

REPORT FROM THE DELEGATE  
IN THE EMIGRATION  
COMMISSION AT THE  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST  
CONGRESS IN STUTTGART

*by*

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The emigration question has already stood on the agenda of the Amsterdam Congress [in 1904]; even then it fell to the Jewish Bund in the commission to oppose those Americans who demand a limit to emigration. The Amsterdam Congress did not decide upon a definite policy on this question, and it was laid aside until the Stuttgart Congress.

At this Congress, as is known, the Bund agreed to present a report concerning emigration.

We knew that to produce a report which would be useful to the Congress would not be an easy task. On the one hand, we believed that the Congress could not content itself with an empty gesture about the solidarity of workers, nor could it adopt a purely abstract resolution. On the other hand, the factual material was so great and varied, the conditions and forms of emigration so diverse and peculiar, that to give a full picture of the whole of emigration in a brief report seemed an impossibility.

We thus found it necessary to point out the most important forms of proletarian migration, to demonstrate only the general causes of these phenomena, and merely to lay a foundation for our attitude towards them. We concerned ourselves almost exclusively with trans-oceanic emigration, leaving aside the migrations within Europe from place to place and land to land. We feel that a mass migration can be directed only toward the trans-oceanic colonial lands, where land is plentiful and labor scarce. Only in such lands, where the hungry European peasant is absent, can the worker easily earn high wages, even in such areas as construction work, the housing industry, etc. Therefore, no single European country (with the possible exception of industrial England) can attract

so many emigrants as, for example, America, Australia, South Africa, etc.

The Congress, had it intended to produce a clear resolution, therefore had to devote itself only to trans-oceanic emigration (in the trans-oceanic countries). It had to delineate the causes clearly and expose the sources of its various forms and contradictions, and to indicate ways and means by which to mitigate these difficulties.

Our report has striven to expose the capitalistic nature of present-day emigration, to show clearly the historical form which migrations have generally had to take in capitalist society.

We will dwell a bit longer on our report in order to clarify the difference between our resolutions and those of other bodies.

Here we will not touch upon the reasons for emigration as such, nor will we speak about all the related circumstances, such as political, national, and religious oppression, which at times play a significant role in emigration. All this is discussed in the body of our report; here we wish to extract from our report what is characteristic of the *form* that emigration has taken in the capitalist world.

In the ancient world, and in the Middle Ages with its natural economy, the individual was only a member of a whole body (community, corporation). This collective body occupied itself with emigration both in the sense that the entire community took part in migration, and also in that the entire community controlled the travels of its members and regulated the arrival of new members. The reverse of this is true in the capitalistic world with its "freedom of the individual," in which every person is his own master and is left to his own resources, where immigration must become the province of the individual and must take on an individual character.

The community of an earlier age would undertake migrations either because of the emigrant himself or in order to

provide more room. Present-day mass migrations bear a wholly different character. The emigrant becomes transport merchandise. He is led by the demands of capital, which seeks for itself cheaper labor through agents and middlemen. He is led away particularly from backward countries such as China and India, through special exporters, is dragged into the emigration process by agents and ship companies who must have masses of emigrants as cargo for their ships. The emigrant is a business article bringing profit; emigration, a business like all business, conducted for the profit of the capitalists.

This glance at contemporary emigration gives us a chance to explain all the forms and paradoxes which we find in present-day migration.

We understand now how it is possible that the same proletarian masses which we can depend on in the Old Country to be ready to fight against capitalism and exploitation, are considered—and sometimes rightfully so—by our American working brothers to be strikebreakers or unfit for the struggle. We understand how it is possible that workers who flee the Old Country in order to earn high wages in America are accused by our American comrades of depressing wages. We know now that the real guilt lies with the alien power which controls mass migrations for its own benefit. Our report explains further how mass migration is even possible among such paupers, such as coolies, Indians, etc.

