agencies all over Europe during the 1860's. The professional agent of this type began to appear in Denmark around 1865. At first it had been mainly wholesale merchants (often in the tobacco trade) who took on the function of emigration agents as a sideline, mainly for shipping companies in Hamburg. But with increasing emigration and the introduction of the Danish law to protect emigrants, a new type of agent came to the fore. This was the professional businessman who specialized in emigration canvassing for British companies, engaging scores of subagents in the Danish provinces and advertising in many newspapers all over the country.

After about 1870 the main offices of the emigration agencies were concentrated along a single street in Copenhagen, 'Nyhavn', near the docks where ships from Sweden and the provinces came in. The number of head agents varied between 6 and 12, about the same number as in Sweden where emigration was on a much larger scale. They were men of very different origins, many of them recruited from relatively high social levels. Many had tried their luck as businessmen in America; some were of low moral standard. In the course of the decades up to 1914, however, the recruitment of head agents changed in character. Clerks of the earlier agents were promoted to head agents: their 'image' is nearer to that of administrators not given to the sharp practices of the agents of the 1880's.

The Danish law of May 1, 1868, introduced official control over the emigration agents. They had to deliver a rather high deposit to the

police before practicing (about £1 000), and each contract made with emigrants had to be certified by the same authority. In practice, however, this control was ineffective. It seems to have been the rule among agents that the British or German shipping company would pay the deposit on behalf of the agent. The agent, on the other hand, had to deposit a sum with the shipping company as security for the transfer of the passage money received. If the agents wanted to avoid police control, or found it too embarrassing, they could at any time send their emigrants to Hamburg or Liverpool without contracts by pretending to sell tickets only to those ports.

The emigration agents could make very high incomes in years of relatively large emigration. They received a fixed salary of about £100 to £200 a year plus 5 to 10 shillings in commission per passenger booked. In addition they had minor earnings by exchange of kroner into dollars or by writing orders on banks in places such as New York and Chicago.

After about 1868 the head agents arranged a network of subagents all over the country. In the 1880's there were more than 1 000 subagents in Denmark, an average of 70 for each head agent. They were recruited among the local population and were often grocers, innkeepers and artisans, people in daily contact with townspeople and the farming areas. The subagents represented an import link in the dynamics of European mass emigration. This network, which was spread out to the most distant provinces all over Europe, diffused the idea of emigration and distributed the great masses of propaganda material, the maps of American railroads, the leaflets and books from Minnesota, Iowa, Canada and Australia. The subagents were paid a commission of 10 to 15 shillings per emigrant, and their earnings thus depended on their zeal in persuading their 'customers'. Among the subagents were a considerable number of editors of provincial newspapers and even a few politicians and members of the Folketing (the Lower House of the Danish Parliament).

The network of subagents was doubtless an important factor in the pull effect through its diffusion of information about overseas countries. However, they seem to have been less effective in actual canvassing for emigrants. Very few of the authorized subagents had been in the overseas countries themselves, and their talk to that extent would have seemed unconvincing. Capable of carrying greater conviction was

another group in the emigrant business, the most direct representatives of the pull effect, the so-called Yankees.

The keen competition in Atlantic shipping and the great demand for settlers in the American railroad areas led to a systematic use of Danish-Americans who were often sent home free of charge in order to collect parties of new emigrants. These Danish-Americans had a powerful impact when they appeared in Denmark. The elegant ten-gallon hat, the drawling accent and the well-to-do look told the poor Danes of great opportunities in the New World. The Yankees were eager to recruit emigrants. They were paid a commission per emigrant that seems to have been generally two to three times higher than the commission to subagents. Moreover, they were given free passage back to the USA when they had provided, for example, 10 emigrants to the head agent. The Yankees might be engaged for this business by an American railroad, by a mining company or—most often—by one of the shipping companies. Many of them went on to act as entrepreneurs on their own account, 'selling' the emigrants whom they had recruited to the agent who offered them the highest commission. This traffic was not sanctioned by the authorities, and little is therefore known of its scale. But a great many circumstances seem to indicate that all shipping companies used this sort of sales promotion to a very large extent, especially in the 1880's. An example from Sweden provides an impression. In the autumn of 1881 one of the companies, the Allan Line, recruited 300 Swedish-Americans and sent them free of charge to Sweden to canvass throughout the winter and each would accompany his own group of emigrants back to the USA the next spring. It is said that three of these Yankees were accompanied by 200 emigrants —'Yankees have monopolized the whole business already,' one of the agents said. All the companies used the same method, which was no doubt one essential factor in the generation of the great boom in emigration during the years 1882–1884.

