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in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948

The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families
after World War II

THE Great Departure

Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World

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Tara Zahra

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to William Irvine

Contents

INTRODUCTION: "Not a Golden Country" 3

CHAPTER 1: Travel Agents on Trial 23

CHAPTER 2: "The Man Farthest Down" 65

CHAPTER 3: Happy and Unhappy Returns 105

CHAPTER 4: The First Final Solution 143

CHAPTER 5: Work Will Set You Free 181

CHAPTER 6: The Freedom Train 217

CHAPTER 7: Free to Stay or Go 255

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 293

NOTES 297

BIBLIOGRAPHY 361

INDEX 371

THE Great Departure

INTRODUCTION

"Not a Golden Country"

Faustina Wiśniewska was counting the days until she could return home. "I do not understand how the people there look upon this America," she wrote to her parents. "They think that a country like America is made of gold. This is not a golden country, but a new one, . . . and here they exploit people as they did the Jews in Pharaoh's time, 12 hours' work a day." Faustina, a recent Polish immigrant, was not impressed by electric lights or by the Statue of Liberty. Assaulted by the sounds, sights, and foul smells of New York City, she moaned, "Oh, how lonely I am! Here you only hear the noise of thousands of people walking, of the whistling of factories, of the bells of trolleys . . . in place of nightingales and larks. Instead of roses, tulips, and lilacs, barrels of garbage and covered wagons, and stench instead of fresh air." She had abandoned any fantasy of prosperity, yet her parents constantly nagged her to send money home. She and her husband were living hand to mouth. "We cannot live on smelly meat, stale bread, musty cereals. . . . To live in misery or to kill myself in order to save a *grosz*, no, I am not that crazy to work myself to death." She refused, on principle, to sacrifice her few daily pleasures in order to support needy

relatives. "I have already suffered a great deal myself and I denied myself the eating of a good breakfast. Now I eat the best meat, the filet. There are those who send money to the old country, but they themselves live like animals."[1]

Faustina took part in one of the greatest migrations in human history. Between 55 and 58 million Europeans moved to North and South America in the period 1846–1940. At the peak of this exodus, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Austria-Hungary was the top supplier of migrants to the United States, sending more than 2 million subjects of the Dual Monarchy through the gauntlet at Ellis Island.[2] The great departure from Eastern Europe was not unique: millions were on the move in other parts of the world as well. Between 48 and 52 million people, mostly from India and Southern China, moved to Southeast Asia and to islands in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific between 1846 and 1940. Another 46–51 million people left northeastern Asia and Russia for Manchuria, Siberia, Central Asia, and Japan.[3] Yet the movement out of Eastern Europe hollowed out villages with particularly dizzying speed. In 1907 alone, more than 300,000 people left the Dual Monarchy for the United States, the most ever to land on American shores from one country in a single year.[4] "Moans are uttered by people here because it seems that all of Europe is depopulating itself and is heading in droves for America," Faustina attested.

When Faustina made her journey, the phenomenon of mass emigration from Eastern Europe was still relatively novel. Before the age of the steamship, the journey across the Atlantic was long (averaging thirty to forty days), expensive, and potentially deadly. But by 1890, when Faustina left home, transatlantic emigration was far less dangerous and somewhat more comfortable, even in steerage. Expanding railway lines and steamship routes reduced the time, cost, and risks of transatlantic travel, and narrowed the psychological distance between Eastern Europe, Western Europe,

and America. The insatiable demand for cheap labor in North America's booming industrial cities fueled the growing transcontinental and transatlantic traffic in labor. And the erosion of feudal bonds and labor obligations in Eastern Europe unleashed millions of people from the villages or regions of their birth. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was possible to travel by steamship from Hamburg to New York in only seven days, at cut-rate prices. Fares fluctuated with periodic price wars, but a third-class steamship ticket around 1900 would have cost about thirty dollars for an East European emigrant (approximately eight hundred dollars in today's currency). This was not easy money for the average peasant to come by, but not impossible with the help of family, friends, and credit.[5]

The sudden departure of millions of citizens to foreign lands sent shock waves across Europe and the Atlantic. If the arrival of the "unwashed masses" from Southern and Eastern Europe inflamed xenophobia in Western Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century, those who stayed behind were no less unsettled. Military officials bemoaned the growing number of conscripts who failed to appear for military duty. Landowners worried about where they would find workers to harvest the next year's crop (and about the need to increase wages to compete in a global labor market). Religious authorities warned that peasants would be demoralized and secularized in foreign cities. Family members despaired that they might never see their relatives again. To many, "America fever" (and its cousins "Brazil fever" and "Argentinia fever") threatened to destroy individuals, families, and nations.

Faustina's trajectory was not unique. But in her letters home, Wiśniewska also challenged the story that Americans like to tell themselves about this great departure: that immigrants desired to come and to stay—not that many came reluctantly, pushed by cir-

cumstances at home, feeling that they had no other options, and that many wished mightily to return home again. The great story of immigration has generally focused on how many persons the United States (or other receiving countries) would allow in, or keep out, not on the situations those migrants sought to escape, or on the impact of their departure on their homelands, or the role of their own governments in keeping them home. Significantly, it has tended to ignore one of the most consequential political discoveries of nineteenth-century European states: that emigration could be manipulated like the steam valve on a teapot; that encouraging people to stay or go could be used as an instrument of policy, to serve both domestic and international goals. People could be "scientifically" managed, like any other natural resource.

THE STORY OF mass migration has also generally accepted the premise that more mobility meant more freedom. In American political culture, the meaning of the term "freedom" has never been stable, but it has long been defined in relation to movement. Among eighteenth-century political theorists, Thomas Jefferson was one of the most ardent defenders of the right to exit. He insisted that all men possess "a right which nature has given to all men of departing from the country which chance, not choice, has placed him."[6] Freedom has also long been defined in racial terms in America, especially in relationship to slavery and its legacies. Since violent capture, forced transport across the Middle Passage, and the physical bondage of human bodies were essential to slavery, physical mobility became fundamental to abolitionist ideals of freedom in the United States.[7] Within the United States in the first half of the twentieth century, the domestic slave trade forcibly uprooted at least two-thirds of a million people at the whims of their owners. Slaves lived in fear of being arbitrarily sold away

from parents, children, spouses, and siblings, a form of (threatened and real) forced migration that emerged as a quintessential symbol of domination and unfreedom for enslaved people.[8] Abolitionists also helped to consolidate a link between free labor and freedom in America, implicitly legitimating capitalism. The notion of "wage slavery," deployed during the Progressive era and beyond, was so powerful precisely because actual slavery was a living memory. In his famous muckraking novel *The Jungle*, the socialist writer Upton Sinclair explicitly compared the East European immigrants in Chicago's meatpacking industry to chattel slaves. "Here was a population, low-class and mostly foreign, hanging always on the verge of starvation, and dependent for its opportunities of life upon the whim of men every bit as brutal and unscrupulous as the old-time slave-drivers," he declared.[9] While particularly powerful in the United States, the ideal of the "free migrant," defined in opposition to the slave or indentured servant, has been a cornerstone of global migration politics since the era of abolition.[10]

In the United States, of course, imagined links between freedom and mobility also reflect the centrality of the frontier to American history and identity. Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 address entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" is certainly the most famous version of the myth of "frontier individualism." Turner asserted that movement had been the "dominant fact" of American life since Columbus's arrival in the New World. The American conquest of the West transformed Europeans into Americans and bestowed on them a unique attachment to freedom, individualism, and democracy. In Turner's view, physical mobility, social mobility, and political liberty naturally converged in the American West.[11]

Like the movement west, mass immigration tethered the concepts of freedom and mobility in the United States. Mass immigration helped transform freedom into an imagined space or a

physical destination, rather than a political or spiritual condition. Migrants were said to travel into or out of "freedom" as they crossed U.S. borders. To East European Jews, "America signifies distance. America signifies freedom," wrote the Austrian-Jewish writer Joseph Roth in 1927.[12] Migrants themselves made, and continue to make, powerful political claims based on the argument that immigration is at the heart of American identity. At the outset of the Second World War, when American nativists cast European immigrants and refugees as a threatening "fifth column," Louis Adamic (himself an immigrant from the Habsburg Empire) maintained that America's immigrants were its greatest strength. "The fact that its population is an extension of most of the Old World, stemming from about sixty different backgrounds, constitutes perhaps one of the greatest advantages which the U.S. enjoys." He even speculated that Europe's descent into fascism was a consequence of mass emigration. "Too many 'Americans,'" whom he defined as "people addicted to liberty," had abandoned Europe for America in the past century, he insisted.[13]

In reality, however, from the very moment that the mass exodus from Eastern Europe began, many Europeans questioned the notion both that emigration should be unrestricted and that moving would lead to freedom or prosperity. Like Faustina and Upton Sinclair, they insisted that emigrants were being delivered to new forms of bondage and misery. Many European and U.S. officials in the nineteenth century believed that producing "free migrants" required regulating the intermediaries—like emigration agents and shipping companies—that facilitated and profited from migration. In Eastern Europe in particular, a conviction grew that emigrants could never be truly free outside their homelands.

These fears were linked to anxieties about the status of East Europeans in global racial and civilizational hierarchies. By the late nineteenth century, when peasants and workers began to

move en masse from the East to the West, Europe's continental empires (including the Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Empires) self-consciously occupied a precarious position between the imagined "West" and the colonial world.[14] Emigration reformers feared that their citizens would become the slaves, coolies, or indentured servants of the twentieth century—fears stoked by American nativists who questioned the racial "value" of migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. East European policymakers from the late nineteenth century onward consistently worked to defend and cultivate the status of their citizens as "white" Europeans, and to protect their legal and social equality with white West European and North American workers.[15] To an extent, they were successful. For Jewish migrants arriving in the United States, Roth observed, the image of America as a land of liberty corresponded to a certain reality. "Not because they really are all that serious about liberty in the new country, but because they have people who are more Jewish than the Jews, which is to say the Negroes. Of course Jews are still Jews. But here, significantly, they are first and foremost whites. For the first time a Jew's race is actually to his advantage."[16]

CONCERNS ABOUT THE LOSS of population were hardly new in the late nineteenth century. In the early modern era, vast numbers of Europeans were wiped out in the demographic catastrophes of the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries, in particular the Black Death and the Thirty Years' War. These natural and man-made disasters taught rulers that human beings were a precious resource. Early modern sovereigns generally subscribed to mercantile economic theories, valuing population as a motor of economic development and source of political power. More people, they believed, meant more labor, larger markets, and bigger armies for self-defense. Most early modern states therefore sought to hoard population

by restricting emigration. Some, such as Catherine the Great in Russia, even campaigned to attract immigrants to populate and productivize their domains.[17]

By the early to mid-nineteenth century, however, mercantilist theories gave way to Malthusian pessimism throughout much of Europe, as mortality rates declined and population increased. State authorities began to worry less about underpopulation and more about overpopulation and its ugly bedfellows—poverty, disease, famine, and revolution. As a result, authorities eased restrictions on movement. The Frankfurt Parliament of 1848, for example, declared that "freedom of emigration may not be restricted in the interests of the state," while the Austrian constitution of 1867 guaranteed every citizen the right to exit the Habsburg Empire. A growing emphasis on free movement in this period coincided with the general ascendance of political and economic liberalism.[18]

The middle to late nineteenth century has therefore long been remembered as a golden age of unfettered mobility. It was only in the aftermath of the First World War, in this story, that Western xenophobia, the expansion of state power, and economic crisis spelled the end of an era of open borders.[19] This narrative of unlimited migration is incomplete at best, however. Movement could also mean expulsion, even in Western Europe in the nineteenth century. As emigration came to be seen as a potential solution to various social and political problems, several European states developed strategies for encouraging or even forcing the emigration of individuals or groups seen as "undesirable" or "surplus" citizens.