Finally, our report with its view of emigration presents the opportunity to explain the theme of America overflowing with emigrants, which occurs constantly. It explains to us the mystery of what makes possible—in view of all the protests that things are getting worse and worse in America—the unceasing growth of emigration which, with every crisis, becomes greater than before. We know now that the cause here is the same as with the overproduction of ordinary merchandise. As prosperity begins, new transport ships begin to be built, and the shipping companies search for more

human material. The hireling press cooperates by spreading news of America. Letters and advertisements pour forth from brand-new friends and relatives; prepaid ship tickets are suddenly received from forgotten uncles and aunts. All this is offered by the agent in America; he gives everything on the installment plan, his concern is his merchandise, the emigrant. Mass migration continues until a crisis hits the human merchandise—emigrants wander about homeless in the streets, often becoming (in the hands of *padroni*, bosses, etc.) professional scabs or common thieves.

Only by accepting our view of emigration do we discover that capitalism is the maker of war between native and immigrant workers, and we thereby understand that only the war against capitalism can be of any help to us. Moreover, we know now what we can achieve in our fight against capitalist emigration; we understand that it is impossible to destroy capitalist-individualist emigration completely as long as capitalism itself exists. We cannot dream of organizing emigration with the help of private societies, as does the S.S. [Zionist Socialist Labor Party], or with community help—as does the Y.S. [Jewish Socialist Labor Party].<sup>19</sup> Our methods can only be protective measures against exploitation by the capitalist “slave-dealers,” methods which can protect the emigrant first in the Old Country and afterwards at the scene of exploitation and low wages. The methods we propose are neither complete nor the only ones that may be offered. What is important is not the specific methods, but their character and their aim. We know that any limitations upon emigration can bring only one result: the human merchandise cannot be protected; through all these restrictive laws the terrified emigrant can become totally the victim of the agent who undertakes to drag him over despite all obstacles.

How vital and necessary it was to have a pure Marxist view of emigration was immediately brought to our attention by the example of the American resolution offered by Com-

rade Hillquit (of the Socialist Party). This resolution, put before the Congress and also before the Commission on the first day, was the only one which competed with ours. (The Belgian resolution was concerned mainly with intra-European migration and thus played no significant role.)

Hillquit's resolution suggested that it was a duty for all native workers, “A) To aid and support in every way all *bona fide* immigrant workers (workers with nothing on their conscience), to make clear to them the principles of socialism and of the labor movement, and to admit them as quickly as possible into the local organizations. B) To prevent the false trickery of the capitalist speculators through the spread of true information about the condition of the worker in the lands of immigration. This can be done through the international bureau. C) To combat by every means possible the capitalist introduction of cheap labor. Such uninvited immigrants are sent to destroy the labor unions, to lower wages, to worsen the condition of the workers and to hinder the development of socialism.”

As is known, this resolution evoked much dissatisfaction among European socialists. The differentiation of emigrants into those of impure and those of pure conscience has cut as though with a knife those of us who deal with the emigrant masses while they are yet in the Old Country. We are well acquainted with the examination which occurs upon entrance into America, with the pain and worry it imposes on the emigrant. We could have firmly demonstrated that not only does it not protect the emigrants, but on the contrary, forces the emigrant to sell himself completely to the agent. All the defects in the American resolution were clear to everyone; for us it was an example of what is brought about by the striving for a purely practical resolution without a deep penetration into the essence of the phenomenon, even when there is great familiarity with the question.

The American resolution proceeds from the correct assumption that mass emigration is unavoidable in the capitalist

order, as well as that emigration is anarchistically increased by speculators and agents. But all this, which the formulators of the resolution know, stands alone, torn from every practical context. They seek to justify the restrictive laws which exist in America against immigration, and thus hold the emigrant responsible for them. Instead of looking for ways to fight against the emigration entrepreneurs, the resolution makes the emigrant the scapegoat and transfers to him the anger [which should be exhibited] against the capitalists. This sterile pragmatism, which is ready to "fight with every means necessary," with no thought for the distant future, is characteristic of narrow-minded trade unionism.