Many different approaches have been adopted in research on the cause of the vigorous fluctuations in emigration from year to year. But one seems not to have been tried: to ask whether changes in the price of the Atlantic passage influenced the number of emigrants. There is a great deal of evidence to show that the cost of tickets was high in relation to average wages of the time. It was very difficult for the general labourer to save £5, and even more difficult to save the fare

needed if he had a wife and children. When offers were made of assisted passages to Australia or Brazil there was a response from a new social level, from among poor people who could not afford to go to the USA.

In his book, *Economics of Migration,* published in 1947, Julius Isaac maintains that fares for the Atlantic passage varied very little between 1850 and 1914. A closer examination seems to reveal that this was not so. The competition in Atlantic shipping after 1865 caused a trend for the fares to fall. Especially during the 1880's, the contest for passengers between British and German lines reduced prices to about half the level of the 1860's. Technical innovations, the construction of bigger ships and a falling consumption of coal during the passage helped to make these reductions possible.

The fares were made up of different elements: (1) the net cost per passenger for the shipping companies; (2) the net price paid by head agents to their companies; (3) the commission to the emigrant agents; and (4) the commission to the subagents. Competition between the lines often led to a certain tension between shipping companies and head agents. There were two ways to secure more passengers for the individual line: to reduce net prices, or to increase commissions to the agents and thereby increase their zeal in canvassing. The agents often took advantage of the situation to get their commissions raised when there was a fall in the number of emigrants. It is true that price cutting had only a small effect on the number of emigrants during acute economic crises, such as in 1885 when emigrant fares reached their lowest level. But during 'normal' times, when the cyclical economic trend was favourable, a sudden reduction in fares could encourage higher emigration.

Unfortunately evidence of a very few series of price fluctuations in Atlantic emigrant traffic before 1914 has been preserved to the present time, although from Danish material it is possible to establish a falling trend until about 1893. After 1901 (apart from the cut-throat competition period of 1903–04) prices tended to rise steadily, and they did so radically after 1918. It is interesting to examine developments in general wage levels in Denmark and other European countries in relation to this trend. From about 1870 there was a steady rise in minimum wages for both rural and urban labourers. Thus from year to year a larger section of the population became capable of raising sufficient money to realize the dream of emigration. This seems to have been a

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factor in the steady decrease in the average age of emigrants—even young men and women could now afford the fare.

From the above outline it may have seemed as if price formation in Atlantic shipping was free of any restrictions, as free as many other commercial relations in this liberal era. A more detailed examination of sources, however, reveals close co-operation among the managers of the great shipping companies, a monopolistic tendency that started as early as about 1870 and developed into a world-wide agreement between all shipping companies on prices and the division of the market in the Atlantic emigrant traffic. Almost nothing has been done before to bring this development to light and to examine its influence on the emigration movement.

