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THE ATTITUDES OF GERMAN TRADE UNIONS TO MIGRANT WORKERS, 1880s to 1914

SUMMARY

In a short introduction to this paper a specific development of the German social democratic party and trade unions is dealt with, along with workers' emigration, mostly to the United States of America, and a growth of immigration, mainly from Poland and Italy. There follows an account of job competition, because of the danger of undercutting wage levels on the labor market, an account of strikebreaking, and of threats to migrants' health, morals and culture. In the final part of the paper German trade unions' practices towards foreign workers are compared from a theoretical point of view.

The Historical Context

In the 1860s the first political organizations of German workers were founded. These two social-democratic groups (Lassalleans and Eisenachers) received 6% of the vote in the January 1874 elections for the Diet. As a result, government and the judiciary mounted a campaign of persecution. In reaction to this pressure and following broader tendencies among the membership the two wings joined to form the *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* on the basis of the *Gothaer Program* (May 1875). By 1877 the party received more than 9% of the vote. On the educational and craft level numerous workers' clubs had existed in the German states since the 1830s and 1840s. They joined into a union movement only under prodding from the two political organizations. Both party and union organization drew on the political thought and traditions of migrating journeymen artisans. By 1877 about 30 unions had been founded with a total of less than 50,000 members. In 1878 the Diet passed the Anti-Socialist Law using as pretext two assassination attempts on the Emperor, both unrelated to the labor and socialist movement. The political and union organizations of the workers were outlawed for twelve till 1890 (36; 12).¹

Before 1878 few foreign workers had migrated into Germany. In 1871, 207,000 foreigners were counted, in 1880, 276,000, including merchants, professionals etc. What labor migration there was, followed to a considerable degree artisanal traditions. On the other hand, and much more important, German artisans and workers had been leaving and this movement crested in the mass emigration of 1879 to 1893, during which 1.9 million Germans left, particularly East-Elbian agricultural laborers, and workers and artisans from all over Germany. The first »foreign workers« the German labor move-

¹ See also the works by Gary P. Steenson, W. L. Guttsman and Guenther Roth.

ment had to deal with, thus were its own emigrated members mainly in the United States. Officially the party opposed emigration reasoning that it would weaken the struggle at home. This policy summarized in Wilhelm Liebknecht's often cited phrase »Our America is in Germany«. Practice was different. The party paper published in exile, *Sozialdemokrat*, contained farewell notices of emigrating comrades, reports about conditions in America and reports on how American unions received (or rejected) German immigrant workers. The German-American workers and the German-dominated Socialist Labor Party in the U.S. acted as fund-raiser for the oppressed German party organizations, sometimes to the detriment of its American-centered activities. There was thus a lively exchange between the (underground) German and the German-American labor movements. Labor migration was — so it seemed — a factor of everyday life. In-migrating workers, especially those with union cards, should be accepted on an equal footing: this was the demand of German foreign workers in America, a position supported by the German labor organizations (16).²

Meanwhile the situation in Germany changed. With the rapid pace of industrialization the demand for workers increased. Internal migrations took the character of a mass movement. Six factors may be mentioned as determinants: 1. the early reforms abolishing serfdom and thereby introducing wage labor on a larger scale and creating a reserve army of »free« labor of former smallholding serfs and laborers with below-subsistence plots; 2. the introduction of the right to choose one's place of living within the North German Federation in 1867, continued in the German Reich after 1871; 3. the abolishment of entry fees by the Prussian cities in 1867; 4. the expansion of the transportation networks and the homogenization of the German economies after 1871; 5. the increasing industrialization; and 6. the deterioration of living conditions in the agricultural areas. In less than half a century, from 1871 to 1914, the balance between rural and urban populations was almost reversed. At the beginning of the period two thirds of the population lived in rural communities, at the end just under two thirds lived in urbanized areas. At the turn of the century 47% of the total German population, 54% of the urban population were in-migrants (8; 24:45—52). A large East-Vest migration (1.75 million till 1895) was the predominant aspect of a multiplicity of migratory movements. Union membership in many trades consisted of migrating German workers, annual turnover rates were sometimes higher than 100%. Unions saw this migration as necessary: they gave financial aid to migrants under certain conditions and opened employment agencies. They also considered it dangerous to organizational stability and to solidarity during strikes (12:72, 102; cf. CB; 34).

In addition to emigration and internal migration, in-migration of foreign workers began. Polish and Italian workers came in increasing numbers during the 1880s. In a futile effort of national and religious oppression the government closed the border to Russian Poland in 1885, and expelled »foreign« Poles from the German occupied areas. This policy had to be reversed in 1890. From then on the government attempted a policy of regulation rather than exclusion. Permanent settlement of workers was to be prevented by forcing them to leave during winter (Polish workers, later applying to Polish agricultural workers only), or »inducing« them to leave (unemployment of Italian masons during the winter months). In 1890 the Anti-Socialist law was allowed to expire and the SPD returned to normalcy. In the same year the

² The acculation of political impact of German migrants in the United States was the subject of a research project directed by Hartmut Kiel and John B. Jentz (19).

