

The Larsson Brothers.

A study of the activity of Swedish emigrant agencies during the 1880's*

by *Berit Brattne*

The emigrant agents and their business activities are a central factor of importance for a study of the causes and development of emigration. Not until recently however, has research paid due attention to the role played by them with regard to the supplying of information and with a view to travel. The issue has been brought to the fore within the theoretical discussion concerning the volume changes in mass-emigration. To a large extent the debate has been stimulated by the successive results of empirical research into the channels of information between the country of emigration and the country of immigration. Hitherto however, owing to the faultiness of the source of material, a closer study of the role played by the different elements of the transport sector for the development of emigration has been rendered difficult.

Since the discovery of emigrant archives in Sweden, it has been possible to throw more light upon many of those interesting issues which Nordic research has connected with the transport sector's significance for the development of emigration. This thesis is principally the result of research into these archives. They were left by five brothers, called Larsson, who at times together and at times individually, carried on emigrant agencies and other business activities during the period 1873–1914. The preserved documents extend over an appreciable period of that epoch which covers the great emigration from Sweden to America, but they undoubtedly provide a most comprehensive illustration of

* This article is a summary of Berit Brattne's doctoral dissertation *Bröderna Larsson. En studie i svensk emigrantagentverksamhet under 1880-talet*. Uppsala 1973.

the period of culmination, e.e. the 1880's. In using the Larssonian archives it is the express intent of this thesis to make a study of the conditions and structure of the emigrant agencies during this decade. The framework of the business was created by the directions of the authorities and principal employers, which were of a varying nature. An additional basic factor was the variable state of the mercantile conditions governing the transportation of emigrants, since these were strongly dependent upon the demand for sailings. The contents of the information together with the principles the emigrant agents employed for the marketing of their services illustrate very clearly the role they played in the development of emigration. The emigrant agents constitute an important element in the structure of the transportation apparatus, but the central question at issue is whether they can be accredited with being actual emigrant recruiters, capable of influencing the size of the emigrant volume.

In certain respects, primarily commercial, the conditions were the same for the Scandinavian emigrant traffic. Because of this, the result of the investigation concerned with the relations between the North Atlantic shipping companies and their representatives can be regarded as being valid for Norway and Denmark also. Since, on the whole, the Finnish emigrants passed through Swedish emigrant ports during the 1880's, it can be assumed that they had the same travel conditions as those from the Scandinavian countries.

In association with the investigation of the emigrant agency some additional problems have been dealt with which have general validity within the field of emigration research. The material in the Larssonian archives provides a unique opportunity to shed light on the potential emigration, on the distribution of the emigrant volume between cash and prepaid tickets, as well as to discuss certain problems pertaining to travel which directly affected the emigrants. Furthermore, it is possible to scrutinize critically the official sources of material dealing with Swedish emigration. In the following pages the most significant results will be recapitulated.

In view of the problem of choosing a period for the study of emigrant agencies with regard to the Larssonian archives, the factors of having access to comprehensive material and the structure of the Larssonian business prove decisive. The source of material from the last two decades of the 19th century is extensive but more comprehensive for just the 1880's. This is to be explained by the fact that the Larssons

had located their business in three centres for the transportation of emigrants, namely Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm. The decade also constituted a period of active construction for their business, so there was a need for close contacts between the brothers on matters concerning the organization of the business. Another motivation for the choice of the 1880's as the period of investigation is that the Larssons on the whole only represented a single shipping company during this time. Judged on criteria other than those contained in the Larssonian archives, the decade can still be regarded to cover an interesting period on which to base a study of the emigrant agency. During this period the second great wave of mass-emigration took place and this has been interpreted by scholars as being particularly fruitful for the study of not only external but also internal migration during the process of industrialization.

The problems of interest associated with the transport sector, which earlier research has specified, have been difficult to illustrate due to insufficient sources of material. For this reason it has been judged important to use the information of the Larssonian archives in order to earlier presented hypotheses as well as to attempt to make new contributions to the knowledge about the most important phase of the mass-emigration with regard to volume.

In the two opening chapters the Larssons and their business are presented together with the economic outcome of this. The purpose behind this is to give a survey in the form of a case study of the development of an emigrant agency and those other business activities closely associated with it during the period 1874-1914.