When Scandinavian emigration started to swell after 1865, a vigorous competition arose between British and North German lines to secure these passengers. In 1868 the British emigrant lines appealed to the British government for support against their German competitors. The first agreement, the so-called North Atlantic Steam Ship Conference, between seven British emigrant lines from Liverpool, dates from this time. The Conference laid down certain regulations for a fixed net price for the Atlantic passage and a maximum commission for agents (the Inman Line alone had 3 000 agents in Europe). It made agreements with American railroads as to the commissions from these to the shipping companies and their agents in Europe. By chance, a detailed account of one of the meetings of the Liverpool Conference in 1871 has been preserved in the Danish material. It gives striking evidence of how the managers of the seven great British emigrant lines tried to eliminate every internal competitor by establishing their control over all agents in Great Britain and on the Continent. The purpose was to keep the net prices to New York at a profitable level and to lower the agents' commissions. The North Atlantic Steam Ship Conference, founded shortly after 1868, is an interesting institution as it seems to have been the first of its kind in the world. That distinction has hitherto generally been awarded to the so-called Calcutta Conference of 1875, for control of frieght shipping to India. As early as the 1850's it is known that there was an agreement as to freight rates and passengers fares between the British Cunard Line and the American Collin Line. It is true that the Atlantic Conference of 1868 was not quite successful: most agents did not obey the Liverpool regulations. Yet the Copenhagen emigrant statistics show that the British lines acquired the main share of the market in emigrant traffic from Copenhagen from the German lines.

When a new boom in American emigration began in 1879, the Liverpool Conference was re-established, now with a more detailed organization. Thus Copenhagen agents were ordered to set up a 'subconference'. An account of the discussions of the Copenhagen conference of British lines has been preserved. It reports an endless number of arguments between the agents, who accused one another of undercutting fares or of giving excessive commissions to Yankees.

During the years after 1880 the German lines became involved in a great price war, mainly between the old Hamburg-Amerikanische Packet Aktien Gesellschaft (HAPAG) and the newly established Carr Line. This ended with a regular economic crisis for all companies when emigration suddenly fell in 1885. As a result of the fight the German companies established a North German conference following the British model. European emigrant transport was now divided between two great cartels fighting each other. This state of affairs lasted only a few years. When American capital started to penetrate the emigrant business the British and the German conferences came together. In December 1887 the two cartels founded the new North Atlantic Steamship Conference, comprising 12 British and 3 German lines as well as the Danish line Thingvalla. The 'Agency Regulations, Scandinavian Business' have been preserved: they fixed the price to New York at 105 kroner and agents' commission at 15 kroner. In 1892 the two last 'pirate-lines', the Holland-American Line and the Red Star, were admitted to the Conference with acceptance of their undercutting of fares but with a quota of emigrants from the northern part of the European Continent limited to 20 per cent of the total.

The 1892 agreement led to a pooling arrangement which set fixed quotas of emigrants for each Atlantic shipping company. This was arranged in the 'British-Continental Steerage Pool', signed in London on June 7, 1898. By this agreement the German Lines undertook to withdraw from the Scandinavian emigrant market and leave it to the British companies and the Danish Thingvalla line.

After the establishment of the International Marine Steamship Company by Morgan in 1902, the greatest fight of all thus far developed between the new American trust and the all-European conferences. This fight, too, was stopped by an international cirisis, the panic of

Table 2.

British lines	40.99 per cent
German lines	31.14 per cent
American lines	23.38 per cent
Canadian Pacific (passengers to USA)	4.49 per cent
	100.0 per cent

1908, after which control of the North Atlantic emigrant traffic was merged in the hands of one great cartel, covering price and agents' regulations and a steerage pool. The national quotas for passenger traffic between Europe and the USA can be seen from table 2.

If any of these quotas were exceeded the national conference would pay 60 shillings per passenger to the other partners. The agreement was renewed in 1911 and remained in force for many years after World War I.

The international conference system in the Atlantic traffic was primarily an economic measure by the shipping companies to maintain prices at a profitable level. It was devised as a sanction against local agents, but it did not prevent competition among agents in canvassing for new passengers. The conference regulations did not prohibit the employment of Yankees and other effective means. Nevertheless, the very detailed agreements and the pooling system of 1898 and 1908 seem to have produced a change in the character of the emigrant agencies. The old type of rough salesman-agent from the 1870's and 1880's disappeared after the turn of the century: the emigration business became more bureaucratic and more like the travel bureau of modern times.