General Commission of the German Trade Unions took office in Hamburg. This »free« union movement (as opposed to the Christian and the liberal unions) had a registered membership of 278,000 in 1891. By the middle of the 1890s workers' emigration practically came to an end. Party and unions, as well as the rank and file workers now faced the question of immigrant workers for a second time: those coming into Germany. By 1895 almost half a million foreigners were counted in Germany, by 1910 their number had grown to 1.25 million. In 1907 the census of occupations found an average of 4.1% foreign workers in agriculture and industry. In agriculture and related occupations 48.5% of the 279,040 employed in-migrants were women, in industry, mining, and construction 11% of a total of 440,800 were women. The percentage of skilled immigrants in industry, mining, and construction amounted to a surprisingly high percentage of 42.6 (37:280). The four largest groups came from Austria-Hungary, Russia, the Netherlands, and Italy in 1910. The different ranking in 1871 reflected the remnants of artisanal/skilled worker migrations (9:34; 7:16—46, esp. 35).

From 1890 to 1914 membership in the free trade unions grew rapidly, reaching the one million-mark in 1904, passing two million in 1910, and reaching 2.54 million in 1913. This, however, means that only about 12% of the total labor force was unionized (33:80). Membership figures for the SPD reached half a million in 1906/07, one million in 1914. The election results had indicated a continuous increase even under the Anti-Socialist Law from 3.2% in 1871 to 9.7% in 1884. After a temporary decrease (1887: 7.1%) the party's share jumped to almost 20% of the vote in the first election after the end of the repression period (1890) and reached 34.8% in the last pre-war election. 1912 (12:91, 104).

The Party discussed the position of international labor migration both in the newspapers for its members and in Kautsky's more theoretically minded journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, Julian Marchlewski and Max Schippel being the most prominent authors. In preparation for the resolutions of the Stuttgart international socialist conference numerous articles appeared and the internationalists won the day. This victory on the level of resolutions veiled an ambiguous political practice. Before World War One the SPD never came to terms with »the Polish question« (which from the viewpoint of the Polish social democrats would of course be a »German problem«). Poles meet less discrimination from the Social Democrats than from other parties but usually were not on an equal footing in the party's organization and in its policies. As a result of this — and more importantly of the general discrimination in German society as well as of governmental oppression — Poles withdrew into ethnic organizations. A relative openness because of prior cultural contact and everyday interaction was turned into what has been called a secondary minority formation: a minority ready to come to terms with the hegemonial society being rejected and then deciding to rely on its ethnic resources (21:94; 26).³

For the trade unions and at the workplace the situation was different. Because of potential or real job competition, because of the danger of undercutting wage levels, migrants and particularly foreign migrant workers were considered a threat by many workers and unions. No semi-integration as in the SPD, no ethnic separatism could solve the problems of class struggle and

³ The concept was developed by Christoph Kleßman (21); English summary of the work in: Dirk Hoerder, ed. *Labour Migration in the Atlantic Economies*, Westport, ct. 1985, pp. 253—275. Note that Migrants from the German section of partitioned Poland were citizens of the Reich, thus differentiated from migrants of the same ethnicity coming from the Russian and Austrian sections. In this way we refer to the common ethnicity.

Foreigners in Germany by State/Empire of Origin. 1871-1910

States	Years								Increase 1871-1910 in percent
	1871	1880	1885	1890	1895	1900	1905	1910	
Austria-Hungary	75,702	117,997	156,762	201,542	222,964	390,964	525,821	667,159	782.6
Russia	14,535	15,097	26,402	17,107	26,559	46,967	106,639	137,697	847.3
Italy	4,019	7,115	9,430	15,570	22,693	69,738	96,165	104,204	2,492.8
Switzerland	24,518	28,241	34,904	49,027	44,875	55,494	62,932	68,257	178.4
France	4,671	17,273	24,241	19,659	19,619	20,478	20,584	19,140	309.7
Luxembourg	4,828	7,674	9,310	11,189	11,755	13,260	14,169	14,356	197.3
Belgium	5,097	4,561	6,638	7,312	8,947	12,122	12,421	13,455	163.9
Netherlands	22,042	17,598	27,191	37,055	50,743	88,085	100,997	144,175	554.1
Denmark	15,163	25,047	33,134	35,924	28,146	26,565	29,231	26,233	73.0
Sweden	} 12,345	8,483	10,943	10,924	8,937	9,622	8,932	9,675	} 5.4
Norway		1,416	1,727	2,012	2,154	2,715	2,921	3,334	
Great Britain and Ireland	10,105	10,465	13,959	14,713	15,290	16,130	17,252	18,319	81.2
Other European	1,177	1,414	2,139	2,322	3,316	5,011	7,114	10,044	753.2
United States	10,698	9,046	12,685	14,074	15,788	17,419	17,184	17,572	64.2
Other countries	1,855	4,630	3,327	3,824	4,416	4,167	4,197	6,253	237.1
Total	206,755	276,057	372,792	433,254	486,190	778,737	1,028,560	1,259,873	509.3

Source: See: Britischgi-Schimmer (9), Böhmert (7)

Foreign Workers in Germany by Occupation, 1907

Occupational Groups and Skill Level	Number	Percent of Total Labor Force in the Respective Category
Agriculture, Gardening, Fishing	279,940	3.8
Total Industry	440,800	5.1
skilled workers	187,670	3.8
unskilled workers	251,466	7.1
Specific Branches		
Mining and Smelting	76,906	8.5
skilled workers	27,296	6.6
unskilled workers	49,596	10.1
Construction work	69,055	10.7
skilled workers	13,960	7.8
unskilled workers	55,014	11.9
Weaving and Spinning	46,393	5.4
skilled workers	19,113	4.9
unskilled workers	27,090	5.9
Masonry and related Trades	124,645	7.9
skilled workers	40,915	4.4
unskilled workers	83,687	13.3
Commerce and Transportation	45,205	2.3
Diverse and Changing Occupations	9,120	1.9
Household Service	24,798	2.0
Total	799,863	4.1

Source: Occupational Census of 12th June, 1907 as summarized in Böhmert, p. 35 (See Britischgi-Schimmer (9), Böhmert (7))

differences of interest in view of structurally different access to jobs, training, and advancement (v. 2; 11; 40; 15:558).