The Larssons themselves had their origins in one of the social groups which formed the basis of recruitment for emigration from Sweden. Four of the five brothers emigrated from Sweden to America at an early age on various occasions during the 1860's and the 1870's. Besides a knowledge of the language, their visit gave them an education and practical experience in the mercantile field. After successively having re-immigrated to Sweden in the 1870's and at the beginning of the 1880's, the brothers, on the basis of their experiences and connections in America, began to devote a greater part of their professional time to the emigrant agency business. The youngest brother, Samuel Larsson, represented shipping companies carrying emigrant traffic for thirty-seven years, which meant that at the beginning of the 20th century he was the grand old man among the emigrant agents.

During the 1880's the Larssons for the most part represented only a single shipping company, namely the British Guion Line, which with regard to the number of passengers was of medium size. The economic yield of the business varied strongly and was directly dependent upon the changeable volume of emigrants during different years. Substantial profits were made by this agency during the years of great emigration. On the other hand, receipts from other business activities were of considerable significance for the total results of the business during years with low emigration.

During the next decade each of the Larssons carried on a more independent business and were thus in possession of several different agencies. Generally speaking, the emigrant agencies were profitable even during the 1890's, though to a lesser extent than during the previous decade. The retrogression was counterbalanced by an increased activity within other branches of business, principally concerned with export and import transactions within the agrarian sector. The Larssons concerned themselves at an early stage with the increasing export of butter from Sweden which took place during the decade. Their import of coal went primarily to the beet-sugar industry, which emerged at the end of the 1880's.

The continued agent activity by the Larssons during the 20th century up to the time of the Great War was principally carried on by Samuel Larsson. The forming of concerns within the North Atlantic shipping industry had the effect of reshaping the emigrant agencies, so that every individual agent could represent several shipping companies. For Samuel Larsson's part this meant that he represented the American and Dominion Lines and was with regard to passenger volume among the leading agents in Sweden, following the representatives for the Cunard and White Star Lines, who were in a class of their own. For Samuel Larsson, the economic outcome of the emigrant agencies proved to be a changeable nature and seen in its entirety resulted in a net loss.

The possibility that the Larssonian agency was representative of emigrant agencies in Sweden has been investigated from four different angles of approach. The examination of Elis F. and Samuel Larsson's position with regard to taxable business incomes during the first half of the 1880's has led to the conclusion that in this respect they could be regarded as being representative of the emigrant agent body. The same can be said of the business activities carried on along-

side those of the emigrant agency. With a regard to continuity, the Larssonian emigrant agency can be most closely compared with those of the representatives for the leading shipping companies carrying Swedish emigrant traffic, who held agencies for one and the same shipping company throughout the decade.

An investigation into the position which the Larssons held with regard to volume has shown that the company they represented, the Guion Line, occupied fourth position amongst the ten British shipping companies operating on the Swedish emigrant market. On both the Swedish and Continental markets, however, the company was clearly outdistanced by the leading Cunard, White Star and Inman Lines. On the average, the Guion Line's share of the emigrant traffic could be estimated to approximately 10% during the 1880's. Consequently, with a view to volume, the company was of medium size. On the other hand, the agency carried on by the Larssons was, with regard to the distribution of the passenger volume between cash and prepaid tickets, by no means representative. Of all British shipping companies the Guion Line transported the lowest percentage of emigrants with the last-mentioned category of ticket.

In spite of the lack of that positive factor which prepaid tickets constituted to the total sales' result, the Larssons managed to successively increase their share of the market. This was fairly constant for the majority of shipping companies during the decade. The successes of the Guion Line can be attributed to the intimate collaboration of the Larssons coupled with their strong, personal investment in order to attain successful results.

In connection with the investigation into the market situation of the emigrant agents, an examination of the official material covering Swedish emigration has been undertaken. This consists of those lists of emigrants handed in to the appropriate authorities at the Swedish emigration ports, the so-called ships' lists. Together with material from the parish registration books these lists constitute the most important source of material for an investigation into emigration and have, to an increasing degree, become the subject which research has taken up. The investigation has been of both a qualitative and a quantitative nature.

A qualitative investigation is judged to be of possible value for the data processing of the material from the ships' lists which is now in progress within the research project "Sweden and America after 1860" at the Institute of History in Uppsala. The examination has

