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Title: *GERMANY AND THE EMIGRATION 1816-1885*

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Synopsis: Treats the whole German 19th century emigration as an aspect of German history.

Three general themes:

- What impelled the emigration
- What the experience meant in Germany
- What political responses were made to the emigration.

Conclusions: The emigrants, 90% of whom went to America, were neither men of ambitious enterprise nor migrant laborers seeking economic advantage. For the most part they were families seeking escape from the revolutionary changes being inflicted on them and their communities by economic and technological advances.

Local conditions caused emigration in varying volume at different times from different parts of Germany.

Generally, the emigration was a concern of the liberals, only in the 1880's did Bismarck use the emigration as a possible reason for colonialism by Germany.

Main periods of emigration: 1816-1817

- The French-German wars that ended at Waterloo brought restlessness and instability into every village for a generation.
- England was flooding the continent with factory-made, cheap goods. Dislocated textile markets (weaving) put many in Germany out of work.
- Demobilization of troops cut wages in half from what they had been in 1815.
- High density of population compared to the productivity of the land in areas such as the Rhenish Palatinate, where the population was largely freeholders engaged in subsistence agriculture.
- Southwestern Germany law and custom dictated that inheritances be divided among all living children--after several centuries this had fragmented agricultural lands into tiny holdings. Emigration and increased use of potatoes had been the former responses to this. This led to home manufacturing: weaving, straw plaiting, making wooden tools and clocks which gave additional income to the peasants. This way of life was extremely vulnerable to the factory competition which came with the peace.
- Summer never came in 1816--grain didn't ripen, livestock were slaughtered as there was little fodder, the elderly and the children died of chill and hunger. Hot weather in February, cold in

April, even colder in May!, a plague of mice, cloudbursts and hailstorms in June, rainfall 6 times greater than in 1814, dams burst, river valleys flooded. When the harvest finally started in October, snow came and the potatoes froze and rotted. Grapes froze--the wine was worthless.

- Robbery and beggars were commonplace.
- By late 1816 people by the thousands began to leave their homes--either heading for North America or Russia. This was an emigration of escape--with no clear and hopeful plans for the future.
- The Rhine River was an easy channel of escape from western and southwestern Germany to America.
- It was families that emigrated in this period.
- Horrific conditions developed at the ports as the emigrants piled up--many expecting a free passage to America.
- Some assistance was given to the emigrants by private societies--in general, the various German states did not know how to deal with the situation, and ended up doing nothing.
- There are no accurate figures on the number who emigrated, but probably about 20,000 Germans went to the US in 1816-1817, and 15,000 to Russia.

Main periods of emigration: 1820-1830

- Emigrants were recruited by Brazil after it became independent. They were given free passage in return for military service.
- The recruiters for Brazil were mainly interested in soldiers, not self-supporting colonists. They took the human castoffs of poorhouses and prisons, notably from Mecklenburg-Schwerin.
- Probably 7-10,000 Germans left for Brazil between 1823 and 1830. They were generally poorer and of a lower social class than was usual during the 1800-1850 period.
- They came from areas of the 1816 emigration, and also from the Eifel and Hunsrueck uplands, Hessen-Homburg, Hessen-Kassel and Hess-Darmstadt.
- Some state governments tried to stop the emigration and reports of the abuse of the emigrants filtered back to Germany. The Brazilian government was soon overstocked with embittered German colonists and soldiers and finally the Brazilian emperor insisted that no foreigner could land in Brazil without a permit certifying that he was self-supporting. This finally ending the flow to Brazil by 1830.
- In the course of the emigration to Brazil, the "virus" spread into new areas of Germany where it had not struck before. The idea of emigrating stayed in these areas, but the emigrants once more looked to the USA as a destination.

Main periods of emigration: 1830-1854

- The great mid-century transatlantic migration was all but exclusively to the United States and almost entirely unsolicited.
- Emigration revived about 1830 due to rising prices, European revolutions, a more favorable view of America and a cholera epidemic.

- The general rise in volume over this period is probably attributable to an accumulation of German outposts in America, which swelled the number of personal letters bringing information and encouragement to the Germans.
- There was no single explanation for the large numbers of emigrants--various factors all entered into the decision to leave the homeland, and the reasons to leave varied by area within Germany.
- Improved transportation, removal of tolls on the Rhine and other rivers, and the introduction of the steamboat made seaports more accessible to more interior areas and people.
- Removal of trade barriers meant to bring economic prosperity, brought economic distress to many handicraftsmen.
- From 1830-1845 the emigration movement was largely the lower middle class: neither great landowners nor harvest hands, but small farmers who cultivated their own land; not apprentices, nor unskilled laborers, nor great merchants, but independent village shopkeepers and artisans. Almost no one was emigrating from the larger towns and cities.
- The emigrants were people who relied upon their own skills, who had property that could be turned to cash; they traveled on their own resources.
- They were people who had something to lose, and who were losing it, squeezed out by interacting social and economic forces; a growth of population without a corresponding growth of economic bases.
- The contrast in land values between Germany and America was a strong reason for emigration. In Germany, the real cost of land rose until it was disproportionately high to the income it produced. But the same high land prices which prevented the small farmer from acquiring enough land to feed his family made it possible for him to sell it; he might be able to liquidate his inadequate holding at a price enabling him to cross the sea to America and buy a larger farm, which would absorb his and all his family's energies productively. Those unable to do this did not ordinarily emigrate.
- The heavy representation of wine gardeners among the emigrants emphasizes the factor of marginality. The grape cannot be raised successfully without adequate reserves; a series of bad years always sent many growers down their valleys to America.
- The emigration between 1830 and 1845 probably included a higher proportion of prosperous and skilled, educated people than that of any other time. For German government this was the most dismaying aspect of the emigration, for these emigrants took cash with them and reduced the tax bases of the localities.
- It was declining standards of living for themselves and their children, rather than absolute lows, that drove people to emigrate.
- The small farmer preferred to go to America rather than move to a German city and drop down to the wage-laborer class. The farmer's hope for success in the old ways was higher in America. In America the value of a man was greater than at home.
- Rather than overpopulation being the cause of much emigration, it was more likely that with technological changes there were too many shoemakers for the markets they could reach and hold, or too little productive land to supply the people who depended on it.
- The governments changed their attitude from encouraging marriage to imposing restrictions aimed at preventing the establishment of households without adequate economic bases. The principal results of such restrictive legislation were an increase in illegitimate births, moral confusion and antagonism toward the state. The growth of the population, and of the poor,

went on.