Trade Unions and International Solidarity — Theoretical Aspects

The German trade union movement consisted of »yellow« unions, the *Hirsch-Dunkerschen Gewerkvereine*, both relatively unimportant; the Christian unions and the »Free«, i.e. social-democratic unions. The first two will receive no attention in this paper. The Christian unions' attitudes can be dealt with rather briefly. A reading of their official organ, *Mitteilungen des Gesamtverbandes der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* (called *Zentralblatt* since 1905), shows that little attention was devoted to labor migration and that no policy was developed. The VIIIth Congress was to take up the matter, but nothing happened (CB-21:558; ZB-4:229 f.). The first international conference of Christian trade unions (Zürich, 1908) passed no resolutions, and a request of the international commission in 1911, that the secretariat prepare materials concerning labor migration did not lead to any action (ZB-5:30488; ZB-6:3248).⁴ Miscellaneous notes and articles in the *Zentralblatt* give the following impression. The foremost aim of the Christian unions was protection of German workers against the »dirty competition« (*Schmutzkonkurrenz*) of foreign workers (ZB-7:350). This nationalist position implied the following specific attitudes and actions:

- opposition to unrestricted immigration,
- preferential treatment for German workers (*»Inländerprimat«*),
- attempts by specific unions in recession years to exclude foreign workers from the labor market,
- preferential hiring of German workers for public works,
- in the case of lay-offs foreign workers were to be fired first,
- demand for a per capita tax on foreign workers (MIT-1:68; MIT-2:11; MIT-3:28-30; MIT-4:185-188; MIT-5:231 ff; ZB-2:161-162).

The Christian unions reluctantly conceded that to influence foreign workers, they had to be organized. But they hoped that workers would carry the idea of organization back home and improve conditions there so that migration to Germany would no longer be necessary. To this end international union cooperation was deemed necessary. The only protection to be offered was against exploitation by labor agents (MIT-5:231-233; MIT-6:295-296; ZB-1:384-385; ZB-2:362-363). In sum: »Native workers have priority right to find work and bread in Germany's industry, commerce, and trades« (ZB-8:350).

The social-democratic unions emphasized solidarity but also saw in-migration of foreigners as causing problems. In 1893 the General Commission planned to publish leaflets in Polish, Czech, and Italian, »to win those workers for our cause, which are presently being used by employers against native workers to undercut wages, to explain their situation to them and to wake their class consciousness« (CB-4:54; CB-6:15-16). Only rarely, however, did the unions admit that the foreign workers were necessary for the growth rates of the national economy. During the intensive debate in 1907 Otto Bauer argued that the expansion of the German steel and iron industry in Westphalia

⁴ The discussion centered on activities in border areas, information in the emigration countries, and agitation among migrant workers.

and Lorraine could not have taken place without foreign labor — Polish and Italian — and that this growth provided jobs for German workers in related industries (CB-32:16; v. MIT-6:259-296; 4:476-494, esp. 487). German workers and their organizations felt exposed 1. to economic competition concerning wages, 2. in the labor market, 3. by strikebreaking, 4. Furthermore dangers to health, to morals and to culture were considered a consequence of import of foreign workers.

As to *wage levels*, few unions accused migrant workers in general as intentionally undercutting existing wage rates.⁵ Specific cases did occur and employers tried to use foreign workers to lower wages, but even when the migrants came from areas with lower standards of living and accordingly with lower expectations and reproductive expenses there is no reason to assume — as contemporaries and many labor historians did — that they would consider their work not worth equal wages, that they had internalized such discriminatory practices. What did result from in-migration was — as Otto Bauer and others have pointed out — that in boom periods when the scarce labor supply would induce wage increases, labor importation acted as a buffer (4:476—480, 483; v. Carl Legien — CB-20:523; CB-12:4). Thus in the East-Elbian agrarian areas wages remained stable at their extremely low level because the effects of German out-migration to industrial wages in the West, whether Westphalia or the United States, were offset by Polish in-migrants at the prevailing wage rates (22:30 ff; 28:232). The anti-Polish and anti-Catholic policy of the Prussian government added a non-economic aspect that did lower total wage costs. Polish workers (but not Ruthenians or others) were required to leave Germany during winter to prevent acculturation and permanent settlement. This also saved wages when work was slack. The same effect was reached when separate and sub-standard accommodation was supplied by employers according to governmental policies.⁶ In the building trades and in stone-cutting foreign workers seem to have received lower wages. The gardening workers' union charged that wage gains were lost after East-European contract workers had been imported to replace German workers (28:232; 25:65—91, esp. 82—83; CB-8:30; CB-38:310).

The position of foreign workers in the *labor market* has to be discussed separately from the wage issue since governmental regulations gave them a different position and since employer interest and a lower level of class consciousness among them led to preferential hiring in some areas. No unified codex or law regulating foreign workers existed, but Prussian regulations were usually adapted or adopted in other states (5:1—2). Legally, three categories of foreign or rather non-ethnic German workers existed: the Polish workers from the areas occupied by Germany (German citizenship and voting rights, rigorous Germanization policy); Polish workers from the Russian and Austrian territories (policy of rotation by expelling migrants during the winter months); all other nationalities or ethnicities.⁷ Among the latter governmental agencies preferred West European migrants, Italians ranked next lowest in esteem, and East-Europeans occupied the bottom rung of the ladder. Employer preferences were similar when racially motivated, different, when wage costs and degree of unionization furnished the yardstick of evaluation.