consisted of a comparison between, on the one hand, double contracts and other apt material in the Larssonian archives and, on the other hand, the ships' lists and has referred to the agent's procedure with the recording of the oral and/or written information of the emigrants. The number of conveyed emigrants, including those who undertook the crossing second class, were correctly reported. Personal information referring to name, profession whenever applicable, the parish and county of the emigrant and place of destination were in principle correctly recorded. From the middle of 1883 these particulars are assumed to be in closer agreement with the material contained in the parish registers, since certificates notifying the change of land of residence were already required in order to obtain an emigrant contract, even though this was not required by law until 1885. Age particulars were, on the other hand, incorrectly recorded for children under fourteen years of age. The ages of one, five and twelve year olds were recorded as lower than they actually were because the travel costs were successively raised for these age limits. Thus, when making an analysis of the age structure of emigrants, due attention must be taken to this incorrect recording of the younger age groups. Certain errors have also been noticed concerning the recording of payments for journeys. The emigrant agent recorded those prices which tallied with current tariffs even in those cases where special discounts were granted. It should therefore be noted that when making a fundamental analysis of the emigrants' travel costs with regard to the ships' lists, the recorded details of travel costs exceed those actually paid, particularly where group travel is concerned. However, these really incorrect particulars about the travel costs can be of use to research, since they help to determine the correct places of destination in those cases where there are several identical place-names. Another important observation to be drawn from the information in the ships' lists on places of destination concerns persons with prepaid tickets. Because of booking technicalities the place of destination of these persons was recorded as New York. When undertaking an investigation into the distribution of the places of destination, due consideration should be attached to the division between cash and prepaid tickets. These observations ought also to be valid for the other Nordic countries, since the stated divergencies were conditioned not only by commercial factors but also by factors regarding travel.

The main aim of the quantitative investigation undertaken into the

information given by the different group-sources on the emigrant volume during the 1880's has been to determine the reliability of the statistics drawn up by the emigrant agents themselves and called the Return of Emigration. If these statistics can be used, then the hitherto, comparatively imperfect details about the distribution of the emigrant masses between cash and prepaid tickets can be supplemented. In the discussion of the driving force behind the emigration this aforementioned fact is of great interest to emigration research. The digressions between the Return of Emigration and the official statistics turn out to be percentually very small. Consequently the information in the first-mentioned statistics with regard to the total volume of each of the shipping companies can, on principle, be considered as correct. According to commentaries in the letter-material of the archives, the distribution between cash and prepaid tickets recorded by the respective shipping companies digresses from what actually was the position. With this in mind, the recorded share of prepaid tickets for individual shipping companies should be interpreted as being only approximate. The percentage of emigrants with prepaid tickets sailing from Gothenburg can be estimated to roughly 50% for the years 1883-1886 and around 40% for the years 1888-1889.

In this connection some viewpoints on the significance of prepaid tickets for the development of emigration have been presented. After certain comparisons between Danish and Swedish statistics, this ticket category's role as a pull factor stands out as being much more difficult to interpret than has hitherto been comprehended. The fact that a larger percentage of people emigrated with prepaid tickets during years with a low emigration than during years with a large emigration is possibly just a false connection which can, in turn, lead to an overemphasis of the importance of this ticketgroup for the volume of emigrant traffic. In the discussion about prepaid tickets consideration should be taken to the North Atlantic transportation apparatus, which operated under various commercial conditions during different parts of the decade. It can be assumed but not proven that ticket price-cutting took place to a greater extent on the American market than on the Scandinavian during the situation of severe rivalry which arose between the shipping companies in the middle of the decade. Quite naturally, it must have been more difficult for an individual shipping company to maintain a fixed ocean-fare on the great American market than on the more limited and controllable Scandinavian

market. It is hardly probable that it was solely the situation on the European market which occasioned a gradual co-operation between British and Continental shipping companies during the latter half of the decade. Close collaboration was also a prerequisite for price control on the American market, within which, according to Swedish statistics, 40-50% of the emigrant tickets were purchased. The statistical material strengthens to some extent the hypothesis that changes in the number of prepaid tickets should partly be explained by the more advantageous ticket prices in the land of immigration. During the years of collaboration between the shipping companies from 1888-1889, the percentage of prepaid tickets was 10% lower than during the years in the middle of the decennium, when there existed no collaboration.

Furthermore, a dispatch of prepaid tickets from the country of immigration can in many cases be interpreted as the following up of a decision already made in the country of birth or a purely technical measure aimed at making an emigration easier in a practical way. Naturally, prepaid tickets constituted a pull factor in no small way, though not of the size which the submitted percentual distribution between the two ticket groups easily brings to mind.

In connection with the investigation into the market situation of the emigrant agencies, light is even shed on the agent's course of action when contacting emigrants, principal employers and authorities with a view to issuing emigrant contracts. The general impression remains that in doing this they observed those regulations in force and that departures from this principle were not disadvantageous to the emigrants but were, if anything, quite the opposite.