Such practices of human dumping took many forms. In the nineteenth century, the French and British Empires expelled vast numbers of convicts to colonial penal colonies, where many perished from disease, malnutrition, and overwork in brutal conditions. In the British Empire, champions of emigration urged

the government to "shovel out paupers" in the 1820s and 1830s. Orphans and "surplus" single women soon joined paupers and convicts in exile. Emigration, in this context, became a strategy for rendering Britain's colonies profitable and ridding the metropole of unwanted elements. And of course, until the abolition of slavery in the Americas, millions of Africans were transported across the Atlantic in chains. Free and unfree forms of migration coexisted throughout most of the nineteenth century and were defined in relationship to one another.[20]

Nor did concerns about emigration ever fully disappear in the Habsburg Empire. In the Bohemian Lands, for example, early Czech nation builders and government authorities responded with alarm to a wave of mass emigration to North America. More than 20,000 Bohemians received passports to emigrate from Austria in the 1850s, part of a broader movement of people from Northern and Central Europe to North America at midcentury. That number does not include individuals who emigrated illegally: the actual number of departures was probably closer to 64,000.[21]

Regional and local officials mobilized to stop this emigration with police measures, including the prohibition of emigration agencies and the prosecution of agents. Liberal Czech "national awakeners" such as playwright Josef Kajetán Tyl, author of the unofficial Czech national anthem "Where Is My Home?" (Kde domov můj?), meanwhile created narratives that explicitly linked emigration to misery and loss. In his 1850 play *The Forest Nymph, or A Journey to America* (Lesní panna, aneb, Cesta do Ameriky), an unscrupulous Jewish emigration agent seduces a party of naïve Czech villagers into emigrating to America; en route they are robbed by gypsies; upon arrival they are attacked by Indians while living in a community of fanatical, hypocritical Quakers. Needless to say, the emigrants come to regret their foolhardy decision to leave home. The play ends with the migrants' return to their Bohe-

mian village, where they joyfully reaffirm their attachment to their homeland. "I now feel as if my heart has burst its strings!" declares one homecoming migrant. "The Bohemian climate—and the beer! America can't measure up to that!"[22]

AS NEWS (AND REMITTANCES) from emigrants trickled home, migrants and their family members and neighbors participated in the heated transatlantic debate about emigration. The questions at stake had no easy answers. Was emigration a solution to a social crisis, a productive outlet for unemployed workers and landless farmers? Or did it siphon off society's most valuable citizens at the height of their youthful potential? Did migrants return home with pockets full of dollars and fresh ideas, or with broken bodies and souls? Was migration a path toward freedom, social mobility, and a better life? Or did it entrap migrants in new forms of slavery?

These debates divided villages and families as well as policymakers in Vienna and Budapest. Growing up in the Austrian village of Blato at the turn of the century (in current-day Slovenia), Louis Adamic recalled that he "experienced a thrill" every time a man returned home from America.

> Five or six years before, as I heard people tell, the man had quietly left the village for the United States, a poor peasant clad in homespun, with a mustache under his nose and a bundle on his back; now, a clean-shaven *Amerikanec,* he sported a blue-serge suit, . . . a black derby, a shiny celluloid collar, and a loud necktie made even louder by a dazzling horseshoe pin. . . . [H]is two suitcases of imitation leather, tied with straps, bulged with gifts from America for his relatives and friends in the village.

Adamic loved to listen to these *Amerikanci* hold court in local cafés, where they treated their audiences to rounds of beer and sausage and dazzled them with tales of their American adventures. In his imagination, America

> was a grand, amazing, somewhat fantastic place—the Golden Country—a sort of Paradise. . . . In America one could make pots of money in a short time, acquire immense holdings, wear a white collar, . . . and eat white bread, soup, and meat on week-days as well as on Sundays, even if one were but an ordinary workman to begin with.[23]

As Adamic plotted his own emigration, however, he realized that his mother did not share his romance with America. She had heard other stories about the fate of emigrants, whispered among neighbors.

> Mother knew of other men in Blato and the vicinity who had gone to America and had sunk, leaving no trace, into the vastness of America. She knew of men in villages not remote from our own who had returned from the United States without an arm or minus a leg, or in bad health. There was an *Amerikanec* in Gatina, the village nearest Blato, who had come home with a strange, sinful, and unmentionable disease, which he later communicated to his wife, who, in turn, gave birth to a blind child. There was a widow in Podgora, another village near by, whose husband had been killed in a mine accident. . . .[24]

Migrants multiplied these harrowing stories in their letters and testimonies. Adam Laboda left Austrian Galicia when he was sixteen years old, joining a party of fourteen boys from his village. He

eventually found a job working in a mill in Massachusetts, where he earned $2.77 a week for sixty-four hours of work. When interviewed in 1938, he had no regrets about his decision to come to America. He conceded, however, that not all his traveling companions had been as fortunate. "I will tell you about what happened to those 14 Polish boys who came to America together," he said. "Four of them committed suicide, one shot himself, one hung himself, one took poison, one drowned himself. There is one who is a big contractor in Buffalo, another who has a large store in Boston. The four who killed themselves had left the church and took to drinking and that finished them. The rest are working something like me."[25]

For many migrants, the greatest hope was to return home. At least 30 percent, and perhaps up to 40 percent, of the migrants who came to America from Central Europe at the turn of the twentieth century made a round-trip (or even multiple round-trips). For many, that had always been the plan. "Most of the Bohunks came to America intending to stay two or three years, four at the most, work to the limit of their endurance at whatever they might find, save every cent possible, and then, returning to the Old Country, pay the debt on the old place, buy a few additional fields and heads of cattle, and start anew," recalled Adamic.* Adamic himself remained in the United States, where he became a successful journalist and public intellectual. But others returned disappointed and disillusioned, having found little reward for their hard work, lack of support in times of illness and old age, and questionable moral values in a society where everyone seemed out for him- or herself.[26]

"In America the work is hard—like in the galleys; you sweat

* "Bohunk" was a derogatory term for immigrants from the Habsburg Empire (a combination of "Bohemian" and "Hungarian").

more in one day than in a week at home. . . . As long as a man is healthy and can work, then it is good; but if he is not well, he cannot work and then there is only misery,"[27] Joseph Cybulski wrote to his wife, Sophie, discouraging her from joining him. Moses Weinberger, an Orthodox rabbi from Kniesen, Hungary, offered similar advice to his peers in Europe. In an 1887 tract, he counseled, "Stay home. . . . Nothing will be left for you to do save dressing in black, wrapping yourself in shrouds, and rolling from darkness to abyss: from factory to sweatshop to itinerant peddling. For such great success you don't need America!" Weinberger concluded that survival in America required abandoning all scruples. "He who does not know how to deceive, does not live in a world of hypocrisy, does not enjoy leading people astray, and does not consciously bait people by telling them lies—such a one will never see an extra cent in his purse."[28]

Some migrants nursed fantasies of return for decades. In 1912, a letter signed "the unlucky one" reached the editors of *Forverts*, a Yiddish daily newspaper in New York. The writer was contemplating a return to Warsaw after twenty-two miserable years in America. "I am not skilled in a trade, but I am a businessman, and all these years I've struggled because I never made a living. I know English, I am not lazy, I've tried everything and never succeeded." Now that his children were grown and married, he just wanted to go home. "It is very hard to part with the children, but to live in poverty is also bad. It seems strange to me that I must go away from the free America in order to better my condition. But the chances for me are still better there," he reflected.[29] America, these migrants concluded, would never deliver on its promise of bread and freedom, let alone gold, milk, and honey.

These conflicting visions of America and of Western Europe drove and intensified ongoing debates about emigration. When Faustina wrote her letters home, these debates were just beginning.

They would not be resolved in her lifetime. The forces that propelled emigration and shaped migration policies in East Central Europe changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century, with the rise and fall of multiple empires, states, and political regimes, dictatorships and democracies. This history was defined by extremes: from the extreme mobility of the turn of the century to the virtual paralysis of the Cold War era. From the 1880s onward, however, one constant remained strong: anxieties about emigration were bound up in a broader discussion of the meaning of freedom, free labor, and slavery in a global labor market.

THE MEMORY OF THESE MIGRATIONS has been distorted by the rise of nationalism and ethnic politics in the twentieth century. There are many bilateral histories of migration: Poles in Chicago, Jews in New York, Algerians in France, Turks in Germany. Ethnically defined museums and organizations are often most active in collecting migrants' stories and disseminating them to the public. Ethnic groups play the starring roles in these stories, which often start and end with the question of how migration diluted or strengthened ethnic solidarities. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that migrants always shared these concerns. Louis Adamic recalled that Austrian emigrants in America "thought of themselves as fighters, lovers, poets, dancers, singers, and children of the Almighty before it occurred to them that they were also members of definite national and political groups."[30]

It is impossible, however, to ignore the persistent role that nationalism and nation-states played in the development of emigration policies in the twentieth century, particularly after 1918. In the late nineteenth century, some Austrian nationalists, especially Hungarian and Polish activists, began to see emigration as a potential weapon in a nationalist demographic struggle. They plot-

ted to discourage the emigration of Hungarians and Poles, while encouraging the emigration of other national minorities. Emigration, they hoped, could alter the demographic (ethnolinguistic) balance sheet in their favor. The Russian Empire pursued similar policies of "filtration." As a result, the vast majority of the 2.7 million Russian subjects who left imperial Russia between 1880 and 1910 were Jews, Polish-speakers, or German-speakers.[31]

After the First World War and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire into self-declared nation-states, all of East Central Europe's new governments hoped to "filter" their populations, retaining only the most desirable national citizens. Emigration policy became an explicit tool of new and more violent forms of nation building and population politics. Before World War I, many European states encouraged (or forced) the emigration of "surplus" populations. But they tended to define these "surplus" populations primarily in terms of social class, gender, or occupation. Now, in East Central Europe after World War I, "surplus" populations typically referred to national, religious, or racial minorities.

Ironically, this meant that the most "desirable" citizens from a nationalist perspective tended to enjoy the least freedom of mobility after World War I. Ethnic and religious minorities, by contrast, were free to go, but not typically welcome to return home. The line between encouraging and forcing emigration became increasingly blurry with the onset of the Great Depression and the rise of right-wing fascist regimes in East Central Europe. That line was easily crossed in the context of the Second World War and its aftermath. The violent policies of ethnic cleansing associated with this era, including the deportation and murder of Europe's Jews and the flight or forced expulsion of twelve million ethnic Germans, can be traced to the Wilsonian moment after World War I, when democratic governments began to selectively open and close the migration tap in order to mold nationally homogeneous populations.

Ethnic cleansing and immobility were ultimately flip sides of the same coin in East Central Europe. The more Germans, Jews, and other minorities emigrated or were deported, the tighter the state's iron grip on its "preferred" citizens, who were needed to fill the demographic craters left behind. Immobility was the terrible cost paid by East Europeans for achieving the long-standing dream of homogeneous nation-states after 1945.

Eastern Europe's Jews were the most tragic victims of a growing conviction that emigration could solve the perceived "problem" of national, linguistic, and religious diversity. Well before the Nazi conquest of the East, a broad consensus had developed—among Western diplomats, Zionists, humanitarian organizations, and East European officials, as well as ordinary Jews desperate for a better life—that the "solution" to the so-called "Jewish problem" would entail the mass emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe. The groups and individuals invested in Jewish emigration in the 1930s had very different motivations and vastly unequal degrees of power. While "encouraging" emigration became a soft form of deportation for East European anti-Semites, it was a last hope for many Jews and the humanitarian organizations that tried to save them during the Second World War. But the fantasy that Jews could be relocated en masse to a faraway colonial reservation—like Madagascar, Angola, or Guiana—emerged from a long-standing view of mass emigration as a solution to demographic and social "problems." When the Nazis successfully made Jews disappear, under the pretext that they were being "relocated" to the distant East, it is hardly surprising that so few East Europeans protested: the notion of emigration as a "humanitarian" solution to the "Jewish problem" had been long established, and it helped make the departure of Jews palatable to their neighbors.