⁵ Otto Hue, president of the social-democratic miners union (*Alter Verband*) explicitly made the point that the in-migrants did not work for lower wages (18: vol 2: 563).

⁶ Period of exclusion: 15 Nov. — 1. April, later reduced to 20 Dec. — 1 Feb. Industrial workers were excluded from this rule. (28: 29—43, 58 ff; 22: 41—42; 5: 46—48).

⁷ The terms »nationality« and »ethnicity« refer to a political self-awareness of a people and to a cultural awareness respectively. The former is used by European scholars since most of the peoples concerned were striving for a state of their own. The latter is used by North American historians where for each immigrant group the preservation of its culture was the prominent goal.

Entry into the labor market was usually via recruiting agents, either on a small scale (work-gang leaders in agriculture and brickmaking) or as mass import when individual contractors offered hundreds, sometimes tens of thousands of workers in newspaper advertisements.⁸ This became a kind of contract labor, though the contract was often not in writing and therefore could not be enforced from the workers' side. An attempt to stop the worst features of this system was the law concerning labor agents of 1910. But in 1905 syndicates of agrarian employers (*Landwirtschaftskammern*) and governmental institutions organized the »*Deutsche Feldarbeiterzentrale*«, renamed in 1912 »*Deutsche Arbeiterzentrale*«, to recruit, screen, and since 1908, control foreign workers. The *Zentrale* had to provide each foreign worker with a »legitimizing card« colored differently according to nationality and containing not only the personal data of the bearer but also the address of the employer and the duration of the contract. Foreign workers without this card or those looking for labor without having a discharge notice of their employer on the card were subject to immediate expulsion. The *Zentrale* and the police cooperated closely. Since leaving the employment was practically the only means of labor protest available to foreign workers they were thus left defenseless and from the German unions' point of view exploitable with no means of recourse (for details — v. 22; 5; 28).

Social security laws (health, accident, invalids', and old age insurance) applied to foreign workers only sporadically, usually after bilateral treaties with the countries of origin had been signed. In-migrants were often excluded from many public works. Since 1899 they had to know a certain amount of German to be hired in mines (*Bergpolizeiverordnung*). In April 1908 the *Reichsvereinsgesetz* ruled that foreign workers had to conduct any public meeting in German (5:26; 14:581-589; 28; 39; 21; 26; 35; 32:60-63; *Reichsvereinsgesetz* cited in CB-27:288).

Employer interest also led to a differential position in the labor market: For foreign workers payment of wages could be irregular, physical punishment could be imposed, segregated low quality housing was deemed sufficient, workers had no means of protest. This applied mainly to Eastern agricultural workers. Mine owners in the Ruhrdistrict discussing the importation of Chinese coolies argued that they were useful to »advanced cultures« as long as they remained a kind of labor-saving machinery. Any attempts to reach the level of the »advanced nation«, however, would make them dangerous to economic interests and cultural homogeneity. Furthermore employers considered foreign workers less class conscious and rejected demands to employ unemployed Western German workers on the East Elbian latifundia, arguing that they were pampered, infected with social democratic ideas, would corrupt the »quiet and sensible« workers. Employers and government officials agreed that foreign workers could be discharged and expelled whenever an economic downturn reduced the need for workers (for details — v. 22; 28; 6; CB-13:4; CB-16:284; CB-24:37; CB-26:18; CB-29:486-487; CB-37:172).

Migrant workers were seen as a potential for *strikebreaking* whether of German or foreign origin. The *Correspondenzblatt* published a regular column listing strikes and warning of in-migration. It took note of strikes lost because of (German) in-migration or because of labor importation of Russian, Italian, English, Belgian, and Slavic workers. The latter did not usually know the immediate purpose for which they were hired and some let themselves be con-

⁸ Such advertisements, up to 1914, resemble those for the sale of redemptioners or slaves in the United States in the early 19th century.

vinced upon arrival not to take up work. Even these were a drain on union funds since they had to be reimbursed for expenses, put up and receive their fare back. In the case of strikes employer organizations helped in the recruiting on distant labor markets to prevent upward pressure on wages on nearby labor markets and union interposition. Specific agencies supplied employers with professional strikebreakers and some organized groups of Italian strikebreakers extorted money from unions in return for non-interference. The major prejudices about strikebreaking were directed against Italian workers.⁹

While these economic issues — wages, labor market, strikebreaking — can at least be documented if not easily evaluated, the situation is more difficult concerning health, frequency of accidents, moral dangers, racial mixing, cultural debasement. Epidemic infections, skin diseases and the worm sickness of miners were reportedly spread by labor migrants including migrants passing on their way to the United States through Germany. Practically nothing of this can be or has been proved. Medical aid and sanitary conditions were probably comparatively low in some areas of emigration, but in the receiving society sanitary conditions at the workplace, in company housing in (German) towns in general were squalid. The move from village to tenement (*Mietskaserne*, *Baracke*) may in fact have included a move to lower sanitary standards. In the mines the German government prevented work and safety regulations from being published in other languages than German — thus foreign workers were deliberately excluded from safety measures. Since Polish in-migrants usually had mining experience in Silesia there is no reason to assume that accidents were caused by inexperience. The supervisory personnel of the mines also did not know Polish. Moral dangers or 'racial' mixing was an issue mainly seen by nationalist-minded circles and by the Christian trade unions. There was little mention of this in the publications of the social-democratic unions, though rank-and-file workers may have shared ethnic prejudice (v. 40:56—60).