The continued presentation includes an investigation into the regulations and conditions related to the running of an emigrant agency and their application.

The examination of the application by the authorities of the ordinances and regulations in force has been concentrated to dealing with questions concerning the permission of the Larssons to act as emigrant agents during the years 1875-1885. According to the opinion of the Emigration Commission, the control of the business by the authorities was conventional and ineffective. On going through the documents of the annual applications for Letters of Authority to carry on an emigrant agency, it appears that Elis F. Larsson was refused permission on two occasions and also that his permit on two other occasions was

strongly in question. For Samuel Larsson's part his permit to act as an emigrant agent was withdrawn on one occasion. Inasmuch as the borthers alternately held the permit to be emigrant agents, the agency representing the Guion Line could be maintained continuously: consequently the intervention by the authorities did not mean the end of the Larssonian business. Generally speaking, however, the knowledge of the authorities' control and the risks of losing an agency gave rise to a more careful observation of the regulations in force. The marked attitude towards rivalry within the agent body contributed towards its members, to a great extent, drawing the attention of the authorities to offences committed by individual emigrant agents. In this way the supervision of the business was more efficient than it otherwise would have been.

The commercial demands of the North Atlantic transportation apparatus were of a more decisive importance to the marketing of the agents and the shaping of emigrant traffic than laws and ordinances. In connection with the investigation into the regulations of the principal employers with regard to the commission of agents and directives governing the shaping of businesses, even the price-fixing policies of the shipping companies have been examined. This in turn has been investigated against the background of the presence of co-operation between shipping companies on the Scandinavian market. Since the results of the investigation provide the possibility of connecting journey costs to the emigrant volume during the 1880's, attention has been devoted to the question of the possibilities the agents and shipping companies had of influencing the size of the emigrant mass by means of an elastic prices' policy. Light can also be shed indirectly on the terms of travel of the emigrants.

A close relationship existed between the internal state of the North Atlantic shipping lines and the individual shipping company's formulating of marketing. A study of the commercial conditions of the emigrant agents must in the first place be based on an elucidation of the state of rivalry within the area of emigrant traffic. By using information from the Larssonian archives it has been possible to supplement the hitherto known picture of collaboration between the shipping companies. Contrary to what was the case within the Coal and Steel Industries, the British succeeded, as far as the Shipping Industry is concerned, in bringing about cartel agreements, thus alleviating the increasing rivalry of the Continental industrial countries in the last

decades of the 19th century. The form of collaboration would probably not have been foreign to the representatives out in the emigrant market. The formation of trusts increased greatly in the USA during the period of time in question, and even in Sweden cartel agreements began to constitute a new feature in the sphere of business economics. During the 1880's, under the heading of Liverpool Conferences, there was co-operation between British shipping companies on the Swedish market up to the middle of the year 1884 and during the years 1888-1889. During the two last-mentioned years even the leading Continental shipping companies were incorporated in the collaboration on this market.

Above everything it was economic considerations which conditioned the collaboration of the shipping companies. During the periods of the conferences the companies managed to maintain a considerably higher level of prices for ocean-fares than during periods without co-operation. The terms governing the agents' commission were also more favourable during the conference periods. A fixed sum of remuneration for every emigrant conveyed was then settled, while, during periods without conferences, the commission was directly dependent upon the demand for sailings within the home market.

In order that the ultimate aims of the shipping companies could be realized, it was a prerequisite that the plans for economic co-operation be combined with organizational ones. These last-mentioned plans were formulated by directives governing the shape an emigrant agency should take and were aimed at reducing local rivalry and the establishing of a control body. Common price and provision terms together with periodically mutual dollar exchange rates and principles governing advertising led to an appreciable limitation on the possibilities of competition. Guarantees which encouraged the following of the directives were, to a considerable extent, created by an imposed economic co-operation within the local agent associations. Regulations other than those of a purely economic nature were also observed, which shows that the forms of control were effective.

The investigation into the price-fixing policies of the shipping companies has even provided a basis for a study into the connection between price levels and the emigrant volume from the point of view of the hypothesis which states that the demand, and not the supply, of sailings was decisive for price-fixing. The journey costs and the volume of emigration show a fairly similar variation during the decade.