The Second World War marked a critical turning point in the history of East European emigration in other ways as well. As

some twenty million people were uprooted during the war and its aftermath—the majority from Central and Eastern Europe—governments and international agencies first began to distinguish officially between "economic migrants" and "political refugees." While migrants designated as "political refugees" were favored with new "human rights" to international humanitarian assistance, individuals labeled "economic migrants" were often denied such assistance. These distinctions, formally anchored in international law and humanitarian practice during the early Cold War, have shaped asylum and migration policies ever since. In postwar Europe, the line between "economic" and "political" migrations was from the outset, however, unstable and arbitrary. It reflected the political concerns of the moment and the perceived demands of labor markets as well as the prejudices and whims of border officials. These distinctions served, above all, to privilege certain groups of migrants above others in a brutal competition for visas, recognition, and humanitarian sympathy. Distinguishing between "economic migrants" and "political refugees" also enabled Western governments to square the circle between their ongoing desire to control state borders and a theoretical commitment to a "human right" to emigrate.

Emigration policies in East Central Europe did not simply contribute to the development of border controls and ethnic cleansing, however. The rise of a global labor market raised genuine humanitarian and social concerns about the welfare of migrant workers. From the late nineteenth century onward, reformers typically justified restrictions on emigration in the name of migrants' own well-being. These concerns were often highly paternalistic, presuming that migrants were victims of false consciousness, duplicitous emigration agents, or Western propaganda. But they were also based on a vision of freedom that differed significantly from contemporary liberal visions. Freedom, in this view, was not linked to

movement, or to the absence of state intervention in private life. Real freedom required stability, security, and solidarity at home. Workers were to enjoy the freedom to stay home, rather than the illusory "freedom" to cross the ocean in search of bread and employment. Protecting citizens' freedom, in this view, required restricting their movement.

From the vantage point of the post-Communist present, it is easy to dismiss such rhetoric as cynical propaganda. Today the relationship between mobility and freedom seems almost sacrosanct. The Cold War was a critical moment in this development. After the Second World War, the "captivity" of East Europeans behind the Iron Curtain became a quintessential symbol of unfreedom for many in the West. American Cold Warriors depicted the Iron Curtain as an impermeable barrier between a "free world" and a "slave world." In Cold War parlance, "captivity" referred both to the political control of East European governments by Moscow and to the physical captivity of individuals by their own governments.[32] Freedom of movement thus attained the status of a fundamental human right. In 1948, as Cold War divisions hardened, Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights declared, "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." Over the course of the following four decades, emigrants and anti-Communist dissidents would passionately invoke this right to movement.

By 1989, nothing symbolized the failed promise of socialism so profoundly as the barbed wire and watchtowers that imprisoned citizens in their own states. Communism's collapse remains indelibly associated with images of euphoric Germans dancing, singing, and popping champagne corks atop the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. "The sound that you hear and what you're seeing tonight is not hammers and sickles, but hammers and chisels, as young people take down this wall, bit by bit," reported Tom Brokaw from

Berlin on November 10. On that day, commentators insisted, East Berliners were not simply crossing from the East to the West: they were moving from captivity to freedom. As crowds of dazed East Germans wandered the streets of West Berlin for the first time in twenty-eight years, Brokaw declared, "Tonight in Berlin, it is 'Freedom night.' . . . Thousands of East Berliners have been crossing into freedom all day long."[33]

And yet the Iron Curtain did not simply descend from the sky in 1948 or 1961. Nor was it merely a Soviet imposition. It was the culmination of a century-long struggle against emigration in Eastern Europe. The borders erected by Eastern bloc regimes were undeniably murderous. At least 136 people died trying to cross the Berlin Wall between 1961 and 1989. The Iron Curtain was littered with dead bodies, divided families, and constrained lives.[34] But precisely because the campaign against emigration in Eastern Europe was so enduring and so deadly, it is worth taking seriously the rhetoric of "slavery" and "freedom" that helped to radicalize and sustain it.

This campaign was a powerful, but ultimately failed, effort to uphold state sovereignty in the face of globalization. It was simultaneously an effort to establish and protect the status of East European migrants as "white" men and women in the context of global labor markets. Since the 1880s, millions of emigrants from Eastern Europe have successfully settled in places like Chicago, Lille, and London. Thousands of others died trying—whether killed by the guns of East European border guards or the American "paper walls" that trapped Jews in the Nazi empire. Whether these migrants were propelled by hope and ambition or desperation and fear; whether they succeeded or failed in their efforts to go to the West; whether they made permanent homes abroad or ultimately returned home—the great departure from Eastern Europe helped to define the "free world" in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE

Travel Agents on Trial

In the winter of 1889, reporters from across the Austro-Hungarian Empire and beyond flocked to the sleepy Galician town of Wadowice. Wadowice, located about fifty kilometers from Cracow, is today best known as the birthplace of Pope John Paul II. That winter, however, Wadowice played host to a sensational trial that captured the imagination of the Austrian press and public. The defendants were Jewish travel agents from the nearby town of Oświęcim, better known to the world today as Auschwitz.

Oświęcim, conveniently located at the juncture of Prussian, Russian, and Austrian railway lines, had recently developed a booming emigration business. Since 1880, hundreds of thousands of East Europeans had trekked through the town en route to the German ports of Hamburg and Bremen and then to America. The sixty-five defendants in the case were accused of seducing migrants into abandoning their homeland with false promises of an American El Dorado. In reality, prosecutors argued, East European peasants were delivered into hard labor in American factories, mines, and brothels. "What happens to these poor people over there?" the state's attorney demanded. "Each of them left because

unscrupulous people convinced them that they would be able to make a good living—and each ends up ruined and in misery." The accused agents stood trial for a host of unsavory crimes: fraud, smuggling, bribery, assault, and generally swindling emigrants out of their last heller as they set out for America.[1]

The Wadowice trial quickly came to implicate much more than a group of corrupt travel agents. As the prosecuting attorney argued in his closing statement, the trial was a referendum on emigration itself, "one of the most important, burning problems of the day." And emigration, he claimed, posed a grave threat to the basic ideal of freedom in the Habsburg Empire. He accused the travel agents of Oświęcim of nothing less than "introducing a slave trade into the free land of Austria."[2]

NEFARIOUS EMIGRATION AGENTS appeared in contemporary literature as well as in law. Henryk Sinkiewiecz, the Polish journalist and Nobel Prize–winning novelist, famously dramatized the tragic plight of Polish emigrants in America in his 1897 novel *After Bread*. The protaganists, the peasant Lorenz Toporek and his daughter, Mary, are seduced to emigrate by the beguiling promises of a duplicitous German agent and his Jewish co-conspirator:

> This German expatiated on the wonders and marvels of America. He promised him for nothing more land than the largest farm in Lipintse . . . so that the peasant's eyes beamed with anticipation. . . . [T]he Jew milk-merchant, who accompanied the German, said that the American government gave to everybody as much land as they could use. . . . They tempted the peasant till they secured him. Why should he remain here? . . . He struck hands with the German, had a mass said to St. Michael, took his daughter—and lo! he was coming to America.

Lorenz and his daughter are robbed of their life savings en route, and of their health and spirits in New York. "The 'inheritance' which they expected was a dream and passed as a dream, and the reality appears in the form of a narrow basement room, deep in the ground, with one window, partly broken; from the walls of the room oozes unhealthy slime and streaks of moisture. . . ." After Lorenz dies of overwork and illness, Mary wanders the docks in New York City each morning begging for passage home. "Should she remain here? Never! She would go to the docks, embrace the feet of the ship captains and beseech them to take her, and, if they would take her across the water, she would walk on foot through Germany and return to Lipintse." But it was not meant to be. "One day she did not appear, and they saw her no more. The next day the papers announced that a policeman had found on the end of a pier the dead body of a girl of unknown name and origin."[3]

Emigration had become such a burning issue for a good reason. Around 3,547,000 emigrants departed Austria-Hungary for overseas destinations between 1876 and 1910, 7–8 percent of the 1910 population. The largest numbers left from the impoverished Austrian provinces of Galicia and Bukovina and from southern and eastern Hungary. Hundreds of thousands of migrants were also moving east to west within Europe. At least 300,000 Austrian workers harvested German fields in Prussia and Saxony; others earned their bread on French farms or in British factories. Seasonal migration within Austria-Hungary or Europe was often a stepping-stone to emigration overseas.[4]

This mass departure was sudden and unexpected; contemporaries described emigration as a contagious "fever" that infected

entire villages. Aside from the midcentury wave of Bohemian emigration, relatively few citizens of the Habsburg lands crossed the Atlantic before the 1880s. In 1880, for example, only 17,267 Austro-Hungarians emigrated to the United States. By 1892, that number had more than quadrupled, to 76,937. At the peak of the exodus, several hundred thousand citizens of the Dual Monarchy were emigrating each year.[5] Leopold Caro, a Polish-Jewish lawyer and emigration reformer, described villages that became ghost towns overnight. "Entire regiments left in 1907 in order to earn money in America. Many houses stood empty, and in many others only old women and small children remained behind. In some villages the entire young generation left home. . . . Everyone believed that America was the Promised Land, a true paradise."[6]

In an era in which demographers saw population as a measure of political, economic, and military strength, these numbers induced panic in the halls of government and beyond. Military officials were consistently at the forefront of efforts to curtail emigration in the late nineteenth century, dismayed by the loss of conscripts to America fever. Conservative landowners, social reformers, nationalist activists, religious authorities, and socialists also mobilized against emigration, however. To many, the loss of millions of workers represented a disgraceful symptom of underdevelopment, poverty, and imperial decline.

In the eyes of many reformers, the seductive propaganda of emigration agents was the major cause of the emigration boom. The Wadowice trial of 1889 was one of the most sensational cases in which travel agents were prosecuted, but it was not isolated. In 1905–06, Hungarian authorities arrested or fined two thousand emigration agents and were monitoring more than fifteen hundred individuals who were suspected of encouraging emigration. In 1914, over three thousand agents faced criminal charges in the Austrian half of the monarchy.[7] These arrests and trials were often

initiated through anonymous denunciations (sometimes from competing agents and shipping companies, or by local anti-Semites). They were clearly orchestrated as a warning to would-be emigrants about the hazards of leaving home.