The charge of 'cultural debasement' demands more attention because it was a topic of union debate and because the term »culture« has been used with widely different connotations. Contemporary unions and workers used it in a broad sense, meaning a whole way of life (*Lebensweise*), as Raymond Williams has done in more recent scholarly debates. Culture included a) the material standard of living: working conditions, hours and wages, the reproductive conditions, housing and food; b) the level of class consciousness and organization; c) the level of educational attainment, reading and leisure habits. It comprised a notion of continuous progress towards higher standards of living (through labor struggles, individual skill and national entrepreneurship). This notion was normal in the period but could easily be turned into a cultural arrogance of those more advanced.¹⁰ The standard of living became the main point of reference when frugal living (*»Bedürfnislosigkeit«*) lack of expectations was considered a sign of cultural backwardness.

The differences between advanced and backward nations posed a permanent double threat to workers in the former, mass in-migration and capital export. Therefore the social-democratic trade unions took the position that international solidarity was the only means to help workers of all societies to reach a higher level of existence. The General Commission consistently oppo-

⁹ *Correspondenzblatt*: regular column »Situationsbericht« usually on the last page of each issue; strike statistics 1900—1911 (CB-36, appendix, tab. 36, p. 280); strikes lost to in-migration (CB-1); employer resolutions quoted (CB-34: 656—667); Italian gangs (CB-17: 539 passim).

¹⁰ The German term »Kulturation« is translated as »advanced society« since the term »culture« conveys too restricted a notion.

sed all restrictive measures, demanded freedom of migration and worked for international union cooperation to prevent strikebreaking migration, to organize workers in emigration areas, to secure admission of previously organized workers into the unions of the host society (4:488; CB-5:4; CB-6:15; CB-23-498; CB-2:123; CB-10:1—2; CB-11:1—2). It demanded that the government put foreign workers on a equal basis with German workers (following the example of a French—Italian treaty).¹¹ The General Commission conceded — after an intervention of the Mine and Smelter Workers Union (*Berg — und Hüttenarbeiterverband*) that health care and prevention of accidents might warrant some specified restrictions. When the brickworkers' Christian union demanded total exclusion of foreign workers the General Commission voiced its strong opposition noting that according to such »protective-tariff« principles local workers from one community could demand protection against in-migrating German workers from other communities (CB-14:11; CB-15:127)).

In the debates on labor migration preparing the resolution of the Stuttgart Socialist Conference, 1907, the General Commission repeated that labor migration should basically remain unrestricted: a position that remained unchanged till the First World War:

- The state was called upon to pass a law to protect all aliens against arbitrary officials and governmental reprisals;
- to conclude international treaties putting workers on an equal footing;
- to pass protective legislation, public education, improved sanitary conditions for the whole working population.

Migrant workers were

- to act as free, class-conscious workers (as opposed to cringing wage slaves), to support strikes and other struggles,
- to join and be admitted to the union of their respective trade in whichever country they were.

Employers were to be prohibited by law from importing wage slaves (contract labor as opposed to migrant labor).

Restrictions in the »general interest« might be applied in the case of persons with contagious diseases, perhaps against criminals but definitely not against paupers, other races, persons of poor education or unable to speak German (or the language of the respective receiving society). The General Commission, however, made an important — and perhaps revealing — distinction. Migrants from industrial-capitalist countries, it noted, could be accepted since they would easily be integrated, but migrants from agrarian and proto-industrial countries would need special governmental attention concerning education, language training, home economics and safety measures against work accidents. Finally migrants from »backward races« reaching countries like the United States, Australia or South Africa from China, India or Southeast Asia might have to be excluded.¹²

The Stuttgart Congress of the IInd International took a similar position. Additionally it demanded *acceptable* entrance fees to unions (a provision directed against some craft unions and particularly many AFL unions in the United States). It added guidelines for unions in the emigration countries:

¹¹ In 1904 France agreed to extend all protective and social security legislation to Italian workers. In return Italy promised to bring up its respective laws to French standards thus reducing the emigration potential (cf. CB-23: 507—509).

¹² In view of an employer-initiated debate on the importation of coolie labor, the General Commission admitted that it might have to change its position towards restrictions if hundreds of thousands coolies or negroes would be brought to Germany (CB-22: 465 *passim*; cf. 4; 32).

agitation among emigrants, information about the real working conditions in the immigration countries, cooperation with the unions in the immigration countries, control of agents, contract-worker recruitment, and other means stimulating emigration (e. g. shipping-company agents). A reading of the contemporary labor press reveals that in many countries realistic information was already being provided (29:vol. 2/58; 38:547-56a; 17).