During the first four years and the period 1888-1889, all years with a high recorded emigration, the journey costs were high. The prerequisites for this were a large number of passengers and collaboration between the shipping companies. The passenger volume, which successively grew less after 1883, caused the lowering of travel costs and also an interruption in the co-operation of the shipping companies. By the middle of the decade prices had dropped so that they amounted only to two thirds of the level of costs at the beginning of the decade. Emigrants had opportunities to negotiate low ticket prices and other favourable terms of travel. In spite of this, the volume of emigrants could not be maintained to anything like the same level which had existed at the beginning of the 1880's. In 1885 it constituted barely one third of the volume of 1882. A vigorous increase in emigration in 1887 led to a successive rise in the level of prices, and during the next two years the travel costs were the same as at the beginning of the decade. The price directives issued to the emigrant agents by the shipping companies together with their insufficient passenger tonnage show that there were factors outside of their control which affected the volume of emigration. The development of travel costs can be shown to be a direct consequence of the changes in the development of emigration. Even in spite of a periodically elastic prices' policy, the transport sector represented by the shipping companies and their agents could not accelerate emigration. Thus, in this aspect, it can not be accredited with the role of having been a driving force behind the development in emigration.

The terms of travel of the emigrants were also greatly dependent upon the variations in the volume of emigrants. During years with a considerable emigration journey costs were comparatively high and stable in spite of the seasonal fluctuations in the demand for passages. At times there was a certain shortage in passenger tonnage, which led to a further worsening of the terms of travel. Contrary to this, however, during years with a low emigration emigrants had far greater opportunities of solving travel problems to their advantage. Prices were then elastic, and the harsh rivalry between emigrant agents made it possible for emigrants to negotiate lower fares, particularly for group travel and for children under fourteen years of age. It was, moreover, also possible to extort comparatively good quarters on board the emigrant ships.

The framework of the emigrant agency was formed by the legal

and commercial conditions. Its practical formulation with regard to contact with customers has been studied in the two final chapters of this thesis and has been centered around the informative activities of the agents. The technical set-up of the business, the origin and contents of the information and the character of the emigrant agent's contact with the market have been investigated. By this means it has been possible to answer the essential question of whether the information issued by the emigrant agents can have had a decisive influence on the size of the emigrant volume.

The most important channel of information for the emigrant agents at the beginning of the 1880's, from an organizational viewpoint, was provided by their representatives, the sub-agents. In the light of the information on the number of sub-agents, their organization has earlier been ascribed as having had a considerable significance for the sales' results of the individual emigrant agent and consequently for the total emigrant volume.

The documents in the Larssonian archives make possible a study of the organization of the sub-agents with regard to numerical strength, opportunities of establishing contacts with clients and the importance of the market being acquainted with the company they represented. A comparative examination of the number of sub-agents according to the official sources and the archives has led to the last-mentioned being used as the foundation for further investigations, since calculations should be based on the activity the representatives could be expected to exercise. This has been estimated on the basis of the information found in the archives dealing with the access of the representatives to informative material. The investigation shows that the Guion Line, a shipping company of medium size, was represented by approximately 150 sub-agents in 1882. At a rough estimate, the whole body of shipping companies was represented by approximately 1 500 sub-agents on a country-wide scale at the beginning of the 1880's. The sub-agents were recruited mainly from persons who, by way of profession, social status and place of domicile, had opportunities of making contact with a large circle of people. The organization of Swedish sub-agents was built up in accordance with the same principles that applied in the other Scandinavian countries.

The employers did not actually expect the sub-agents to be capable of recruiting emigrants. Their hopes were, that through the work of the representatives, the shipping company would become known on the

market and that the emigrants would book their passages in advance. The outcome of the enterprise was to show that these expectations were not fulfilled. The emigrant agents received few advanced bookings through the direct action of the sub-agents and, as a consequence of this, the sub-agents received but little economic benefit from their assignment. The lack of continuity in the activity of individual sub-agents mirrors the disappointment over the slender profitability.

The significance of the sub-agents for acquainting the emigrant market with the shipping companies they represented has been examined through a study of the connection between the number of the sub-agents in different counties and the volume of passengers. Generally speaking, the sub-agent network was most dense in counties with a large total of emigration. For the Larssons there was a clearly negative connection between the number of sub-agents and the shipping company's passenger volume. From a general point of view, not even an increase in the number of representatives had any positive effect on the shipping company's shares of the emigrant volume from the counties. The shares were fairly constant for the two last years of the investigation. Consequently, the investigation shows that the information supplied by the sub-agents had hardly any significance for the size of the emigrant volume.