In their effort to curb emigration, Austrian officials were not alone in focusing on the middlemen who facilitated migration. Beginning in the nineteenth century, abolitionists and government reformers had begun to crack down on agents as they sought to eliminate various forms of unfree migration. They accused agents of coercing migrants to leave home, swindling them en route, and trapping them in forms of labor that resembled slavery. These concerns stimulated the first attempts to regulate the business of emigration. The English Passenger Vessel Act of 1803, initially intended to monitor shipping firms, were gradually expanded to regulate emigration agents, labor brokers, and rooming houses, in order to protect migrants from unscrupulous brokers. Laws passed in France in 1854 and Belgium in 1876 required emigration agents to obtain licenses. The Swiss government was the first to ban advertising for emigration completely. Closer to home, Bohemian authorities banned emigration agencies in the 1850s. Other laws regulating emigration followed in Japan (1896), Germany (1897), Italy (1901), and Hungary (1903). The Hungarian law was the most restrictive to date, and it became a model for legislation across East Central Europe after World War I.[8]

Beginning in the 1860s, British laws aimed to guarantee that emigrants from China and India were transported by choice, and that they understood the conditions of their contracts. American consuls were required to inspect U.S. ships embarking from Hong Kong and to question migrants to certify that they were departing voluntarily. Officials confronted migrants with a series of ritualized questions (for which many were clearly coached). A British missionary recorded this interrogation in Hong Kong in 1871:

Q: Who induced you to go?
A: No one.
Q: Why do you go?
A: Because I wish to get higher wages and be a free man.
Q: Who sold you the ticket?
A: The elder.
Q: Did you sign any contract to work in America in payment for the ticket?
A: No.
Q: Have you made any arrangement with regard to your labor after arrival in California?
A: No.
Q: Then you declare unqualifiedly that you are under no obligations whatever to any persons, which will bind you to labor for any particular party in the United States?
A: I do.[9]

As of 1885, American immigration laws banned contract labor completely, insisting that all contract labor represented "slavery" in disguise. The ban was also intended to insulate American workers from competition from cheap migrant labor. But the contract labor law created a Catch-22 for migrants, who could be rejected upon arrival in America if they admitted to having a job lined up in advance. In the words of the U.S. Industrial Commission Report of 1901, the migrant "strives to show that he can support himself, and he strives to show that he does not know of any job by which he can support himself."[10]

As Adam McKeown has argued, these laws obscured the fact that the vast majority of nineteenth-century migration conformed to neither extreme of "free," unmediated migration or "slavery." The very ideal of the "free migrant" was based on a mythical pro-

totype: a rational individual who made decisions independent of social pressures, family, or friends. Unsurprisingly, this imagined migrant was also male. Single female migrants, seen as less capable of willfully choosing emigration, were often suspected of being either prostitutes or victims of the "white-slave trade," and their mobility was restricted in the name of their moral protection.[11]

By blaming mass emigration on Jewish agents, prosecutors and social reformers cast migrants as innocent victims of Jewish and capitalist machinations. A 1913 memo from the Austrian Ministry of War to the Justice Ministry expressed the typical view: "It is common knowledge . . . that the majority of emigrants do not actually decide to emigrate of their own initiative, or because of their economic situation, but are rather induced to emigrate by the immoral, speculative activity of emigration agents."[12] Blaming and arresting travel agents was also a far simpler (and less costly) "solution" to the perceived emigration crisis than addressing the deeper social and economic inequalities within Austria and beyond that actually propelled emigration.

There was, however, an obvious contradiction at the heart of the anti-emigration movement. It was painfully self-evident that many Austrians, particularly the peasants and Jews of Galicia, lived in a state of abject poverty. Images of "Galician misery" and backwardness circulated widely in the empire, and justified a range of imperial civilizing and modernizing projects.[13] And yet, a broad constituency of Austrian politicians and social reformers were fully convinced that only the disingenuous promises of travel agents induced Austrians to emigrate. These reformers were intent on hanging on to Austria's population even though there was not enough land, food, or work to go around.

In part, the preoccupation with maintaining population in imperial Austria was linked to the explosive growth of popular nationalist movements at the end of the nineteenth century. In the

nationalist battle for supremacy, numbers mattered. Beginning in 1880, when citizens were first asked about their "language of daily use," the imperial census escalated into a high-stakes campaign for citizens' allegiances, as the number of Czech-speakers, German-speakers, Polish-speakers, or Ruthene-speakers counted came to be seen as a measure of national strength. Increasingly, numbers determined how state resources were allocated, where schools were built, and in which languages children could be educated.[14]

It follows logically that nationalists would mobilize to prevent the emigration of members of their own national community and encourage the exodus of national rivals. The Hungarian government, which operated somewhat like a nation-state within the Dual Monarchy (sharing only a common foreign policy and military with Austria), did just that. As of 1904, two-thirds of the emigrants leaving the Hungarian half of the monarchy were not native Hungarian-speakers. A secret memorandum from the Hungarian undersecretary of state to the Hungarian prime minister explained, "For the institution of national statehood it is absolutely necessary that the ruling race . . . become the majority of the population. . . . Providence . . . has granted another population factor which has significantly raised the proportion of the Hungarian element at the expense of the nationalities. . . . This important new factor is the mass emigration of the non-Hungarian population."[15]

In Russia as well, imperial authorities began to encourage Jewish emigration in the 1890s, while restricting the emigration of nationally "desirable" citizens. The Russian government allowed the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) to set up branches across the empire beginning in 1892, effectively legalizing Jewish emigration, even though emigration remained illegal for non-Jewish Russians. The JCA had established four hundred offices

throughout Russia by 1910, providing migrants with information about opportunities to emigrate and assisting with the burdensome paperwork.[16]

In Vienna, by contrast, imperial authorities officially mourned the loss of all the kaiser's subjects equally. In 1905, out of 111,990 emigrants from Austria to the United States, 50,785 (45 percent) were Polish-speakers, 14,473 (14 percent) spoke Ruthene (a language later known as Ukrainian), and 11,757 (10 percent) were Czech-speakers. In contrast to their proportion in the emigration from imperial Russia, where anti-Semitic persecution was much more severe, Jews were not heavily overrepresented among emigrants from the Dual Monarchy. Out of a total of 275,693 emigrants from Austria-Hungary in 1905, for example, 17,352 emigrants (6 percent) were Jewish, only slightly more than the percentage of Jews in the total population in 1900 (4.7 percent in Austria, 5 percent in Hungary).[17]

At the provincial and local level, however, Polish nationalist activists began to worry that Polish emigration would play to the advantage of Ruthene-speakers. Representatives of growing populist and anti-Semitic parties, meanwhile, began to suggest that the emigration of Jews to Palestine or North America represented a potential solution to the "Jewish problem." In 1901, after being informed that sixteen thousand Jewish Galicians had emigrated that year, the anti-Semitic priest and peasant organizer Stanislaw Stojalowski quipped, "A pity there were not three times as many."[18]

At the Wadowice trial, the prosecutor Heinrich Ogniewski condemned the loss of "Polish souls" to emigration. "Over a million Polish souls have been swept away by America fever," he lamented. In America, these migrants "are dispersed in all of the businesses, mines, and factories, and crushed by foreign elements, and in time they cease to be Poles. This denationalization takes place in the course of only a few years. Are we really so numer-

ous that we can be indifferent to the loss of over a million Polish brothers?"[19] In spite of such nationalist concerns, however, it was not until after 1918 that Austria's successor states began to follow the Hungarian example, deliberately manipulating emigration to engineer homogeneous populations.

If emigration agents and nationalist agitation were not behind the emigration craze, what was its source? The motivations of individual migrants were predictably diverse and complex. In the short term, letters and money sent home from relatives and friends were often the most persuasive form of "propaganda."[20] "I want to write to you the truth about the freedom and goodness of America. There is happiness here," wrote M. Celmer in Detroit to his family back home in 1891.[21] Not all such letters can be taken at face value, however, since some migrants surely felt compelled to obscure their struggles and failures. Joseph Roth observed,

> Most Jewish emigrants are too proud to write when things are going badly for them, and most are eager to play up the new home at the expense of the old. . . . In a small town in the East, a letter from an émigré creates a huge stir. All the young people in the place—and not a few of the old—are overcome by itchy feet. They want to leave the country where a war might break out from one year to the next, and from one week to the next, a pogrom. And so they leave, by foot, by train, on board ship, for Western countries where a different, somewhat reformed, though no less dismal ghetto offers its own brand of darkness to the newcomers who have barely managed to escape the clutches of the concentration camp.[22]

In Hungary, a poem mocked the tendency of emigrants to exaggerate their success:

If he writes home
What does he tell his wife?
Boastful and self-satisfied
He tells of his good life.

If he picks turnips for a farmer
He'll write he's bought a farm.
Hundred and sixty acres' yield
Will soon fill his barn.

Or if he is a laborer
He's sure to be in foreman's rank.
He gives his orders in the bar
But neither at work nor at the bank.[23]

On the other hand, many migrants openly described the hardships they endured to friends and family at home. These letters fueled the anti-emigration lobby, as they seemed to expose the illusory nature of both "freedom" and prosperity in the New World. Simon Sosieński discouraged his brother from joining him in America.

> In the old country, you can work the way you like and every Sunday and holiday you can rest. But here in America . . . you have to work day and night and holidays and non-holidays and every Sunday. Because even if you want to have a day of rest, they will not give it to you; but rather you have to work straight through just like the horses or oxen do back home. Yet not even like that because horses and oxen are idle every Sunday and holiday there.[24]

If family members and friends proved most persuasive (or dis-

couraging) to individual migrants in the short term, deeper social and economic inequalities clearly stimulated emigration over the long term. Landholding and inheritance patterns in Galicia, in particular, left peasants with tiny plots of land that could not possibly sustain a family. Emigrants themselves consistently cited poverty, lack of employment, or the desire to save money to buy land or a home as their primary motivations. Anna Kupinsky emigrated from Bukovina to New Jersey at the age of eight, in 1914. The family left Austria, she recalled, because "life was hard in Europe. . . . We were poor. We didn't have any luxuries. We hardly had enough for food."[25]

In a context in which the decision to emigrate was seen (at least by government officials) as morally suspect and possibly illegal, however, migrants may have been inclined to justify their decision to emigrate in terms of economic hardships. They were likely to downplay more individualist motivations: a yearning to escape the confining routines of village life; personal ambition; an oppressive family situation or unwanted pregnancy; the desire to escape military service.

Two equally mythical views of America—and of the global labor market itself—thus propelled emigration and the emigration debate in fin-de-siècle East Central Europe. To some, America was a golden land of social mobility and adventure; emigration agents were purveyors of freedom and the good life. But to the adherents of a growing Austrian anti-emigration movement—and to many disillusioned migrants themselves—emigration represented a nefarious form of "human trafficking," as agents sold their victims into a life of hardship and exploitation.

EMIGRATION was in fact a big business by the end of the nineteenth century. The route from east to west was littered with

opportunities for exploitation and profit. The most practical path to America from northeastern Europe was through Germany. Between 1871 and 1914, 38 percent of emigrants embarking at the ports of Hamburg and Bremen were Russian citizens, and 51 percent were Austrians.[26] Transmigration alone brought droves of migrants through Austrian cities and railway stations. More than 2,771,900 Russian citizens emigrated to North and South America between 1880 and 1910, and many traveled through imperial Austria, arousing anti-Semites and stirring accusations of espionage and smuggling along the way. A journey by train from Brody, on the Austro-Russian frontier, to Bremen took only a day by the turn of the twentieth century (today it would still take almost fourteen hours). The trip required serious endurance, however. Emigrating legally from Russia posed particular challenges. A passport enabling travel abroad cost 17.25 rubles in 1910, equal to around one month's wages for an agricultural worker. It was possible to acquire an "emigrant" passport for free, but this was a one-way ticket, since return was forbidden. That meant virtually cutting off family ties, and brought the risk of statelessness if a migrant was rejected or deported by American immigration authorities.[27] For many it was simply less expensive and troublesome to cross Russia's western frontiers illegally, with the help of a smuggler or agent. That also entailed considerable risk, however. Philip Cowen, a Jewish-American journalist and immigration inspector at Ellis Island, made an undercover journey to the Russian Pale of Settlement in 1906 to investigate Jewish emigration. He reported that upon crossing the Russian border—with a smuggler's or agent's assistance—"the emigrant is often despoiled of all that he possesses."[28]

The path from east to west was obstructed, in part, by racist and anti-Semitic fears of East European (i.e., "Jewish") dirt, disease, and backwardness.[29] In 1892, German authorities had blamed Russian Jews en route to America for a severe cholera outbreak in

Hamburg.[30] In response, the American government suspended emigration for several weeks. German authorities quickly erected new delousing and disinfection stations along Germany's borders with Russia and Austria-Hungary, turning back migrants who were sick as well as those without sufficient funds for the journey. The idea was to stop immigration at its source.[31]