Trade Unions and Migrant Workers — Everyday Practices

During the everyday struggles the unions tried to abide by their official viewpoint. Since 1892 agitation committees were founded in the eastern parts of Germany to reach foreign workers. While a call by the Magdeburg section of the woodworkers union to publish the *Correspondenzblatt* in several languages was rejected, the General Commission began to print leaflets in Polish, Czech, and Italian since 1894 (CB-3:49 f, passim-committees; CB-7:27 — Magdeburg notion; CB-4:59, passim — leaflets). Since the turn of the century, Italian-Speaking trade unionists were sent to the Italian emigration areas, a plan realized jointly with the Milano-based *Società Umanitaria*, a partly governmental, partly socialist party-financed organization to aid migrants and later workers in general. The *Società* in turn opened educational centers for Italian workers north of the Alps (30:119-114; 31). The willingness to admit foreign migrating workers into the German unions is demonstrated by agreements which the masons' union had with 13 other national unions, the metalworkers' union (eleven nations), construction workers' union, woodworkers' union (eleven nations each), miners' union (six nations), general factory workers' union (five nations) (40:96; CB-9:554 f; CB-25:62 cf; CB-31:600 f; CB-35:464 ff). Beginning in 1898, the social-democratic trade unions began to publish periodicals for Italian and Polish workers. These, however, did not address agricultural workers. Even with the best of intentions their impact must have been very limited: in 1910 about 280,000 Polish workers were in the Ruhr district alone and 104,000 Italians were registered in Germany. The combined editions of the four periodicals published by the social-democratic and the Christian trade unions amounted to about 20,000. To these the periodicals by individual trade unions have to be added. But in relation to the number of workers, even granting that each issue was read by several people, the figure remained very low. (See Appendix: Union Periodicals.)¹³

Nevertheless, the trade unions themselves considered their agitation successful, though an intensification was demanded again and again. Since the early 1900s reports in the *Correspondenzblatt* about Italian strikebreaking seem to have declined and in general there are fewer complaints that migrants act like wage slaves rather than workers. On the level of the central organisations and its functionaries the image of Italian and Polish workers seems to have improved.

Viewed from the migrant workers' perspective the picture was less positive. The German masons' union journal continued to report negatively about Italian workers and to demand exclusion of foreign workers from public-financed constructions. Polish miners felt better served in their own ethnic »union« and the periodicals of ethnic organizations achieved a much larger circulation than union papers. Depending on which specific trade is selected

¹³ Information from *Zentralblatt* and *Correspondenzblatt*; cf. for Polish publications — Krystyna Murzynowska and Christoph Kleß (37: 129-155).

prejudices against one or another ethnic group predominated: against Italians in the building trades, against Poles among the miners. The unions and their members often assumed that migrant workers took away their jobs (job-competition theory). While this may have happened occasionally the usual process was one of substratification, in which foreigners moved into jobs no longer acceptable to native workers, jobs from which natives, in fact, withdrew through out-migration.

The internationalist position of solidarity regardless of ethnic/national background was never fully accepted by the journal of the *Zentralverband der Maurer Deutschlands* (masons' union), the *Grundstein*. Its writers — having Italian workers in mind — claimed that replacement of native by foreign labor might damage national productivity. But though protectionist measures were occasionally advocated the journal (and the union) tried to salvage the idea in face of a hostile reality: They demanded international labor legislation concerning work conditions and a stronger influence of trade unions. Then in-migrating workers would have to be treated and paid like native ones and would therefore no longer pose a threat to the well-being of the former, except on the basis of competition between equals. This, of course, was a long-range goal. Everyday conflicts had to be solved, the consequences assessed.¹⁴ During the economic crisis of the early 1900s, when hostility against foreigners increased, one author tried to stem the tide by comparing out-migration of German workers with in-migration of Italian workers. But the editors of the *Grundstein* disagreed. Italians — in their opinion — had done nothing to reach better employment conditions for all workers. Rather they were a »plague« on the land. They were compared to Chinese coolies and — accordingly — the principles of international solidarity were not applicable. German workers as a whole (»*Arbeiterschaft*« not »*Arbeiterklasse*«) had a right to resist their incursions.¹⁵

Polish workers in the agrarian East had little chance to organize. Most German agricultural laborers were unorganized and union as well as SPD functionaries did not consider them easily organizable. On the other hand, in the Ruhr district unions existed, both Christian and free, which opened their ranks to Polish miners. But since they paid little attention to the cultural (and language) needs of the Poles, and since public officials and the German press took an extremely hostile stand, Polish ethnic organizations began to flourish. The social-democratic unions labored under the additional difficulty that the Polish clergy did anything but encourage the joining of free unions. In fact, major periodical of the community, *Wiarus Polski*, was founded among other reasons to prevent Polish workers from coming under the sway of social democracy. Later the *Wiarus Polski* was secularized and the new owner, a major community builder, participated in many ethnic organizations and finally founded the *Zjednoczenie Zawodowe Polskie* (ZZP) in 1902, a rival Polish trade organization to pursue the interests of workers without accepting the notion of class struggle (27; 20:148-178).¹⁶

While contemporary charges by Polish community leaders that the German unions were as chauvinist as the *Ostmarkenverein* (»*Hakatisten*«) were unfounded, the unions definitely discriminated against Polish members. In 1898, the Christian miners' union refused seats on the board of the miners' social security organization (*Knappschaft*) to representatives of the Polish

¹⁴ *Grundstein* 10 (1890) p. 3, 34 (1891) pp 11, quoted by Forberg (11: 85-86).

¹⁵ *Grundstein* 32 (1890), pp. 5f (V. Woerman, »Die organisations-frage der Italiener), 30 (1904), p. 1, quoted by Forberg (11: 92-96).

¹⁶ The following paragraphs are mainly based on the essay (20).

miners, accusing them of demanding »national privileges«. Both, the Christian and free union, accepted the »*Bergpolizeiverordnung*« of 1899, ruling that security regulations in the mines be published in the German language only. The free unions also assumed that for security reasons (fast and accurate communication in the case of danger) only German-speaking workers and engineers could reach the level of supervisory personnel. This exclusionary rule caused problems even for German-speaking in-migrants from Silesia because of the difference of dialects (23:33, 192). The security regulations could have easily been translated, the rigorous Germanisation policy of the government was the real obstacle. The unions had neither the power (objective condition) nor the will (subjective condition) to oppose the government on this issue. With one exception, the free miners' union Polish-language periodical only after the ZZP had been founded. The free unions commented — with irony and bitterness — that after the religious schism in the union movement an ethnic/national one was added, each sect soon have its own union.