Conclusion

There is a fascinating perspective in the fact that more than 50 million Europeans went overseas in the course of 75 years. What was the incentive to this great exodus? An answer to this question will point to some general trends in the pattern of international migration as a whole, trends that are of current interest because of the large scale migration of labourers in recent years from Southern to Northern Europe.

Most modern scholars of mass emigration before 1914 have studied the phenomenon only from an economic-statistical point of view. The aim of the present study has been to look more closely at the historical aspects and to identify a wider range of factors which may have influenced the movement. Thus the fact that emigration showed marked fluctuations from year to year seems less essential from this perspective. Comparison of economic cycles with fluctuations in emigration, as a means of establishing push and pull factors in the mass movement, seems less attractive now than earlier. There are many weaknesses in that method, among them the unreliability of the statistical source material as to both emigration and economic fluctuations.

It has, moreover, been a main point in this study to underline the fact that 'push' must be seen in a wider context than that of emigration by itself. There was a common 'push' behind all the migration 'fever' which came to Europe after 1800 and caused an enormous internal migration, a general mobility of population of which overseas emigration was only one part.

The great increase in population contributed to this rise in mobility. Denmark was not overpopulated in the Malthusian sense. Reforms in the structure of agriculture and technical innovation had made it possible to provide a living for a much larger population. The real background of increased mobility is more likely to be found in an intellectual awakening of the population, a parallel to the new popular, political and religious movements of the early 19th century. The individual became ambitious, and better means of transport helped him to realize his ambitions. This social buoyancy expressed itself in migration from the countryside to the towns. But the new urban population's chances of finding a living depended on the development of industry. Industrialization came comparatively slowly in Denmark before 1890, relative to the influx of population in the towns: and it is this which seems to have caused the high level of urban emigration from Denmark. Rural emigrants were apparently, on the whole, young people who wanted to remain in an agricultural environment and who ended their days as farmers on the American prairie.

The structure of emigration changed in the course of the years from 1860 to 1914. The average age of emigrants fell over the period, as did the proportions of married couples and children among them, whereas the number of unmarried girls grew steadily. One cause was decisive among the several causes responsible for this trend: the in-

crease in real wages in Denmark coupled with the falling price of the Atlantic passage, which made it possible for even a poor young man or girl to go to America and seek a fortune. The increase especially in the percentage of unmarried girls among the emigrants of the later decades may have been a result of the fact that, while industry in its early stages depended on female labour, it came to do so less and less.

The mobility of the Danish population would probably have been limited to migration within the area of Scandinavia and North Germany, had the news of economic welfare in the New World not been spread to all homes in Denmark. It was the distribution of information on living conditions in the overseas countries which constituted the 'pull' effect in the mass emigration. A considerable part of this information came to Europe through personal contacts between immigrants and family or friends at home. The number of letters from the USA to Denmark, as well as the amounts of funds transferred, demonstrate how much this meant for the spread of information and for invitations to join the immigrants. Most striking, however, was the extent of the practice of sending prepaid tickets from the USA to Denmark and other countries. This seems to reveal something essential about the self-acceleration force of overseas emigration: as the national minorities grew in numbers in America, the pull effect became more powerful.

Personal contacts across the Atlantic, although strong, were only one aspect of the pull effect. The insatiable demand for labour in America, and the demand for more passengers for the emigrant ships, were other pull factors. It has been a main point in this paper to give an impression of the international system of emigrant promotion which these demands produced and to emphasize that emigration was not just a spontaneous social and economic phenomenon but also a business. The recruitment and transport of more than 52 million people involved enormous economic interests on both sides of the Atlantic. The question is whether the transport system, with all its sales organization, agencies, Yankees, etc., on both sides of the Atlantic, functioned as one of the factors of 'pull'. The importance of the commercial activity in migration may be illustrated by a modern example. In the course of the last 20 years the coastline and islands of the Mediterranean have been invaded by millions of people from northwestern Europe who come on a holiday to enjoy the mild climate. This mass migration has been made possible as a result, on the one hand, of the general increase in wages; on the other of a fall in transport prices

in consequence of technical innovation, this time not in shipping but in aviation. There are again both push and pull involved in this short term migration, but the primary motivating force behind the movement has been that of the transport organizations, the travel bureaus, agencies, public relations and so on.