These efforts to police hygiene were good business for HAPAG (Hamburg Amerikanische Paketfahrt Aktien-Gesellschaft) and the NDL (Norddeutscher Lloyd), the two major German shipping firms. HAPAG and the NDL controlled the new sanitary stations, acquiring a virtual monopoly on emigration traffic from Eastern Europe. Before the sanitary stations were created, approximately 40 percent of Russian emigrants left the continent through British ports. After 1895, when the checkpoints went into operation, that number dropped to 4 percent. Many emigrants were forced to buy new tickets on HAPAG or the NDL if they reached the border with a ticket for a non-German shipping line.[32]

After 1892, Russians who crossed directly into Germany were typically expedited to Ruhleben, near Berlin, sometimes in cattle cars ("For 8 Horses or 32 Men").[33] In 1894, thirteen-year-old Mary Antin traveled from Polotzk in Russia to Boston. She recorded her experiences in her journal shortly afterwards. The newly established sanitary station at Ruhleben was particularly terrifying, as were procedures for "disinfecting" migrants:

> This was another scene of bewildering confusion, parents losing their children, and little ones crying. . . . [O]ur things were taken away, our friends separated from us, a man came to inspect us, as if to ascertain our full value; strange looking people driving us about like dumb animals, helpless and unresisting; children we could not see, crying in a way that suggested terrible things; . . . our clothes taken off; our bodies rubbed with a slippery substance that might be any bad thing; a shower of warm water let down us without warning. . . . We are forced to pick out our clothes from among all the others, with the steam blinding us; we choke, cough, entreat the women to give us time; they persist, "Quick, quick, or you'll miss the train!" Oh, so we really won't be murdered! They are only making us ready for the continuing of our journey, cleaning us of all suspicions of dangerous germs. Thank God![34]

While emigration was a particularly harrowing experience for Russians, Austrians also encountered serious obstacles on the route overseas. Before 1867, very few Austrians enjoyed the right to emigrate. Craftsmen and journeymen, elites, and refugees were among the few who could legally traverse Austrian frontiers.[35] In 1867, Austrians theoretically acquired a new, constitutional right to move freely within the empire's borders, as well as the right to venture beyond them. Article 4 of the Austrian constitution of 1867 specified, "Freedom to emigrate is limited only by the obligation to military service."[36]

There remained, however, a big difference between the letter of the law and the reality on the ground. While the government couldn't forbid emigration outright, it could and did throw plenty of roadblocks on the route overseas. Almost every district adopted its own policies to limit mobility, an arbitrary and frightening situation for migrants. Gendarmes patrolled train platforms, and in some districts detained all men of military age. In other localities, they apprehended all single women, who were suspected of being prostitutes or victims of sex traffickers.[37]

The Austrian government also tried to limit emigration by regulating shipping companies. By the early twentieth century, shipping firms were forbidden to employ traveling sales agents to

sell tickets. Printed advertisements for emigration were banned, except for basic information about ship schedules, dates of departure, and ports of call. It was also illegal for shipping companies to accept passengers with "prepaid" tickets sent by family members or friends abroad, or to sell tickets to men under the age of fifty who had not completed their military service.[38]

Additional obstacles came in the form of administrative decrees from the Galician governor's office, the Trade Ministry, and the imperial parliament. On March 27, 1877, for example, the governor's office in Galicia ordered all local prefects "to impede the emigration of the peasantry, to advise farmers against emigration, and if this is unsuccessful, to require the possession of 160 florins and a passport."[39] And when the effort to stop emigration didn't succeed, Austrian authorities attempted to entice migrants to return home. In 1907, Emperor Francis Joseph issued an amnesty for draft dodgers—intended in part to encourage the return of Austrian emigrants. That same year the Hungarian government formulated an explicitly nationalist repatriation campaign, aimed at luring Magyar-speaking emigrants (but not German- or Slovak-speakers) back to Hungary (the plan was never implemented).[40]

Then, in 1903, the Hungarian government passed one of the most restrictive emigration laws to date in Europe. Baron Louis de Levay, the Hungarian royal commissioner of emigration, explained that the legislation was a direct response to the "abominable artifice of the secret agents and their accomplices." While many in the press and in parliament "demanded that the emigration evil should be ended by formal prohibition," he elaborated, "the principle of personal liberty, maintained by us," rendered direct prohibition impossible. The law therefore instead simply aimed to "prevent emigration and to protect people from the fever of emigration."[41]

Henceforth, Hungarian men were not legally permitted to emigrate after their seventeenth birthday without written permission from the Defense and Interior Ministries. Parents were required to provide proof that they had made arrangements to support their offspring. In addition, the Hungarian law empowered the government to "forbid emigration to any state or region where the life, health, morality, or property of emigrants is endangered." It was illegal either to speak publicly in favor of emigration or to advertise opportunities for emigration; violators of the law were subject to imprisonment for up to two months as well as to serious fines. The law became the model for restrictive legislation in all of Austria-Hungary's successor states after 1914.[42]

Enforcement of these regulations was haphazard (and often arbitrary), but the constitutional guarantee of free movement clearly had little purchase locally. Simon Herz and Julius Löwenberg, the principal defendants in the Wadowice case, cited the many barriers to emigration in their defense. "After many difficulties, obstacles, and detours, in constant fear and danger of being arrested and returned home, a traveler finally succeeds in arriving in our agency in Oświęcim. . . . He knows that this is an officially sanctioned agency. Is it necessary to force such a traveler to purchase a steamship ticket, to threaten him with violence?" More often, Herz and Löwenberg maintained, emigrants "kissed the ground in joy" at having finally reached the office.[43]

Upon arrival in Oświęcim, emigrants typically spent a night or two at a local hotel or boardinghouse and then caught a train to their port of call. Hamburg and Bremen were the most common outlets for East European emigrants, but it was also possible to depart from Rotterdam, Antwerp, or Liverpool. First, though, the migrant had to get into and across Germany, no simple feat.

If and when migrants finally made it to a port of call, they had to find lodging and food until their departure, typically in hotels

and boardinghouses. These facilities were potential sites of further exploitation, and also became objects of reform and regulation. In 1901, HAPAG constructed an enormous depot for emigrants in Hamburg well outside the city. The idea was to completely isolate East European migrants from the German population.[44]

When the American immigration inspector Terence Powderly visited the depot in 1906, 1,184 emigrants were in residence, mostly Russians, Austrians, and Hungarians. The entire facility was divided into "clean" and "unclean" sections. Emigrants were subjected to daily medical examinations. Powderly praised the institution as evidence of America's civilizing effect on the world. "Our laws . . . are educating foreign people in the use of soap and water," he boasted. "If cleanliness is akin to godliness these people are becoming more godly every time an immigrant is sent back from an American port for having some disease that a due regard for sanitation and clean habits would have averted." Many migrants begged to differ, condemning the depot as a prison. Whereas Austrians could choose whether or not to stay in the Emigrant Hall, Russians were forcibly quarantined there.[45]

Even with the new health screenings in Europe, migrants feared rejection upon arrival. In 1892, the Ellis Island reception center was opened in order to facilitate more rigorous inspection of immigrants. Beginning in 1891, the American government barred migrants who were sick, suspicious, "likely to become a public charge," or involved in "criminal" or "immoral" activities. The category "likely to become a public charge" was particularly elastic. It extended to almost all single women, unless they intended to work as domestic servants. Any unmarried or pregnant woman was considered "likely to become a public charge" (or likely to become a prostitute) by definition, and turned back to Europe. After 1907, a "poor physique" became grounds for rejection, even if a migrant had no actual medical condition. Simply being frail or

underweight could get a migrant sent home. In practice, this clause was applied most rigorously to Jews.[46]

The number of immigrants rejected at Ellis Island was still small—only 1.7 percent in 1907—but the inspections were often terrifying. Louise Nagy arrived on Ellis Island from Warsaw in 1913, at the age of ten. She recalled "noise, the talk, everybody was speaking their language." In a huge room with acoustics "like Grand Central Station," there were lines, more crowds, and the dreaded medical exam. She was petrified of being sent home. "Whatever they would have found wrong with me at the time, they could have sent me back without my parent's permission, whether my parents cared, or wanted me to go. . . . I was just lucky that we came through and nobody was held back." Not everyone was so fortunate, however. "Consumption was a horror word, and I remember one man in particular, he must have been found consumptive and I remember him crying, that meant he had to go back."[47]

Joseph Roth described the experience of being detained upon arrival in America:

> The medical examination in the European port was bad enough. Now there is a still-more-rigorous one. And something turns out to be not quite right with your papers. . . . And so the Jew winds up in a kind of prison that goes by the name of "quarantine" or somesuch. A high fence protects America from him. Through the bars of his prison, he sees the Statue of Liberty, and he doesn't know whether it's himself or Liberty that has been incarcerated.[48]

By the turn of the century, emigrants from Eastern Europe were obliged to navigate a gauntlet of confusing and often frightening situations en route to the West. Russian and Austrian gen-

darmes, German doctors, and American immigration officials all had the power to send them home with little explanation. Anti-emigration activists consistently blamed emigration agents for "artificially" inflating emigration. Given the obstacles faced by emigrants, however, it is difficult to imagine making the challenging journey without professional assistance. In the end, it was clearly not emigration agents who stimulated emigration, but the many barriers to mobility that swelled the demand for the services of agents.

THOSE WERE THE CONDITIONS that brought migrants to the offices of Simon Herz and Julius Löwenberg, the chief defendants in the Wadowice trial. On November 19, 1889, reporters from across the empire and as far away as England, France, and America crowded the few hotels and guesthouses in the Galician town, located about fifty kilometers from Cracow.[49] Sixty-five defendants faced charges in the case, including a number of mid-level Austrian civil servants, railway employees, and police officers accused of accepting bribes from the agents. The proceedings did not end until March 12, 1890, after fifty-five days of testimony.[50] The number of spectators (and defendants) was so large that the trial had to be held in a local gymnasium.[51]

The complete trial records of the Wadowice trial appear to be missing.[52] Local, regional, and imperial newspapers all sent reporters to Galicia, however, and published daily updates, commentary, and transcripts of the proceedings.[53] It is unclear what precipitated the arrests in Oświęcim, but the Austrian War Ministry clearly had a hand in the affair. Beginning in 1888, military authorities had become increasingly alarmed about the number of Galician men who failed to appear for (mandatory) military service. Emigration, they claimed, was draining the supply of new recruits. In

May 1888, the Interior Ministry ordered Galician authorities to mobilize against illegal emigration, and on June 17 the Galician governor ordered the prefect of Biała to scrutinize the activities of the emigration agencies in Oświęcim in particular. A month later, police raided the agents' offices and made the arrests.[54]

The primary defendants in the case were all Jewish emigration agents. In the early 1880s, Simon Herz and Julius Löwenberg founded a travel agency in Oświęcim, located in the first floor of the Hotel Zator, across from the train station in nearby Brzezinka (also known as Birkenau). In 1887, the Herz-Löwenberg firm merged with Jakob Klausner's agency, affiliated with the HAPAG shipping line. Five agents—Herz, Löwenberg, Klausner, Arthur Landau, and Abraham Landerer—formed a partnership. Their primary competitor was another local agency affiliated with the NDL, established in 1888. Fierce competition for customers soon developed between the Herz agency, the NDL agency, and a plethora of itinerant agents who sold steamship tickets and services to emigrants on the sly.