The ZZP did meet a real need: by 1912 the social-democratic »*Alter Verband*« counted about 70,000 members, the Christian union about 40,000 and the Polish union about 30,000. Though several thousand Polish miners were said to have been members of the two German unions before 1902, it seems reasonable to conclude that they could never have reached as many Polish workers as the ethnic organization. Nevertheless, the *Correspondenzblatt* and other union periodicals never reconciled themselves to this development as the consistently negative tone of their references indicate. The ZZP began to cooperate with the German unions during the large miners' strike of 1905. In 1907 it made cooperation concerning »economic matters« its official principle, while pursuing its own line concerning political and ethnic questions. It remained hostile to social-democratic activities. (In regard to ethnic/national separation it should be emphasized that Austrian German-speaking workers preferred their own organization. Even in the Eastern sections of the Reich settled historically both by Poles and Germans the SPD never implemented a consistently international or multi-ethnic political practice. The *Polska Partja Socjalistyczna zaboru pruskiego* (PPS) — Polish Social Party in the Prussian sector — was more successful. However, the PPS could not join forces with the ZZP, either, because of the latter's refusal to take a clear position in the class struggle (20; 21; 26; 5; 39; 35; 32).

In sum, the virulent nationalism of the government and of large sections of society and the latent nationalism of the social-democratic trade unions activated the latent nationalism of Polish in-migrants, which in turn was fired by a small group of virulent nationalists. The examples of the Czechs in Vienna as well as of other immigrant minorities demonstrate that a somewhat less antagonistic climate of opinion in the hegemonial society will permit ethnic feeling of the in-migrants to, merge into the receiving culture. The more insurmountable the entrance barriers erected by nationalists, the stronger the ethnic resurgence.

In the two decades before World War One the latent nationalism and open discrimination as well as strikebreaking activities of in-migrants led to a number of violent clashes, e. g. in Freiburg, 1894 and Augsburg, 1899. In 1901 and 1902 trade union periodicals reported a decreasing propensity of foreign workers to migrate into strike areas. The same periodicals registered an increase in strikebreaking of the workers involved were imported. To counter these increased activities of the employers, unions had to warn Scandinavian, Finnish, Belgian, Dutch, Swiss, Italian, Russian, Czech, and other Austro-Hungarian workers — a formidable task (11:155-158).

Since the beginning of the war the protectionist wing of the unions, always present but always submerged (at least on the higher levels), found increasing response. It soon became the dominant position. The General Commission criticized the forced labor policies of the government, but it did little to alleviate the situation of these workers. In fact, it tried to negotiate agreements with unions in neutral countries to increase in-migration of workers needed, directly or indirectly for the war »effort« (10:189-222). Since 1915/16 both the General Commission and most of the individual labor unions advocated preferential hiring for German workers after the war (»Inländerprimat«). In the early twenties they advocated this position as suitable for all European unions (11:113-122). International solidarity was no longer in demand, not even on paper.

APPENDIX

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE UNION PERIODICALS IN GERMANY, 1898—1914

a) Publications by the social-democratic unions

1892+ founding of foreign-language agitation committees.

1894+ publication of foreign-language leaflets.

1896 call for foreign-language editions of *Correspondenzblatt* met with no response.

1902 motion by the union syndicate (*Gewerkschaftskartell*) of Alsace-Lorraine for a German-French union periodical rejected.

Italian

1898—1914 *L'Operaio Italiano* (Italian Worker)

published by the *Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* (General Commission of the German trade unions), distributed by the masons' union and address to »*Maurer and Bauhilfsarbeiter*«; place: Berlin/Hamburg; fortnightly; editor — a Swiss citizen — expelled from Germany in 1900; circulation varied seasonally, e.g. in 1907 between 10,650 and 15,800 copies; average circulation:

1898		1903		1908	10,444
1899	3,000	1904		1909	7,782
1900	4,400	1905		1910	7,729
1901		1906		1911	9,322
1902		1907	13,225	1912	10,184
				1913	10,202

Polish

1898—1899 *Górnik* (Miner)

subtitle: *Czasopismodla polskich górników i hutników, dwuty-godnik*;

publ. by *Deutscher Berg- und Hüttenarbeiterverband* (miners' and smelters' union); place: Bochum; for Polish members in Upper Silesia; circulation: 10,000.

1902—1914 *Gazeta Gorniza* (Miners' Newspaper)

publ. by *Berg- und Hüttenarbeiterverband* as page seven of its official German journal, »*Bergarbeiterzeitung*«; became a separate supplement since Dec. 1904.

1901—1922 *Oświata* (Enlightenment)

publ. by the *Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* jointly with several of its constituent unions for Polish workers; Place Posen/Kattowitz; fortnightly; circulation averages:

1901	3,000	1906		1911	6,678	1916
1902		1907	6,562	1912	8,034	1917
1903		1908	6,084	1913	8,689	1918
1904		1909	5,256	1914	not	1919
1905		1910	5,663	1915	publ.	1920

(Neither *L'Operario Italiano* nor *Oświata* have been used systematically by labor historians. The Labor Migration Project at the University of Bremen has acquired copies from Polish and Italian archives.)