The development of the sub-agent organization during the 1880's shows a close connection with the changing conditions of the emigrant agencies. The number of representatives was larger during years with a large emigration. The building up of the emigrant agents' sub-agent network in these years was occasioned by the difficulties of delivering a "by word of mouth" information during the period of collaboration in progress between the shipping companies. Logically speaking, the emigrant agents should have concentrated strongly on sub-agents' organization during the years with a low emigration. Because of the small profit margins and the knowledge that the sub-agents were of little importance, the possibilities of a more open collaboration with considerably more effective spreaders of information, i.e. Swedish Americans, resulted in the sub-agents being set aside.

The large amount of informative material, which the emigrant agents distributed in various ways during the 1880's, was produced for the most part in Sweden and paid for by the Atlantic shipping companies. Up to the middle of 1883 even material of foreign origin, made available to the emigrant agents by representatives of immigra-

tion promoting parties in America, was procured. After this point in time, the authorities prevented the distribution of material which contained detailed information on the conditions and future prospects in America. Consequently, the majority of material distributed during the greater part of the decade was of a native origin.

The contents of the information supplied by the emigrant agents was to the greater extent concerned with travel. Brochures and circulars emphasized propaganda-like the advantages and the popularity of the represented shipping company with the emigrants. Much space was also devoted to describing the service which the emigration offices provided for emigrants arriving at the ports of emigration and to sound general advice for prospective emigrants. Details about conditions in the land of immigration were exceedingly brief and can in no way be regarded as giving an idealized description.

Advertising in the press constituted, in addition to the organization of sub-agents, an important channel of information for the establishing of written or direct personal contacts with the emigrant market. It was concentrated to that part of the press which was presumed to reach out to those groups of society which primarily formed the basis of recruiting for emigration. Otherwise advertising had a nation-wide distribution. The advertisements, repeated monotonously week after week during the year's most intensive emigration periods, were with regard to content very stereotype. The prime aim was to make known the name of the emigrant agents and the shipping companies.

The response of the market to the information it received can be studied by undertaking an examination of the letter contacts to be found in the preserved letter material of the archives. The number of letter writers investigated amount to just over a thousand, and the letters date from the years 1882-1884 and 1887-1888. Of the many interesting issues which can be connected with a study of the letters of the customers, particular attention has been paid to the inquiries of the correspondents and the answers of the emigrant agent. The aim has been to examine the role of the emigrant agent for the development of emigration and to try to establish whether this information contained in the letters can be characterized as emigrant recruiting. To shed even further light upon this problem, interest has been directed towards the role played by the emigrant agent with regard to the time-lapse between the point at which correspondence was established and the point when emigration took place and also

the emigrants' choice of destination. In connection with the letter investigation a basis for a discussion on the disposition towards emigration during the decade has been obtained.

The clients' letters disclose that, in the first place, the letter writers wished to obtain general information about America, details of the cost of the journey and times of departure. During the latter part of the decade the inquiries were more precise. Relatively speaking, there was less desire for information on America, yet detailed inquiries about journey costs to specified places, about vessels, the conditions on board as well as departure times were many. The shifting of the provenience of the different inquiry groups mirrored the greater awareness of the market over the conditions of emigration during the latter part of the 1880's. Throughout the decade the more specified inquiries about working conditions in America, conditions of land purchase and desire to arrange employment were percentually very low. To sum up, it can be stated that the market was limited in its expectations of the information the emigrant agents should supply. The clients concerned themselves mostly with travel details and with any additional duties the emigrant agents had concerning the conveyance of emigrants.

The answers by the emigrant agent to the letters of his clients disclose that he regarded his work in a similar way. Approximately three quarters of the letters were simply answered by means of printed information sheets. The share of written replies during the different years investigated show a certain similar variation with the state of rivalry within the area of emigrant traffic. There was a low number of replies during years with collaboration between the shipping companies and a large demand for passages, whereas during years without collaboration and consequently with greater rivalry, the emigrant agents showed a greater disposition towards answering.

All answers to letters, which have extant copies, have been investigated partly with a view to content and partly with a view to the fact that there might have been some difference between the answers to different groups of letter writers. In all 166 letter writers received written answers. Eleven per cent of all answered letters went to presumptive emigrants who did not emigrate, 32 % went out to presumptive emigrants who did emigrate and 39 % went to Swedish Americans. The great difference in the answering of the two first-mentioned groups can be explained by the fact that a considerable part of the letters sent to pre-

sumptive emigrants who did emigrate contained acknowledgements of deposits. The relatively high percentage of answers to inquiries from Swedish Americans is due to the fact that the emigrant agent regarded them as having more decided intentions to travel and that he also foresaw the opportunity of transporting a whole group.