If the Americans, as well as the representatives of the other colonial lands, have shown us an example of shortsighted practicality, many others, such as the French, have demonstrated extreme *rationality*. The French (for example, in a speech by Adéodat-Constant-Adolphe Compère-Morel<sup>20</sup>) have apparently found it superfluous to analyze and explicate emigration. For them, the single line "Proletarians of all lands, unite!" was sufficient in order to have a ready resolution which silences all difficulties and basks in these beautiful words.

All the representatives from the colonial lands supported Hillquit's resolution. Characteristic of its practical shortsightedness is the statement of the Australian representative, Comrade Kramer. He stated that Australia is opposed only to the colored; they have nothing against white immigrants. We knew what the worth was of this generosity towards all whites. We knew that only now, when virtually all white immigration to Australia comes from England, white emigrants are welcome guests, so that our pragmatists will make a wholly different kind of speech when the real migrants, from Italy, Hungary, and Russia, begin to flow in that direction.

The American resolution was also supported by the representative from South Africa, Comrade Lukas, and unex-

pectedly by the German representative, Comrade Fritz Paepelow.<sup>21</sup> True, he opposed the isolation of the trade unions, but he holds fast to a new doctrine, that native workers should be given preference and priority for jobs in their lands; and so he favors the American resolution.

On the other hand, our European comrades, who were the majority in the Commission, barely touched upon the essence of emigration. Except for the Dutchman, Willem Hubert Vliegen,<sup>22</sup> no one even tried to refute the arguments of the Americans. They merely kept repeating that all workers are one people, that to support restrictive laws is to change the motto "Proletarians of all lands, unite!" into a new form: "Proletarians of all lands, throw one another out!" An example of how easily the opponents of restrictions would brush the problem aside was the resolution offered by a comrade from the Socialist Labor Party in America—a small organization under the leadership of Daniel DeLeon<sup>23</sup> and existing alongside the "Socialist Party."

The resolution of this comrade, Julius Hammer, consists of six or seven lines and declares concisely that, "keeping in mind that workers of every color, belief, and nation are all equal proletarians and wage-slaves from the moment they fall into the hands of the capitalist, the Congress resolves that all laws which restrict, hinder, or in other ways limit migration are a violation of socialist principles and merely help the capitalist to create a division among workers."

Our resolution was the only one which, with its in-depth examination of the character of emigration, could present a synthesis of utopian rationalism and shortsighted pragmatism.

Unfortunately, the opponents of restrictions did not discuss this ahead of time among themselves. But its proponents could not forgive our categorical rejection of every restriction. Hillquit was ready to sign our resolution if we could at least add a point forbidding the entrance of contract labor into America—workers with whom contracts would be made in the Old Country and who would be brought in *en masse*,

especially when a strike was in effect; it had come to a point that they were prepared *en masse* by special contractors (the *padrone*-system<sup>24</sup>).

In 1886, a law against contract laborers was passed (with newer regulations in 1891). In the last fifteen years (1892-1906), a total of 12,559 such laborers were apprehended, out of 8,061,056 immigrants arriving during this period; in other words, somewhat more than 1½ out of every 1,000. This was primarily due, however, to the fact that the emigrants had become wiser and did not reveal that they were under contract. (See the American report for 1906, p. 14 and p. 65.)

We ourselves knew very well the harm caused by the contract labor system, but we did not believe that restrictions would help the situation in the least. This, we see, was admitted by the official American report, so we did not agree to include the point.

Our obstinacy called forth on the scene two new compromise resolutions. They were gotten up in the commission by Vliegen (Holland) and Wilhelm Ellenbogen<sup>25</sup> (Austria). Both included the prohibition against contract labor.

In Vliegen's resolution the theoretical portion was entirely patched together, half from our resolution and half from the American. The resolution leaves the impression that it is mainly concerned with the practical side.

A greater role was played by Ellenbogen's resolution. In our opinion, this leaned substantially toward the American resolution. We can state that in many details it is "more American than the American [resolution] itself."