Much more complicated factors were combined in European mass emigration before 1914. But the preceding example, nevertheless, draws attention to the commercial aspect of long distance migration, a factor that seems to have been ignored in the scholarly litterature on emigration. The sales organizations of the shipping companies became the intermediaries and the connecting links between the push and the pull factors. To recognize this provides a better understanding of the pull-push theories of Jerome and Dorothy S. Thomas. These authors showed a close correlation between American economic cycles and the fluctuations in emigration. But they did not explain how the news of a change in the business cycle in America could spread so quickly through Europe and cause a corresponding change in the number of emigrants leaving.

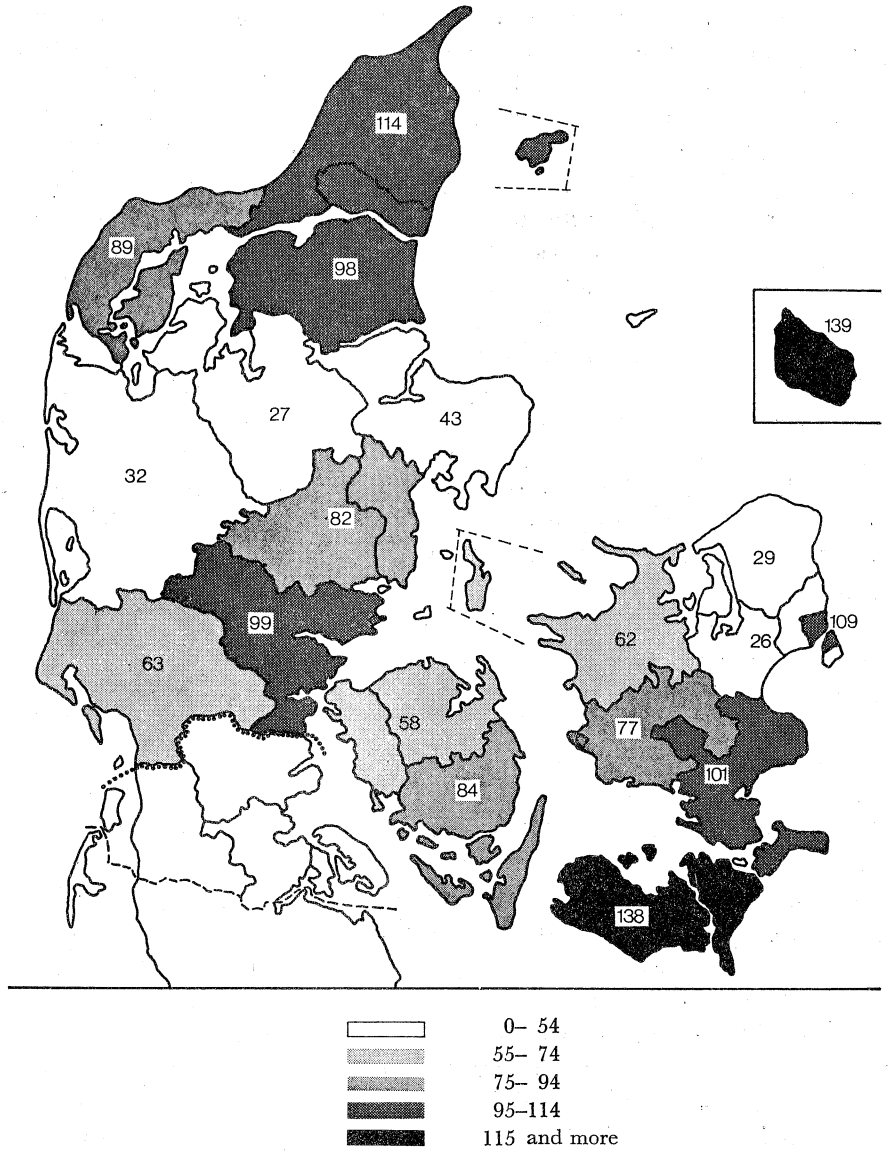
Letters from America to Europe were an important means of communication. But just as important in this respect were the links in the chain of transport organization. The transatlantic companies were very sensitive to the American business cycles, and all cyclical fluctuations were passed on across the Atlantic through the various parts of the transport system. It is thus worth mentioning that the shipping companies each organized and ran great labour exchange bureaus in New York and Chicago. The Atlantic lines worked in close cooperation with American railroad trusts: they had common interests during normal times in more passengers and greater circulation. The shipping agents distributed the propaganda of the American railroads, as well as of industry and of the local commissioners of individual states in the USA.