The trial at Wadowice reflected and promoted the conviction that agents were to blame for mass emigration. The anti-Semitic *Deutsche Volksblatt* declared, "There is no doubt that this massive emigration . . . was not the consequence of overpopulation or economic conditions in the province, but that it was artificially nourished by the propaganda of agents."[55] Austrian and American officials also found a convenient scapegoat in travel agents. In an 1899 speech, the Austrian foreign minister denounced "the artifices of unprincipled agents who carry on a lucrative business in this new kind of traffic in human beings."[56] An American consul in Budapest concurred that Slovak peasants emigrated mostly because of agents "who are managing the business a good deal in the manner of the 'Coolie trade.'"[57] In reality, concluded an Austrian investigation in 1905, agents defrauded fewer than a thousand

emigrants each year (out of hundreds of thousands of migrants).[58] These facts did not stop reformers from blaming agents for the exodus of millions. "The propaganda conducted by steamship ticket agents is undoubtedly the most important immediate cause of emigration from Europe to the United States," insisted the U.S. Immigration Commission in its 1911 Dillingham report.[59]

These discussions reflected a widespread assumption among elites that migrants themselves were ignorant, gullible, and deluded about their own interests. Leopold Caro lamented, "The uneducated are most easily induced to emigrate by agents and village pub owners; these people are the easiest targets and the most docile material. Illiterates will believe almost anything." According to Caro, agents had recently convinced Ruthenian peasants that Brazil was an Austrian territory, that the emperor himself recommended emigration, and that monkeys did all the household chores in Brazil. Subsequent economists challenged Caro's assumptions. They found that emigration actually increased among peasants with a basic primary education. The poorest and least educated, those on the brink of starvation, tended to remain home, since they lacked the necessary funds to travel. Migrants themselves were highly aware of their own economic interests, and sensitive to very small shifts in the labor market abroad (which fueled the high rate of return migration).[60]

The specific accusations against Herz and his colleagues in Oświęcim went well beyond merely inducing emigration, however. Prosecutors depicted a mafia-like organization in the town, masterminded by Herz and his colleagues. Train conductors, police officers, cab drivers, and government officials were all allegedly on Herz's payroll.[61] The most sensational accusations concerned the treatment of migrants as they passed through the town. When trains full of migrants arrived in Oświęcim en route to Germany, thick-muscled "drivers" employed by the competing travel agen-

cies allegedly surrounded them on the platform. These "drivers" did not shy from violence in their competition for customers. According to the *Deutsche Volksblatt*, "It often came to bloody fights between the drivers. They beat each other with fists and sticks, and after fighting it out, these henchmen drove the captured emigrants to the agencies like cattle."[62] Several of the agents had once been livestock traders (a common occupation for Galician Jews), and prosecutors and the anti-Semitic press accused them of treating their human cargo no better than animals.

The fraud allegedly continued once the "herd of slaves" arrived in Herz's office. Löwenberg, costumed in the uniform of an Austrian civil servant, reportedly met incoming emigrants at the office. His colleagues addressed him as "Mr. Prefect." Photos of Emperor Francis Joseph and imperial insignia supposedly adorned the office walls, in order to give the impression of a government office. The agents first ordered migrants to turn over their passports and money, strip-searching them to extract bills sewn into their clothing or hidden in their socks and undergarments. They determined the price of steamship tickets on the basis of how much cash migrants had on hand. Agents then informed unsuspecting peasants that it was illegal to purchase a ticket from any other firm, and threatened them with arrest and violence if they refused. Gendarmes paid by Herz stood by to carry out the threat if necessary.

Even once the beleaguered emigrant agreed to purchase a ticket, the abuse didn't end. The agents now reportedly insisted that it was necessary to make a "phone call" to Hamburg, in order to reserve a place on the ship. A second fake call went out to the "Emperor of America," in order to reserve space in the golden land. Emigrants were charged for both calls, which were made by means of an alarm clock. Finally, Herz informed emigrants that they would not be permitted to enter America wearing traditional

peasants' clothing. Fortunately, they could purchase brand-new "American" suits (at outrageous prices) in Löwenberg's store next door. Prosecutors claimed that agents held emigrants captive while they waited for the train to Germany, sometimes for days, locking them into "pig stalls" and dark basements, where they were charged exorbitant prices for bad bread and weak beer.[63]

The prosecution's case was a shocking litany of violence, exploitation, and corruption. But what did emigrants themselves have to say about their experiences? From December 17 to December 20, 1889, migrants and their relatives took the stand in Wadowice. Many had traveled long distances on foot or by train to testify. Some witnesses were family members whose relatives had emigrated; others had crossed the Atlantic and returned home again. Many were themselves Jewish. Some accused the agents of swindling them, whereas others insisted that they had been treated fairly. All were adamant, however, that they had decided to emigrate of their own volition. Anna Fujarkos, an eighteen-year-old Slovak, wanted to join her husband in America. Janos Hrzesko, aged sixteen, testified that he decided to emigrate because he was poor and hungry. Maryanna Gnapp insisted that poverty and lack of employment alone had caused her to seek a livelihood in America.[64] On December 17, the *Bukowinaer Rundschau* reported, "A series of witnesses, farmers and citizens from the area, testified under oath that it is untrue that emigrants were deprived of their personal freedom in the agency, and that the rumors to this effect were spread by the local anti-Semitic club."[65]

The defendants' lawyers frequently complained that public opinion had been poisoned against their clients by the barrage of anti-Semitic cartoons, caricatures, and editorials circulating around the trial. In one image, dark-skinned agents with hooked noses and malicious facial expressions trick gullible-looking peasants with an alarm clock.[66]

The travel agents of Oświęcim, depicted swindling emigrants by the anti-Semitic press.
Proces Wadowicki z illustracyami z natury wziętemi (Cracow, 1890).

The Wadowice trial clearly reflected the growth of an increasingly vocal Austrian anti-Semitic movement. The activities of Jewish emigration agents in Austria had become a favorite theme of the anti-Semitic press, which played a pivotal role in sensationalizing the trial. The *Deutsche Volksblatt*, founded in Vienna in 1888, printed extensive coverage of the trial, pressuring the government to take action against agents.[67] Many of the most dramatic charges against the agents originated in local denunciations by anti-Semites. Shortly before the arrests, a group of Poles in Oświęcim addressed a petition denouncing the agents to Georg von Schönerer, the anti-Semitic leader of the Austrian pan-German movement. In 1887, Schönerer had even sponsored a bill to restrict the immigration of Russians and Romanians to Austria-Hungary—

a movement facilitated by smugglers and emigration agents in border towns such as Brody.[68]

Vincenz Gawronski, a craftsman in town, was a leader of the local anti-Semitic club. On December 12, he reportedly testified in Wadowice that they had written the petition "because we saw with our own eyes how the Jews sent young men who had not completed their military service to America, whereby our army lost many valuable soldiers."[69] Josef Stancyk, a local real estate agent, had also signed the petition and concurred, "All of Oświęcim was outraged by the Jewish agency, since we could see how the Jewish drivers abused the emigrants, and the poor peasants often cried and complained that they had been robbed and plundered in the Jewish agency."[70]

It is impossible to know precisely what percentage of emigration agents were actually Jewish. Emigration and travel agencies were relatively new businesses in the late nineteenth century, but facilitating emigration was a classic middleman trade. It required familiarity with multiple languages and contexts. The emigration business also extended logically from other occupations—in retail sales, trade, and hospitality (hotels, pubs, and restaurants)—traditionally occupied by Jews in Eastern Europe. It is clear that Jews were heavily represented in the ranks of agents prosecuted by the Austrian government, however. A 1910 list of agents suspected of criminal activity in Galicia included 64 agents, 53 of whom had Jewish names.[71] Out of a sample of 284 criminal cases against agents under way in November 1913, 156 of the defendants had Jewish names.[72]

The period from 1880 to 1900 saw the rapid rise of populist anti-Semitic movements across Europe, accompanied by a rash of anti-Semitic trials. Within a period of twenty years, blood libel trials took place in Tiszaeszlár, Hungary (1882); in Xanten (1892) and Konitz (1900–01), Prussia; and in Polná, Bohemia (1899). A spectacular, anti-Semitic trial of accused "white slavers" was held in L'viv/Lwow/Lemberg in 1892.[73] Fleecing migrants was a less scandalous charge than blood libel or sex trafficking, but the Wadowice trial borrowed heavily from the scripts of these courtrooms. The language used to denounce the agents—as "human traffickers," "parasites sucking on our blood," and "vampires"—echoed the standard vocabulary of anti-Semitic trials. "This trial is taking place because it is impossible to tolerate the existence of a human trafficking at the end of the nineteenth century, a trade in the blood of ten thousand impoverished people," insisted the prosecuting attorney Heinrich Ogniewski in his closing statement.[74]

The link between sex trafficking and emigration was particularly significant. Anti-Semites in Eastern Europe frequently depicted Jews as sexual predators. Now the anti-Semitic press deliberately linked emigration and sex trafficking in an effort to criminalize Jewish emigration agents. Both the "white slavery" panic and the emigration panic targeted Jews for their alleged role in moving people across borders and commodifying human beings.[75] And just as sultry accounts of "white slavery" played on racial anxieties, stoking alarm that white women would be reduced to the status of black slaves, emigration reformers stirred fears that East European men and women would be treated like nonwhite colonial labor, Chinese "coolies," or enslaved Africans.

Even Jewish activists involved in the campaign against sex trafficking associated the trade in women with the broader emigration crisis. The Austrian-Jewish feminist Bertha Pappenheim (also known as Freud's Anna O.) traveled to Austrian Galicia in 1903 to gather information about sex trafficking there. "The cardinal point of any campaign against the traffic in women is that emigration should receive the greatest attention," she insisted. Pappenheim, who founded the middle-class Jewish Women's Association in Germany, shared the paternalistic attitudes of middle-class social

reformers at the time, blaming emigration on the ignorance of migrants and dishonesty of agents.

> The eagerness of the population to emigrate is abetted by . . . the absolute ignorance of the people, which enables the business of unscrupulous agents. Since they don't know that America is not a city near London . . . since they can neither read nor write, and therefore do not expect letters or direct news and cannot verify their authenticity, every girl who emigrates and leaves her hometown . . . is vulnerable to all forms of danger and vice.[76]

As Pappenheim's words suggest, both anti-trafficking and anti-emigration reformers tended to deny the underlying economic conditions that propelled emigration, as well as the agency of individual migrants. Yet female migrants were not shy about expressing their own interests. In the 1890s, for example, Habsburg authorities attempted to crack down on the trafficking of Austrian women to the Ottoman Empire. The effort failed miserably, because the women involved resisted all such efforts to "save" them. In one embarrassing incident, the Dual Monarchy's consul in Constantinople detained a group of Austrian prostitutes on an Austrian Lloyd steamer. The consul attempted to persuade the women to return home and offered them financial support. They adamantly refused his assistance, insisting that they were better off in the brothels of Constantinople than back home in Austria-Hungary. They declared, moreover, that if repatriated by force, they would return at the first opportunity. The consul was forced to conclude, "The tales of slavery and the dark cellar belong to the realm of legends."[77]

The travel agents of Oswięcim, meanwhile, also defended the autonomy of migrants, contesting the charges lodged against

them. In an appeal written (and published in pamphlet form) after the trial, Herz and Löwenberg denied that they had ever induced emigration. The exodus out of Eastern Europe had begun twenty years earlier and only escalated after the agents were arrested. Besides, Austrians had a constitutional right to leave their country, the defendants insisted: "The freedom of every individual to travel for the sake of earning a livelihood is legally guaranteed, and if our concessioned agency facilitated the travel of workers to America . . . we did no differently than any railway office or travel agency that sells train tickets to go abroad."[78]

Above all, the defense contested the notion that a single travel agency could persuade thousands to leave their homes and seek work abroad. In his closing statement, the defense attorney declared, "You cannot solve social problems with prison sentences. You'd have to forbid emigrants returning from America from bringing home the money they'd saved . . . or you'd have to put an end to the ruthless exploitation of agricultural workers in Galicia. If you did all that, emigration would stop immediately."[79]