With regards to content, there are no differences between the answers to those who did not emigrate and those presumptive emigrants who did. Generally speaking, one can say that they are to their content stereotype and formulated in general terms. Even when the writer had asked more precise questions about discounts, crossings with deferred payments and help with the obtaining of employment, his letter was seldom fully answered. This also applied to questions concerned with the need of official emigration documents and the possibilities of illegal emigration. Emigrant agents certainly offered their services to obtain the Certificate of Emigration, which was specially complicated after 1887 for military conscripts, but they always avoided pointing out the possibilities of getting round the stipulations in their written information. In those cases where the emigrant agent showed a compliance towards the letter writers, which meant a departure from the legal and commercial stipulations in force, their promises and pledges were carefully formulated. In his correspondence with Swedish Americans, however, the emigrant agent did not observe the directions of his employers and showed a positive attitude towards negotiating favourable terms of travel.

Naturally the results obtained do not exclude the possibility that the emigrant agents, by way of their office contacts with emigrants, were able to act in a more active way in order to make emigration easier and consequently increase their sales. Since the majority of persons who called on the emigrant agents in the ports of shipment had already decided to emigrate, it is outside the limits of this thesis to study the personal conferences between the contracting parties. Even these are of course very difficult to substantiate.

The results from the investigations into the time difference between the correspondent's initial contact with the emigrant agent and the planned and executed departure and also the emigrant's choice of destination further confirm the opinion that the agent was more of a travel bureau owner than an emigrant recruiter. The foundation of the first-mentioned investigation has been that a decision to emigrate has in most cases involved such an important resolution, that there would have

been a considerable difference in time between contact by letter and possible departure if the emigrant agent's information had had any significance for the decision making. The investigation shows that more than half of those presumptive emigrants who did not emigrate and almost 70% of those that did drew up plans for departure within a period of four weeks. A certain postponement of the actual emigration date of the last-mentioned group can be noted, but a clear majority did depart within the planned period of time.

In the light of this result it can in all probability be assumed that the letter writers had taken up a standpoint of principle on emigration before contact had been established with the emigrant agent. The letter material offers no opportunities of ascertaining the causes behind the decision to emigrate nor does it give an explanation of the choice of shipping company. The information distributed by the emigrant agent and the correspondence with him can not have been factors which triggered things off and are hardly a sufficient stimulus for a decision to emigrate.

The destinations of the people who emigrated present a comprehensive yet uneven distribution in the land of immigration. Slightly more than half of the places of destination were situated in the states of Illinois and Minnesota, which were easily the most attractive areas of immigration for Swedish emigrants during the decade. The map of the geographical distribution of the places of destination and of those areas about which the emigrant agents had possibilities of supplying a more detailed information show a certain congruity. This applies to Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul, which generally speaking were all popular places of destination. As there is no sufficient agreement between the emigrants' places of destination and those areas with which the agent maintained or had maintained contacts, it can only be concluded that either the opportunities of supplying more detailed information were not exploited or that it had little effect upon the emigrants.

Due to the terms governing commission, it was economically more favourable from the point of view of the agent, if the emigrants chose places of destination which were far from the ports of disembarkation. The question of whether the emigrants' choice of destination was influenced in such a direction has been studied with regard to that group which changed its travel plans after establishing contact with the emigrant agent. The emigrant agent could not be accused of influencing the emigrants for purely selfish economic reasons, since

totally this group reduced its travel cost. The belief that agents did not exercise any influence over the choice of destination is borne out by the results of an investigation of the emigrant agent Karl Möllersvärd and his assistants carried out by Lars Ljungmark. The investigation took into consideration the possibilities these people had of directing a contingency of emigrants recruited for the Northern Pacific Railway Co. to areas found favourable by that company at the beginning of the 1870's. It became apparent, that upon their arrival at the ports of disembarkation, the greatest influence upon the emigrants' choice of place of destination was exercised by their countrymen.

To sum up, the general impression seems to be that emigrant agents, via contacts with their clientel concerning questions on travel costs, the various travel problems and general informative details, pursued correct business practices within accepted limits. They sought to create good-will for their business out on the market. In this respect obvious parallels can be drawn between the representatives of the shipping companies and the representatives of American parties with a commercial interest in immigration. When recruiting emigrants from the Scandinavian countries for the Landgrant railway companies, the agents that were sent out were fully aware of the importance of reporting the facts correctly and seeing that promises were kept in order that a successful outcome could be achieved.