In its first paragraph it declares that "immigration and emigration of workers are phenomena closely linked with the essence of capitalism, such as employment, overproduction, underconsumption by the workers; they are a means of shrinking the part of the worker in the products of his labor. . . ." We cannot approve of such a formulation. Emigration as a whole cannot be thought of as always harmful and compared to unemployment, etc. Only sudden mass migration

can be compared with this. The necessity of emigration in general under capitalism can be more readily compared (as is done in the American resolution) with the necessary transition from a national market to a world market. But this alone would not be so important were it not declared in the second half that emigration is a means (when? always?—Y.G.) of reducing wages. This smells of the American enmity toward emigration.

The second paragraph again reiterates the "danger which threatens the workers from emigration." It must be realized, however, that restrictive national laws are no way to deal with this. Therefore the third paragraph declares that it is the duty of organized labor to fight against the forcible reduction of their standard of living, a reduction due to the mass emigration of unorganized workers, and above all against bringing in strikebreakers, and so on.

Here is further clearly expressed the view of emigration as a "perpetual danger" which it is "a duty to fight against." The passing mention of "strikebreaker, and so on" in the last paragraph does little to mitigate this. If emigration is a perpetual danger which much be fought, the trade unions will surely understand how to fight evenhandedly against all immigrants. They are already doing this. The resolution can only spur them on. This is expressed explicitly in the fourth paragraph, where it lauds the "striving of the proletariat of every land to maintain its standard of living on a high level." We know that with this striving the trade unions excuse their policies of separating themselves from the issue.

It is understandable that at the end of the theoretical section there is not lacking a demand that no restrictive laws be made which single out specific nationalities and races. We know, however, that even without the name of specific nationalities, the prior points provide grounds to eject Chinese, Japanese and many Europeans from America.

The practical section begins with the contract laborer: "Industrial laborers who have made a temporary contract in

the Old Country shall be excluded." Why only industrial and not all laborers, we cannot understand. Possibly this is only an accident, but it is also possible that here we have a bit of pragmatism: only industrial contract workers offer dangerous competition on the labor market. This is sufficient to demonstrate the consistency of our pragmatists, and how concerned they are, by shutting out the contract worker, for the welfare of the emigrant in protecting him from exploitation.

This point has a second section, which prohibits the entrance of those "who travel at another's expense." We can imagine what a disaster such a prohibition could cause among the emigrants, especially Jews, with their pre-paid ship tickets.

I shall not touch upon the remaining points; there is nothing new in them.

Obviously, the representatives from the colonial lands were satisfied with Ellenbogen's compromise resolution. We might have hoped, though, that all the European delegates would be opposed. During the debates it was twice proposed (once by the English and once, I believe, by the Galician representative) that our resolution be adopted as a basis. How great was our amazement when by a large majority all three were accepted as a basis—Vliegen's, Ellenbogen's, and ours.

We had to form a commission of five members to work out a general resolution. Unfortunately, our delegate was not put on the Commission. Ellenbogen as chairman took it upon himself to appoint all the candidates. The first five received all together twenty votes, hardly an absolute majority—and the presiding officer called the vote closed. To correct this error was impossible. Put on the Commission were Ellenbogen of Austria and the representatives from Holland, Germany, Italy and Hungary.

This Commission adopted Ellenbogen's resolution, with small emendations taken from Vliegen's and ours.

Due to lack of time, the new resolution was brought before the general Commission without printed copies, and so

it was hard to become familiar with it. Yet it was clear that it was essentially Ellenbogen's resolution.

We had the right to expect that all those who the day before had fought so energetically against the Americans would certainly throw out the "American" resolution. We soon found out that our expectations were vain. In private conversations we saw that yesterday's radical opposition had already wearied and was ready to vote for the resolution, though they saw its defects. Only the English agreed with us to expose its harmful aspects and to improve it as far as possible (to discard it completely after yesterday's decision was impossible).

Our attempt to show, with regard to the first paragraph, that equating emigration with unemployment was incorrect, met with general dissatisfaction. It was clear that we would not be able easily to pass any basic emendations or changes which might result in a new resolution. This would be possible only with isolated words or sentences—added and deleted—to weaken the detrimental aspects of the resolution. In the first paragraph (see the adopted resolution) where it is declared that emigration is "a means of reducing the worker's share in the fruits of his labor"—we were able to add the emendation "often a means" (that is, not always, not all emigration). In the second paragraph, where the threatening danger which emigration poses to organized labor is discussed, we added—"possibly threatening" (see the adopted resolution—second paragraph: "the danger which may come about"—not "that comes about"), and proved that we recognize only one possible danger in particular situations and forms (the capitalist importation of emigrants).