Polish union periodicals were also published by the ZZP, founded in 1902. Both, the free unions' *Gazeta* and the Christian unions' *Pryjaciel* represent reactions to the organization of immigrant workers on ethnic basis.

b) Publications of the Christian unions

Italian

1905—1910 *L'Italiano in Germania* (The Italian in Germany)

publ. by *Gesamtverband der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* for Italian workers;

place: Elberfeld/Köln; fortnightly; editor expelled from Germany in 1906; circulation: about 3,000 in 1905, reduced to 1,200—1,500 by 1910; replaced by:

1910—1914? *Il Lavoro Italiano* (Italian Labor)

publ. jointly by the Christian trade union federation of Germany (*Gesamtverband*), of Italy, Switzerland, Austria, the Italian textile workers' union, the union syndicate of Milano; for distribution in Germany and in the emigration areas

1904+ *La Patria* publ. by bishop Bonomelli (Cremora), the *Opera di Assistenza*, and Lorenz Werthmann, founder of the German Catholic *Caritasverband*; place: Freiburg; average circulation: 10,000;

published advertisements for strikebreakers; later denied that support was given to strikebreaking

? — ? *La Patria* publ. by *Verband christlicher Maurer und verwandter Berufe Deutschlands* for the Italian construction workers; Berlin?

Polish

1903—1909 *Pryjaciel Robotników* (Worker's Friend)

publ. by *Gesamtverband der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands*;

place: Posen; vol. 1—7, 7—26 continued as:

1909—1929 *Zwiazkowiec* (Trade Unionist)

publ. by *Gesamtverband* as joint organ of several of its constituent trade unions; place: Beuthen/Kattowitz; largest circulation: about 6,500 in 1911.

1903—1914 *Gornik Polski* (Polish Miner)

publ. by the miners' union (*Gewerkverein christlicher Bergarbeiter für den Oberbergamtsbezirk Dortmund*), later by *Gewerkverein christl. Bergarbeiter Deutschlands*, since 1909 jointly with the *Gesamtverband* as mines' editions of *Zwiazkowiec*; place: Essen/Kattowitz

French

1907—? *L'ouvrier alsacien-Lorrain* (The Worker of Alsace-Lorraine)

subtitle: *Organ der christlichen Gewerkschaftsorganisationen in Elsaß-Lothringen*, i.e. the christian textile workers' union and the *Gesamtverband*; place: Strasbourg

Dutch

? — ? *De christelijke Werkman* (The Christian Worker)

publ. by the christian textile workers' union

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TRADE UNION PERIODICALS

CB *Correspondenzblatt der Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands, 1890—1914.*

1) 28 (26 Sept. 1891)	15) 8 (24 Feb. 1902)	29) 31 (1 Aug. 1908)
2) 30 (17 Oct. 1891)	16) 17 (28 April 1902)	30) 32 (21 Sept. 1908)
3) 12 (6 June 1892)	17) 31 (4 Aug. 1902)	31) 38 (24 Sept. 1910)
4) 15 (17 July 1893)	18) 23 (6 June 1903)	32) 16 (22 April 1911)
5) 19 (25 Sept. 1893)	19) 31 (6 Aug. 1904)	33) 21 (16 Oct. 1911)
6) 4 (29 Jan. 1894)	20) 32 (13 Aug. 1904)	34) 42 (21 Oct. 1911)

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|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 7) 6 (9 March 1896) | 21) 32 (11 Aug. 1906) | 35) 31 (3 Aug. 1912) |
| 8) 6 (8 Feb. 1897) | 22) 30-31 (27 July-10 Aug. 1907) | 36) 8 (28 Sept. 1912) |
| 9) 53 (31 Aug. 1897) | | 37) 12 (21 March 1914) |
| 10) 8 (26 Feb. 1900) | 23) 32 (1 Aug. 1907) | 38) 20 (16 May 1914) |
| 11) 9 (5 March 1900) | 24) 37 (14 Sept. 1907) | |
| 12) 18 (7 May 1900) | 25) 39 (29 Sept. 1907) | |
| 13) 20 (21 May 1900) | 26) 2 (11 Jan. 1908) | |
| 14) 39 (1 Oct. 1900) | 27) 19 (9 May 1908) | |
| | 28) 20 (21 May 1900) | |

MIT *Mitteilungen*

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|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1) 8 (22 July 1901) | 5) 19 (22 Oct. 1902) |
| 2) 2 (27 Jan. 1902) | 6) 23 (14 Nov. 1904) |
| 3) 3 (10 Feb. 1902) | 7) 23 (14 Nov. 1904) |
| 4) 16 (11 Aug. 1902) | |

ZB *Zentralblatt*

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|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) 25 (11 Dec. 1905) | 6) 21 (16 Oct. 1911) | |
| 2) 23 (19 Nov. 1906) | 7) 22 (28 Oct. 1912) | — Resolution of the VIII Congress |
| 3) 10 (18 May 1908) | | — Report on the VIII Congress |
| 4) 16 (26 July 1909) | 8) 22 (28 Oct. 1912) | |
| 5) 19 (21 Sept. 1908) | | |

STAV NJEMAČKIH SINDIKATA PREMA RADNICIMA MIGRANTIMA

SAŽETAK

U kratkom uvodu ovog referata izlaže se specifičan razvoj njemačke socijal-demokratske stranke i sindikata, te emigracija radnika, posebice u SAD, a isto tako i razvoj imigracije, uglavnom iz Poljske i Italije. Dalje se govori o ekonomskoj konkurenciji u vezi s nadnicama, konkurenciji na tržištu rada, štrajkolomstvu, te konačno pretpostavljenim opasnostima za zdravlje, moral i kulturu. U posljednjem dijelu referata uspoređuje se praksa njemačkih sindikata prema stranim radnicima s teorijskog stajališta.