The correspondence the emigrant market conducted with the agents has also given rise to the possibility of shedding light upon the disposition towards emigration during the 1880's. Operationally, this has been defined as the percentage of non-emigrant letter writers, but excluding persons with prepaid tickets. On the average the share of non-emigrant letter writers was about 80%. If one assumes that all the representatives of the British shipping companies corresponded with the emigrant market to the same extent as the Guion Line, this would mean that approximately 100 000 persons had corresponded with the emigrant agents during the decade without having gone through with emigration. It can also be shown that the letter writers as a rule even made inquiries on behalf of others. According to the investigation concerned with the results of the letter contacts of the Guion Line representative in Malmö, every presumptive emigrant contributed on the average with one further emigrant and every Swedish American with five.

The relation between the disposition towards emigration and the actual emigration which can be said to have prevailed for the Guion

Line provides certain bases for calculating the total disposition towards emigration in Sweden during the decade. An attempt to reconstruct this lies outside of this submitted research project. It can be stated, however, that the concept of emigration was considerably more established than information on actual Swedish emigration gives any idea of. There ought, logically speaking, to have been a positive connection between the variations in the disposition towards emigration and actual emigration. In spite of the study of the connection between these two factors being founded on a relatively limited basis with regard to disposition towards emigration, the investigation does show a manifestly identical variation between the two factors. This fact should give even greater motivation for subsequent emigrant research to take up the observations now presented and to try to make a reconstruction of the disposition towards emigration with general validity for the period in question.

By examining different combinations of inquiries from all presumptive emigrants it has been considered possible to shed light upon the intensity of the disposition towards emigration. Presumptive emigrants and detailed wishes have been designated as the group more disposed towards emigration. Presumptive emigrants with more precise inquiries and detailed wishes have been designated to the group more disposed towards emigration. Due to the many factors of uncertainty connected to such an investigation, the intention has merely been to endeavour to point out the tendency of the changes in the disposition towards emigration. During the early part of the decade approximately one third of the presumptive emigrants can be classed as being lesser disposed towards emigration. During the latter part of the decade this group constituted a little more than a tenth. A larger percentage of the presumptive emigrants were consequently more decisively intent on emigrating by the end of the 1880's. Of these mentioned only one quarter emigrated. The letters can give no answer, however, to why plans for an emigration were shelved completely or simply pushed aside for future use.

Generally speaking, the emigrant agents experienced a favourable market situation during the 1880's. Their numbers amounted to between 12 and 17 persons every year. Ten of the emigrant agents represented British shipping companies which took care of approximately 90% of the emigrant traffic passing through Swedish ports. Due to cartel agreements during the greater part of the decade,

one of the greatest causes of rivalry, i.e. an elastic level of costs, was eliminated. In addition to firm prices the emigrant agents could, during periods of collaboration between the shipping companies, also rely on a fixed commission for every emigrant conveyed, which was independent of the total passenger volume.

During the decade over 350 000 people whose passages were arranged by the emigrant agents were transported through Swedish emigrant ports. In addition, the size of the potential emigration was very extensive. With respect to the great demand, the emigrant agents consequently had theoretical opportunities of increasing their volume of sales. Neither their operations concerned with the supplying of information nor their elastic prices' policy when it was permitted could influence the size of the emigrant volume.

Letters, money remittances and prepaid tickets sent from the land of immigration to the old country have been stressed in literature as important pull factors. The same can be said of the information which was supplied via Swedish Americans and emigrant agents. It has been shown in this thesis that the emigrant agents could not influence the emigrant volume in a positive direction. The remaining factors should consequently, with regard to that type of information which promoted emigration, be credited with relatively greater significance than hitherto has been the case.

According to the results of the investigation, a certain precaution should be taken when interpreting the importance of the flow of information for the development of emigration during the decade. Prior to the 1880's neither emigration nor re-immigration had been of such a size that the extent of a more personally formulated information can be related to the drastic increase of actual and potential emigration.

In the complicated interpretation of the importance of pull and push factors for the development of emigration, the transport sector is increasingly becoming a feature of attention not only within the field of econometric research but also in traditionally historical investigations concerned with changes in the volume of mass-emigration. In this thesis opinions have been presented that are contrary to those of earlier research, which based its standpoint on fragmentary information on the shipping companies' prices' policies. It has been shown that cartel agreements, the periodically inadequate capacity within the shipping industry and the control of the emigrant agents' marketing facilities caused the setting aside of that free competition, which has up till now

been considered as predominant. The observations, which have been made possible by analysing the emigrant agency activities of the Larsson brothers, open new horizons for interpreting the changes in volume during the decade when the mass-emigration from Sweden to North America reached its climax.