- In 1845 the potato rot struck simultaneously from Portugal to Trieste and beyond. In 1846 the European potato crop rotted in the ground and a very large proportion of Germany's potatoes was destroyed.
- Famine for the next two years led a larger number of the poorer people, those day laborers without property, to emigrate. And the area providing emigrants spread to new areas in eastern Germany.
- After 1845 Belgium and the Netherlands encouraged the emigration of Germans from their seaports. It became cheaper to get to the ports and to buy passage to America. Local governments became more favorable to the emigration of the poor and many communities actually appropriated money to pay the costs of the emigration of poor people. They believed this was cheaper and safer in the long run than perpetual support of them at home.
- American law forbade the acceptance of criminal deportees, but many borderline cases were sent.
- There were companies organized in Belgium and Prussia to set up colonies in Central America. In 1842 a Belgian company acquired the Guatemalan bay of Santo Tomas and began to recruit settlers in the Low Countries, France and Germany. This was a fiasco. Perhaps one thousand settlers arrived between 1843 and 1845, hundreds died and the rest dispersed. A group of Germans became interested in the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua, which had been offered to the King of Prussia earlier and refused. The plan collapsed but as a result of publicity 115 East Prussians sailed to the Mosquito Coast and landed empty-handed and unwanted in the lap of the British consul-governor.
- Another group of German nobility formed the "Adelsverein" to establish a German colony in Texas. In 1843 the group purchased a dubious title to some uninhabited lands in the western part of the Republic of Texas from land speculators. In 1844 it began a campaign of recruiting. Prince Karl of Solms-Braunfels was sent to Texas to direct the first settlement. This was a total failure. Five to ten thousand Germans were recruited, and hundreds or perhaps thousands perished in Texas.
- The port of Bremen made the emigration a staple of its commerce. It sought the emigrants, gave them decent treatment and made sure the ships were safe and gave people adequate food and space. Ships would take emigrants from Bremen to America and return with American goods, particularly tobacco.
- The port of Hamburg belatedly got into the business of transporting emigrants, but had a bad reputation for treatment of the emigrants.
- The German Revolution of 1848 did not increase the number of emigrants--from 1848 to 1850 the volume of emigration fell off. It began to rise again in 1851, reached a peak at about a quarter million in 1854, then dropped off abruptly to under one hundred thousand in 1855.
- Emigration from lands east of the Elbe river began in the mid 1840's and by 1850 was greater in volume than that from the western part of the country.
- The Pomeranian emigration of 1853-1854 included a greater proportion from the lower economic and social classes than was true in western Germany. The most striking emigration came from Mecklenburg, most thinly populated of the German states, where the noble estate owners reigned supreme. The population had grown but the great estates needed less and less manpower as specialization in extensive crops became the rule. Individual owners,

responsible for poor relief and housing were glad to see the poor people leave; there was always migrant labor from other localities available; sometimes the owners even gave emigrants money. Freedom of settlement within Mecklenburg did not exist, in law or in fact: if a man left his birthplace, he could not settle elsewhere in Mecklenburg unless he was accepted and employed by the owner-governor there.

- The marriage laws in Mecklenburg were very restrictive; no one could marry without a home, and no one could get a home except from an owner. One way for a worker to get permission to marry was to agree to emigrate to America.
- By 1854 emigration by young male laborers in Mecklenburg was so great that estate owners had a labor shortage; in some places soldiers were put to work harvesting.
- Growing American repulsion at the wretched condition of the immigrant poor and the deportation of European paupers and criminals coincided with American antiforeign agitation. Wisconsin forbade teaching in any language but English. Immigrants were beaten by mobs in New York.
- A depression in America in 1854 and negative news that was carried back to Germany began to slow the volume of emigrants in 1855. The mid-century emigration was over. But it had made emigration commonplace in nearly every corner of Germany.

Main periods of emigration: 1871-1885

- Emigration began to rise in 1864-1865, when the Civil war in America was ending and the German warfare was beginning.
- It was high during the late sixties, but did not reach the 1852-1854 level. Dropped briefly in 1870-1871 before peaking again in 1872-73.
- The German wars were probably the main causes of year-to-year fluctuations in emigration.
- The Civil War in the USA probably slowed emigration while afterwards the Homestead Act brought a generally encouraging attitude toward immigration in the USA.
- With the German wars came conscription, especially severe in Prussia and in areas under Prussian control. This caused young men and whole families to emigrate who might not otherwise have done so. It was not so much fear of combat but rather an unwillingness to spend one's young manhood under the constant threat of conscription, which inhibited establishment of a household and career.
- Between 1871 and 1885 a million and a half Germans emigrated overseas--nearly 3 1/2 per cent of the population. Of those whose destination was known, 95 per cent went to the United States, 2 per cent to Brazil, 1 per cent to other Latin American countries, 1 per cent to Australia, and 1 per cent to Canada, Africa, and Asia.

--the above are my excerpts from this book.

Barbara Halliday