WHILE THE WADOWICE TRIAL reflected a growing movement against emigration, there was clearly no consensus about emigration in late imperial Austria. The participants in the trial took part in a raging debate among Austrian experts about the economic causes and consequences of emigration, as well as its costs and benefits. Some of the most vocal opponents of emigration were in fact Polish and Hungarian nobles who feared losing cheap agricultural labor to American factories and mines. Ignacy Daszyński, a Social Democratic delegate to the Galician diet, reflected in his memoirs, "Frightened with the loss of the world's cheapest workers, the *szlachta* thrust upon the clergy especially the duty of restraining emigration by frightening the village folk from

the pulpit with the greatest tales of horror which awaited the emigrants."[80] It would nonetheless be a mistake to dismiss the campaign against emigration in Eastern Europe as a feudal hangover. Rather, emigration reformers drew on mercantilist and populationist principles that were well entrenched in European political and economic thought by the late nineteenth century—particularly the conviction that population was a precious state resource and that more people translated into more economic, military, and political power.[81] In a 1912 treatise against emigration, for example, the Austrian economist Friedrich Hey warned that proponents of emigration had "forgotten the basic principles and theories of political economy, which teach that the human is an essential link in the chain of the economy; that his labor is a valuable asset, and that the use of this labor, this asset, is above all the right of the state that has made the effort to raise and educate this human material."[82]

These concerns about population escalated alongside a more general European and transatlantic battle for economic power and imperial prestige. Meanwhile, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the goal of increasing population was refined by eugenic theories that focused on the biological quality of the state's "human material." Anti-emigration activists warned that the harsh physical labor and long hours endured by workers in America posed a deadly threat to the physical and moral health of Austrian citizens. Hey contended that 33,000 Austro-Hungarian citizens were killed on the job in American industrial accidents each year, and that another 10,000 were murdered annually, thanks to America's lax approach to law and order (no source was provided for these numbers, which were certainly exaggerated). An even greater number of emigrants allegedly returned home physically decimated, becoming public charges "as a consequence of forced, enervating labor that is detrimental to physical health."[83]

This rhetoric was typical of what one American consul described as a systematic Austrian campaign to deter emigration:

> In the public press of Austria, one will look in vain for important news from the United States. . . . But if there has been an atrocious murder committed anywhere within the republic, or if a great conflagration has destroyed a large amount of property, or a cyclone attack has struck a village in the far west, or the Apaches have attacked a settlement on the frontier . . . the Austrian press will publish the news with all its horrifying details and the frightened reader is supposed to abandon at once and for ever all intention of emigrating to the United States for the purpose of bettering his fortunes.[84]

Whether these horror stories had any effect is another question. Louis Adamic recalled that Slovene nationalist newspapers frequently published sensational tales of American violence and exploitation before the First World War. In these stories, "America broke and mangled the emigrants' bodies, defiled their souls, deprived them of their simple spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities, corrupted their charming native dialects and manners, and generally alienated them from the homeland." But rather than deterring young people from leaving home, such tales only "stimulated our passion for America," he confessed. "It would be, we thought, exciting to live in such a country."[85]

As political economists in Austria debated the impact of emigration, they attempted to meticulously calculate the costs and benefits of such adventures. According to Hey, the Austrian state lost more than 870 million crowns a year because of emigration (whereby each Austrian worker killed in American mines and

factories was valued at 5,000 crowns, and the labor of one worker was valued at 2,000 crowns annually). The estimated 300 million crowns in remittances flowing back to Austria hardly made a dent in this loss.[86]

Other economists and politicians held more positive views, however. Representatives of the Galician peasantry in the regional diet praised the tremendous flow of remittances into the province, where American dollars expanded peasant landholdings, renovated churches, and provided relief in cases of natural disaster. By the eve of World War I, economists estimated that 160 million crowns in remittances were flowing into Galicia each year. Emigration also improved the fortunes of workers who remained home. Wages in Western Europe and the United States were two to three times higher than wages in Galicia. In those regions most heavily afflicted by emigration, domestic wages for agricultural workers rose as employers were forced to compete in a global market. According to Daszyński, "The labor of the peasant in foreign lands has saved the country from abject poverty." Economists have since demonstrated that transatlantic emigration did actually increase wages in the regions most affected by emigration in the nineteenth century.[87] Another Austrian socialist, Wilhelm Ellenbogen, insisted on the futility of efforts to insulate the Austrian empire from global economic forces. "One might want to stamp out emigration with police measures, but political measures cannot override the laws of the global economy, however finely crafted they are. . . . The decisive cause of emigration is not so much the activities of agents as the fact that in Galicia and Dalmatia nothing is being done to further economic development."[88]

These views did not, however, win out in Wadowice in 1889 or in Austrian society more generally. In his closing statement, Ogniewski contested the imagined links between social mobility, physical mobility, and freedom that were so central to the American dream. Protecting Austrians' freedom and well-being, he insisted, required measures to curtail emigration. "With respect to the accusation that the prosecution does not respect the personal freedom of emigrants, I have to say that this allegation must appear to be a truly bitter irony, in that it is made by people who have introduced a slave trade to the free land of Austria, and who have erected an entire system of human trafficking."[89] He appealed to the jury to convict "the parasites that have lived from the blood of our peasants" in the name of "the land of our fathers, for the good of the state, and for the defense of them both."[90] The jury obliged. On March 12, Herz, Löwenberg, and Landerer were each sentenced to four years imprisonment, Landau and Klausner to three.[91]

Ogniewski's words and the outcome of the trial reflected the greater significance of the movement to curtail emigration. The growing barriers to international mobility of the early twentieth century were never simply a one-sided consequence of Western restriction and xenophobia. They were the product of collusion between East and West, as East European officials sought to protect the "freedom" of citizens by keeping them at home.

UNSURPRISINGLY, the imprisonment of Oświęcim's travel agents did nothing to slow the steady flow of humans out of East Central Europe. The number of Austrians who left for North America instead ballooned in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century, when mass emigration reached its peak.[92] Government concerns about emigration also escalated throughout the same period. The number of conscripts who failed to report for duty provoked particular alarm among Austrian and Hungarian military officials. Charles Selmsley reported in 1907 that in the Hungarian town of Bartfa, 700 recruits were called up for medical inspection, but only 200 showed up, since "the rest had emigrated

to America."[93] When war broke out in the Balkans in 1912–13, officials took more direct action, anticipating that Austria-Hungary would soon be drawn into the conflict. In early 1913, the minister of the interior reported that about 120,000 recruits had been missing from the last call-up, 80,000 from Galicia alone. Panic ensued in the War Ministry.[94]

Once again, officials blamed emigration agents, rather than Austria's more deep-rooted economic inequalities, for shrinking military ranks. And once again, the campaign against agents was fueled by a concerted press onslaught led by anti-Semitic newspapers such as the *Deutsche Volksblatt* and the Viennese *Reichspost*.[95] Anonymous denunciations also led to a growing wave of arrests. One such denunciation to the Ministry of War claimed that in Muszyna, Galicia, "entire regiments of Hungarian conscripts have simply been stolen away by the local Jews, with the intention of weakening Hungary."[96] A letter to the Justice Ministry from a group of self-designated "loyal Austrians" accused emigration agents of "selling slaves" and "sapping the blood from the humanity of the Monarchy like nibbling worms."[97]

The government responded with escalating police measures intended to seal Austria-Hungary's borders. The Galician governor's office ordered prefects and police departments in Cracow and Lwow to closely monitor local emigration agents. Police also alerted officials about common tactics used by emigrants to cross borders illegally. Many Austrian men reportedly sneaked across the German border with forged Russian passports.[98] German officials seized at least eight hundred fake passports per year, according to the Viennese police department. The vast majority of illegal emigrants simply crossed the border on foot, pretending to be seasonal workers. Police even warned local officials to be on the lookout for illegal emigrants posing as religious pilgrims.[99] In November 1913, a special branch of the Viennese police department was established to patrol emigration. The Cracow police arrested an average of ten illegal emigrants per day at the Cracow train station in October 1913. By early 1914, control stations had been erected all along Austria's western borders, and both customs officials and railway employees were deputized to apprehend suspicious travelers.[100]

In reality, some Austrian men did attempt to evade military service by emigrating. Josef Krochmal from Lemberg, arrested for illegal emigration in 1913, was a typical offender. He was a wage laborer with no previous criminal convictions. A friend persuaded him to go to America. He decided to take his chances overseas "since my parents are poor, and there is a shortage of work here," he later testified. An agent told him that he did not need a passport for the trip and that he could simply delay his military service for two years. Krochmal was arrested in Cracow and sent home, so he returned to the agency and demanded his money back. The agent encouraged him to make a second attempt, but he was caught again. The third time, the agent decided to "make a Russian out of him." He furnished Krochmal with a forged Russian passport and instructed him to pretend he was a Pole from imperial Russia. This time, he successfully made his way to Germany and then on to Canada. Unfortunately for him, upon arrival in Quebec, Canadian authorities rejected him on medical grounds and sent him home, at which point he was arrested for a third time.[101]

In what quickly became an international incident, on October 6, 1913, Austrian police arrested Samuel Altman, general representative of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (CPR, also a shipping company) in Austria and nineteen of his associates. Austrian police shut down and searched the CPR's offices, seized its books, and confiscated its property. Altman himself was a naturalized American citizen who had left Hungary years earlier.[102] He was charged with facilitating the illegal emigration of tens of thou-

sands of Austrian and Hungarian citizens liable for military service.[103] On the day of the arrests, the Viennese *Reichspost* claimed that the CPR had "unleashed a band of agents on the population of Galicia and Bukovina, who hunted for humans as though they were wild game."[104]

Competing shipping lines were almost certainly behind the attack on the CPR. In the previous year, there had been a shake-up in the cartel arrangement that governed the shipping industry. Until the end of 1912, the CPR was party to the so-called Continental Pool, a cartel established in 1892, which included the Hamburg-America Line, the North German Lloyd, the Red Star Line, the Holland America Line, the Cunard Line, and the Austro-Americana shipping firm. On January 1, 1913, the CPR withdrew from the pool and opened a new route from Trieste to Canada, in direct competition with the British Cunard Line (from Fiume) and the Austro-Americana (from Trieste), both members of the pool. In retaliation, the pool immediately launched a vicious press campaign against the CPR.[105]

Arthur Grünhut was the chief instigator in the case. He personally sent multiple denunciations to government ministries and the press. A Viennese police investigation determined that Grünhut was an unreliable informant. He had married a wealthy woman from Philadelphia in 1909, and then returned to Vienna, where he lived off her dowry and a monthly allowance. "He does not enjoy the best reputation in social or business circles," the report conceded. At least thirty-five cases had been filed against him in Austrian civil courts, and he had been thrown out of the Viennese jockey club because of unpaid debts. He had no stable profession, but variously claimed to be an architect, a civil servant, and a real estate developer. Although Grünhut swore that he had no connection to the Continental Pool, he admitted to receiving large payments for his "research" on the CPR.[106]

In reality, the CPR was responsible for only a tiny percentage of the total emigrant traffic out of Austria. Members of the pool had transported the rest.[107] Altman was released on a bail of 150,000 crowns (about $30,000) in May of 1914. He was eventually allowed to leave for America on the condition that he return to Austria for his trial. Thanks to the outbreak of the First World War, however, the trial never took place.[108]

By the eve of the First World War, Austria's borders were virtually sealed. A few Austrian politicians and intellectuals denounced the new restrictions on travel as an ominous "turn in the direction of a police state."[109] Ignacy Wróbel, a Galician socialist delegate to the Austrian parliament, protested in early 1914, "The entire empire has been surrounded by a police barrier, so that even a bird might not be able to fly across our borders." He insisted that the new barriers to emigration violated Austrians' constitutional right to free movement, and demanded that the Interior Ministry guarantee that workers were "actually able to make use of their constitutionally protected right to free movement, particularly in the search for a livelihood."[110] The Austrian law professor Alexander Loffler compared the new restrictions on mobility to feudal bonds. "The tendency is developing to view our laborers as a type of serf, not bound to a specific estate, but certainly to the territory of the state," he warned. But in the context of the rush to war, these protests were isolated. Amid growing fears of mass desertion (and under the pretext of protecting Austrian citizens from travel agents), Austrian policymakers casually sacrificed the right to exit on the eve of World War I.