The worst point, however, as we know from before, is the third paragraph, which states that it is the duty of organized labor to defend itself against the lowering of its standard of living as a result of migrations. Supported by the English, we proposed that this entire sentence be thrown out and that only the final sentence, dealing with the fight against bringing in

strikebreakers, etc., be included (eliminating, of course, the word "equally"). The Englishmen proposed that only those should be considered scabs who had been brought *only during the time of a strike and specifically because of the strike*. But when they were given the example of the Hamburg [harbor] strike [of 1896-1897], where English scabs were prepared beforehand,<sup>26</sup> and when they were made aware of a host of other factors in importing scabs before a strike or lockout, they were convinced. They withdrew their proposal and supported us in our demand that the sentence be completely deleted. Opposing us was Max Zeterbaum<sup>27</sup> (of P.P.S. [Polish Socialist Party]); and Ellenbogen asked us to withdraw our proposal. Still our proposal was passed by a wide margin, although Ellenbogen and the German delegate Paepflow protested vigorously.

There then arose the danger that the Americans would introduce a resolution of their own. We had to reckon with this. It would have been most undesirable. Zeterbaum and others made it clear in private discussions that a split would develop in the Commission.

Finally both we and the Englishmen were willing that our already accepted emendation be dropped and the deleted sentence put in its place. We proposed, however, that where it speaks of the dire effects of mass migration, this phrase be replaced by "mass importations." Then, of course, the sentence would convey a different meaning; it says only that the capitalist importation of emigrants reduces wages. Ellenbogen was at first hesitant about this, but finally he too, agreed. After the noon recess, Zeterbaum declared that the Bund and the English were withdrawing their resolution; we proposed our emendation. It passed by the same large majority.

We also proposed to amend paragraph four, where the difficulties which mass emigration creates for native workers were discussed. We wanted to delete the entire point, but we did not succeed in this. Then we proposed that the sense of the paragraph be weakened by the emendation "in many

cases." This would refer only to certain forms of emigration. With this and other small alterations in the fifth paragraph the emendation of the theoretical section came to an end.

In the practical section, however, there was not the slightest possibility of any emendation. The Commission alone threw out Ellenbogen's point concerning "industrial contract laborers" and the "prohibition of emigrants not paying their own fare." But the very same point was adopted from Vliegen's redaction. Only the third point on the practical means for the immigration lands could be free from several proposals which Ellenbogen had inserted (e.g., a demand regulating the deportation of aliens). Included in this point in an amended form was also Chaim Zhitlovsky's<sup>28</sup> proposal for liberalization of naturalization procedures. In our opinion, this proposal is entirely superfluous in light of the prior demand for equal "social, political, and economic rights" for the immigrants. In any event, we had nothing against this.

The Germans introduced a rather important emendation. They amended the entire fourth point (for the land of immigration), concerning the means which the trade unions must undertake in order to help the emigrants.

The resolution of the Commission was also adopted by the Congress.

We must state that, despite all these improvements, we are not satisfied with the resolution. It lacks an in-depth look at the essence of present-day emigration. It is saturated with the "pragmatic spirit" of the Americans. True, there was success in pushing to the foreground the categorical statement that no restrictive laws can help; our amendments weakened the detrimental aspects of the resolution and eliminated as much as possible anti-emigration tendencies. But if it was not possible to do more, the fault does not lie with us. We were not the only ones who represented the interests of the emigrants. By our side sat Italians, Hungarians, Poles, Balkans, etc. Their active help would have had an effect. But since only we and the English fought against the resolution, while among

our comrade "emigrants" we often encountered a lack of concern and even dissatisfaction—this demonstrates that basically the question is not understood, that we are still not prepared to solve it in its total aspect.

The delegate in the Commission—

Y[evgenii]. Gieser