The importance of this distribution of propaganda may be seen in the emigration to overseas nations other than the USA. The waves of emigration to Canada, Australia and South America most often were the result of propaganda campaigns undertaken through the shipping agents. Thus, one of the preconditions of the great boom in immigration to Canada after 1901 was the merger of the Allan and Beaver Lines with the Canadian Pacific Railways. The aim of this transaction was not ownership of the ships but control of the sales organization which the two shipping companies operated all over Europe.

The preceding has shown the importance of the organization of transatlantic shipping as an intermediary factor in the pull function. The next question must be whether the system of agents as such was a motive force in emigration—a 'third factor' in addition to pull and push, capable by itself of promoting waves of emigration. This may be answered affirmatively, though with many reservations. Emigration agents in fact could do very little when economic depressions paralyzed activity on both sides of the Atlantic. During such years, as for instance in the last half of the 1870's, agents reduced their number of subagents and curtailed their advertising campaigns: some went into other kinds of business until better economic conditions returned.

During profitable years, and especially in the first stages of an economic boom, however, there was a feverish activity among the emigration agents, stimulated by high commissions and the competition between the shipping lines. Through these canvassing campaigns the agents undoubtedly stimulated an acceleration of emigration beyond the limits of 'normal' push and pull. The agents possessed many means of persuasion, of which the Yankee system was the most efficient. Bringing scores of Danish-American immigrants back to Denmark with the job of going through every village in their home provinces during wintertime to recruit emigrants was not a 'normal' pull effect, but an artificial one arranged by the shipping lines.

The canvassing campaigns remained a 'third' motive force for emigration as long as all emigration agents competed with each other. But such a struggle could be the ruin of the shipping lines. The latter were squeezed economically on one side by the agents, who demanded lower fares and higher commissions to secure passengers, and on the other side by the need for large investments in a costly shipbuilding programme—bigger, faster and more luxurious ships were the conditions for participating in the Atlantic race. In the 1860's the companies could solve the financial problem by packing the steerage of their ships to the last inch with emigrants. But the legislation in most European countries to protect emigrants prevented the lines from continual exploitation of their passengers in the same measure as before. Shipping companies in that situation found co-operation better than competition. The aim of such co-operation was by and large to maintain a profitable price level and to keep down commissions. It began with the Liverpool Conference, apparently the first shipping conference in the world. But the attempt to maintain a price policy was more or



Emigration from Denmark 1868–1900. Per mille of meanpopulation 1870–1901.

less ineffective as long as German, Dutch and American lines competed with the British companies. With the German conference of 1885, the European one in 1898 and the world-wide Atlantic shipping conference of 1908, however, the emigration agents became tied up in a network of regulation. In the course of these developments the crude canvassing practices of the first professional emigration agents were replaced by those of a more bureaucratic system of travel bureaus, employing a staff perhaps on fixed monthly salaries rather than on the basis of a commission per emigrant. From about 1898 the Atlantic transport business no longer acted as a third pull factor.

The general impression thus seems to be that, with all its ramifications, the organization of transport in the early stages of mass emigration contributed actively to swelling the movement. After the turn of the century its importance as an independent factor in the generation of emigration diminished. At this stage, however, the self-accelerating force of emigration continued the mass movement until a world war stopped it.