The war temporarily "solved" the emigration problem. Transatlantic passenger travel virtually ceased during the war. The emigration debate did not disappear, however, as Austrian officials began to plot for the postwar era. Many anticipated a massive return of Habsburg subjects from America and Western

Europe after the war. In 1917, the Austrian diplomat Baron Hugo Sommaruga estimated that one million people would rush home to Austria-Hungary following the armistice. Most returnees, he speculated, would be motivated by curiosity, as well as the assumption that the monarchy would be in need of labor. Xenophobia in America, as well as the prohibition on alcohol, "for which our co-nationals have little understanding," would also encourage a mass homecoming, he predicted.[111]

Meanwhile, in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Austrian vice-consul Edgar Prochnik proposed that the Austrian government ban all emigration to the United States after the war. This would enable Austria to retain its valuable "human material" for its own use and bring the U.S. steel and mining industries to their knees. "I need only mention the large quantity of valuable human material that is thrown into the great sieve at Ellis Island each year," he explained. "It is precisely the most physically and intellectually productive elements who are lost to their homeland, and the qualitatively less valuable human material, the crude rubble . . . that remains at our disposal."[112]

The proposal was taken seriously, and circulated among government ministries in both Austria and Hungary. While most officials disagreed with Prochnik, they did not take issue with the principle behind the plan. They simply recognized that it was impractical. The Hungarian interior minister (presciently) understood that far more radical measures would be required to truly seal the empire's borders. Emigration could be successfully curtailed altogether, he argued, "only if all our neighboring states take the same position with respect to emigration, which we can hardly count on."[113]

Other ministers responded to the memo with more constructive ideas, predicting trends that would develop between the wars. The Austrian interior minister conceded, "Efforts to stop emigra-

tion with prohibitions, border control, and other police measures have been unsuccessful." Emigration, he insisted, had deeper roots. "Austrian emigration, as a mass movement, cannot be seen only as an artificially created phenomenon, sustained by large transportation firms. . . . It must rather be traced back to very serious economic, social, and political sources at home."[114]

Even the War Ministry was seeking new approaches by the end of the war. In August 1917, it released a memo advocating a shift toward more progressive policies to retain population. These included measures to promote economic development, including land reform, investment in new technologies, the expansion of industry, and the creation of state-run employment agencies and public works jobs for unemployed citizens.[115] These proposals were too little, too late for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but they foreshadowed the ways in which the fear and reality of emigration would inspire the expansion of welfare states and efforts to facilitate economic development in East Central Europe after 1918.

FROM THE WADOWICE TRIAL of 1889 to the end of World War I, Austro-Hungarian citizens were engulfed in a heated debate about the consequences of mass emigration. They were simultaneously arguing about the relationship between mobility and freedom in a globalizing labor market. The defense attorneys at Wadowice repeatedly insisted that government measures to restrict and police emigration infringed on the constitutional rights of Austrian citizens to emigrate. "In a modern state citizens should no longer be treated as living inventory which is bound to the land!" one defense attorney proclaimed.[116] The state's attorney disagreed, however, countering that the right to emigrate was an illusory "freedom" that delivered Austrian citizens to wage slavery. In an era in which many could still recall American slavery

and European serfdom, these charges of "human trafficking" represented more than hyperbole. The mass movement of East Europeans from rural farms to American factories, mines, and plantations raised pressing questions about the meaning of free labor in the industrial age.[117]

This debate hinged on competing views of both America and Eastern Europe. American authorities, not surprisingly, typically upheld a vision of America as a beacon of freedom and opportunity, linking physical mobility directly to liberty and democratic values. In 1911, the report of the Dillingham Commission emphasized the "civilizing" impact of a sojourn in America on East Europeans:

> He leaves his village, a simple peasant in his peasant dress, usually not only unable to read and write, but not even desiring to. Ingrained in him are the traditions of his obligations to the church and to his superiors. . . . [W]hen he goes back to his old home he is a different man. He is more aggressive and self-assertive. His unaccustomed money gives him confidence and he is no longer willing to pay deference to his former superiors. Frequently, too, the church has lost the influence it had had with him. Moreover, if he has not learned to read and write himself, he has at least seen the value of that ability and is more anxious than before to send his children to school.[118]

Emigration and return migration, in this self-congratulatory tale, would "modernize" and "democratize" East Central Europe. In the context of growing anti-immigration sentiment, however, many U.S. authorities began to question whether particular groups of migrants (defined in racial terms) were capable of "handling" the responsibilities of freedom. The American consul Henry Stern

reported from Budapest in 1886, "Crude as these Slovacks [*sic*] leave their country crude they also return, for their exclusiveness and love for herding prevents that while in America any 'real' American ideas reach them and instead of ideas of real 'liberty' there is only the danger that they bring with them ideas of 'license.'"[119] U.S. Consul Edmund Jussen (himself a German emigrant) was equally pessimistic about migrants' capacity for freedom and self-governance. Emigrants from Eastern Europe, he warned, "have perverted ideas of liberty, and think of the United States as a country where no police interferes with freedom of action. . . . Many of them think they have been governed too much at home and hope to find a country where they will not be governed at all."[120]

After World War I, nativists would impose dramatic limits on immigration in the name of protecting American freedom. Yet they did not necessarily have the final word. In their sheer determination to emigrate, and in their own testimonies, many migrants continued to link emigration to both freedom and social mobility. Over time, their views have tended to shape America's self-image, if not actual immigration policies. In the words of John Szabó of Chicago, writing in 1909, "Although in the beginning I had to do without, and even now I am not bathing in milk and honey, I feel that now I am that man who at home I only had a presentiment that I had a right to be, that is: an independent, free man."[121]

Notes

Introduction

1 Letter from Faustina Wiśniewska, February 13, 1891, and letter from Faustina Wiśniewska to her parents, undated, in Witold Kula, Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, and Marcin Kula, *Writing Home: Immigrants in Brazil and the United States, 1890–1891*, ed. and trans. Josephine Wtulich (Boulder, CO, 1986), 443–46.

2 Around 2,145,266 subjects of the Dual Monarchy landed on American shores between 1901 and 1910. Italy was close behind, with 2,135,877 immigrants to the United States in the same period. Adam McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846–1940," *Journal of World History* 15 (June 2004): 156–60, 167; Annemarie Steidl, Wladimir Fischer-Nebmaier, and James W. Oberly, "The Transatlantic Migration Experience: From Austria-Hungary to the United States, 1870–1950" (unpublished manuscript), 137; Samuel L. Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870–1914* (Ithaca, 1999), 54. Statistics on emigration vary. Austro-Hungarian authorities recorded a total of 3,547,000 emigrants to all overseas destinations from Austria-Hungary between 1876 and 1910, and 2,953,587 to the United States. Heinz Fassmann, "Die Bevölker-

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8 On the domestic slave trade, see esp. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

9 Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle: The Lost First Edition* (Memphis, TN, 1988), 94.

10 Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York, 2011), 10.

11 Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920), 19, 24. For a more recent examination of the link between westward expansion and ideas of freedom, see, e.g., Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880–1930* (Cambridge, UK, 2000).

12 Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews*, trans. Michael Hofmann (New York, 2001), 93, 95.

13 Louis Adamic, "This Crisis Is an Opportunity," *Common Ground* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1940): 62–63.

14 See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994). On the political consequences of anxieties about backwardness within Eastern Europe, see Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, 2010); Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64 (2005): 140–65.

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16 Roth, *The Wandering Jews*, 102.

17 Roger P. Bartlett, *The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762–1804* (Cambridge, UK, 1979), 23–30.

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19 Nancy L. Green, "The Politics of Exit: Reversing the Immigration Paradigm," *Journal of Modern History* 77 (June 2005): 282. For this narrative, see also John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge, UK, 2000); Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds., *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton, 2001); Zolberg, "The Exit Revolution"; Gérard Noiriel, *La tyrannie du national: Le droit d'asile en Europe, 1793–1993* (Paris, 1991); Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York, 2000); Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War* (Philadelphia, 2002); Claudena Skran, *Refugees in Interwar Europe: The Invention of a Regime* (Oxford, 1995). Recently several historians have challenged this framework by focusing on policies of expulsion and control in Western Europe in the nineteenth century. See Gerald L. Neuman, *Strangers to the Constitution: Immigrants, Borders, and Fundamental Law* (Princeton, 1996); David Feldman, "Was the Nineteenth Century a Golden Age for Immigrants? The Changing Articulation of National, Local and Voluntary Controls," in *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-war Period*, ed. Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron, and Patrick Weil (New York, 2003), 167–77; Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizens and Aliens: Foreigners and the Law in Britain and the German States, 1789–1870* (New York, 2000); Paul-André Rosental, "Protéger et expulser les étrangers en Europe du XIXe siècle à nos jours," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 66 (April–June 2011): 335–73.

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30 Adamic, *Laughing in the Jungle*, 103.

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Chapter 1

1 *Der galizische Menschenhandel vor Gericht*, zusammengestellt aus den Berichten des "Deutschen Volksblattes" über den wadowicer Proceß (Vienna, 1890), 195.

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3 Henryk Sienkiewicz, *After Bread: A Story of Polish Emigrant Life to America*, trans. Vatslaf A. Hlasko and Thomas H. Bullick (New York, 1897), 16–17, 58, 162, 165.

4 For statistics, see Senator William P. Dillingham, *Emigration Conditions in Europe*, Reports of the Immigration Commission, 61st Cong. (Washington, DC, 1911), 351. On emigration from Hungary, see Julianna Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide: 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*, trans. Zora Ludwig (New York, 2000).

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7 Baron Louis De Levay, "The Hungarian Emigration Law," *North American Review* 182, no. 590 (January 1906): 119; Ausweis über den Stand der Auswanderungssachen, October 7, 1914, Carton 3327, sig. 6 VZ 18, Justiz Ministerium (JM), Allgemeine Strafsachen (AS), Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA), Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (OeStA).

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11 Ibid., 84–85.

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19 *Der galizische Menschenhandel vor Gericht*, 187.

20 (Charles) Semsley-(Roman) Dobler Report, July 1906–January 1907, Casefile 51411/52, Report to Frank P. Sargent, Commissioner General of Immigration, January 16, 1907, 8, Reel 1, pt. 4, Series A, Subject correspondence files, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, [microform].

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22 Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews*, trans. Michael Hofmann (New York, 2001), 7. Roth is referring here to camps for refugees in Austria-Hungary during World War I.

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63 Ibid., 37–41.
64 "Sprawy Sądowe. Matactwa emigracyne," *Czas*, December 19, 1889, p. 3; *Der galizische Menschenhandel vor Gericht*, 141–49.
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85 Adamic, *Laughing in the Jungle*, 26–27.
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Chapter 2

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13 See, e.g., David Blackbourn, "Das Kaiserreich Transnational: Eine Skizze," in *Das Kaiserreich Transnational: Deutschland in der Welt, 1871–1914*, ed. Jürgen Osterhammel and Sebastian Conrad (Göttingen, 2004); Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York, 2009); Vejas Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford, 2009).

14 On Mexico, see Jorge Durand, "Migration Policy and the Asymmetry of Power: The Mexican Case, 1800–1900," in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation*, ed. Nancy Green and François Weil (Urbana, IL, 2007), 224–45. On China, see Carine Pina-Guerassimoff and Eric Guerassimoff, "The 'Overseas Chinese': The State and Emigration from the 1890s through the 1990s," ibid., 245–64. One country that has adopted a consistently negative stance toward emigration (similar to Eastern