"Nach Amerika!"

Summary of Volume I

First Part: Emigration in the 19th Century

Prologue

We don't know the exact beginning of the emigration from Liechtenstein to America. The earliest emigrant we are aware of is Joseph Batliner from Schellenberg. There are, however, no documents in Liechtenstein regarding his leaving. In America, by contrast, we see him marrying in 1835 and two years later purchasing a 70-acre parcel of land near Floyds Knobs, Indiana. This property became the cornerstone of the Batliner farm, and today his descendants are still farming the land.

I. Liechtenstein in the 19th Century

In the 19th century the Principality of Liechtenstein was a poor peasant country, the inhabitants of which repeatedly suffered from the flooding of the Rhine River which too often induced widespread famine. The Princes of Liechtenstein resided in Vienna, Austria, and governed their subjects through an appointed administrator. The people possessed practically no rights, and therefore by mid-century dissatisfaction was running rampant. In 1848, when revolutions swept through France and Germany, demands for democratic rights were heard also in Liechtenstein. The Prince met some of the demands, but soon thereafter rescinded them. At long last, the Constitution of 1862 brought relief from the existing form of absolute government.

II. Emigration Policy in the 19th Century

Parallel to the gradual liberalization of the political system in Liechtenstein came a relaxation of the government's emigration policy. During the first half of the 19th century emigration was, for all practical purposes, forbidden. Anyone who determined to emigrate in spite of the existing regulations required a permit from the Prince's administrator and had to pay to the state and local governments a 15 per cent departure tax on his or her property. Furthermore, the emigrants lost their Liechtenstein citizenship. In 1843 the prohibition of emigration was somewhat relaxed, but the required emigration permit, the departure tax and the loss of citizenship remained in place. In connection with a generally more lenient policy of the princely government, the departure tax was finally abolished in 1848.

In 1846 the Rhine River had flooded the Liechtenstein countryside, and the ensuing famine led to the departure to America of about 250 people. This was the first big wave of Liechtenstein emigration which lasted from 1848 to 1855 and represented the departure of about 3 per cent of the total population at the time.

III. America Beckons Immigrants

The stream of emigration from Europe to America had started much earlier. Between 1816 and 1819, immediately after the Napoleon Wars, the United States saw the first big wave of immigrants from Europe with about 100'000 coming to its shores. These arrivals were mainly attracted by a large expanse of fertile soil awaiting settlement but also were inspired by the promise of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" guaranteed by the American Declaration of Independence. Others, a little later, were attracted to the gold rush in California or were enticed by newspaper reports and advertising as well as by letters from friends and relatives already living in America.

At that time it was a difficult undertaking to travel to America. In the 1850s, the journey just

from Liechtenstein to the port of Le Havre in France could take up to forty days, and the voyage on a sailing vessel from Le Havre to, say, New Orleans added approximately seventy more days.

On April 7, 1851, the first large group of emigrants from Liechtenstein landed at New Orleans on the sailing vessel Lexington, and on May 7, 1852, the Jersey arrived with fifty Liechtensteiners on board. Most all of them continued their journey up the Mississipi River to Dubuque, Iowa.

IV. The American Civil War

The Civil War of 1861-1865 brought about a significant slowdown of immigrants coming to America.

We know of several Liechtensteiners who served in the Union Armee, among them Gregor Wohlwend from Schellenberg who was a Second Lieutenant in the 20th Kansas Infantry and was wounded in the Battle of Prairie Grove in Arkansas.

V. The Prairie is Settled

After the Civil War the United States Government encouraged the construction of railroads as a means of lying the country together and opening up the West. Again, immigrants from Liechtenstein arrived in mid-America and helped to build these railroads. There is a letter written in 1881 by Fidel Nutt who, together with three other Liechtensteiners, participated in the construction of the rail line between Kansas City and Los Angeles.

The Homestead Act of 1862 undergirded the drive for settlement of the vast open areas of the West. It gave every person of age, whether a U.S.citizen or someone signing a declaration of intent to become a citizen, the right to acquire 160 acres of free land.

VI. The Second Wave of Immigrants (1880-1884)

At the beginning of the 1880s, all of Europe was shaken by a major economic crisis which precipitated a giant wave of emigration to America. Between 1880 and 1884 about two hundred persons left Liechtenstein for the New World.

This was the era of big business for emigration agencies all over Europe. Nearly every day they advertised in the "Liechtensteiner Volksblatt", the only newspaper at that time in Liechtenstein. The resulting competition among the agencies led to a steep drop in fares. Between 1865 and the turn of the century the price of passage to America fall from 300 to 50 Swiss francs. To be sure, at these ridiculously low fares the emigration agencies were hardly able to offer luxury accomodations to the passengers. For many the journey on overcrowded decks became a nightmare, and upon arrival the American immigration authorities at Castle Garden (1855-1890) and Ellis Island (after 1890) went strictly by the book and quite often subjected the weary passengers to annoying inspections.

VII. Liechtensteiners in America

To a great extent, Dubuque, Iowa, became the destination of choice for the immigrants. When the first Liechtensteiners arrived during the middle of the 19th century, German language and culture were still deeply ingrained in the inhabitants of Dubuque - themselves immigrants who were mostly German speaking - and therefore made it easy for the new settlers to assimilate in the community. Besides, Dubuque in the 1850s was a boom town - at that time the largest city in Iowa - where during the 1850-1860 decade the population increased from 3000 to 15'000. New houses - businesses and dwellings - were built at an annual rate of 500, and construction workers were in great demand. Thus, many Liechtensteiners filled the need for workers in the city, beginning with the early arrivals in 1845, among them stonemasons, bricklayers and carpenters. A very close social network developed among the new Liechtenstein immigrants. Visits became commonplace; they married among each other and also became godparents for children of relatives and friends. For many Liechtensteiners, however, Dubuque served only as a way station. Although there was plenty of work in the construction trades, in their hearts these immigrants remained farmers, and in time they left the city and acquired farms on the rich land nearby. The town of Guttenberg, located on the Mississippi some twenty miles upstream from Dubuque, became another important lowa settlement for Liechtensteiners. The first to arrive at Guttenberg was Leonhard Biedermann from Mauren. During the decades that followed many more Liechtensteiners came to Guttenberg, especially immigrants from Mauren as well as the village of Balzers where the castle of Gutenberg is located. Extensive research for this book, however, has found no evidence of any connection between the name of Guttenberg in lowa and the Gutenberg castle in Balzers. It could very well have been that the familiarsounding name of Guttenberg and similar-looking countryside and climate were the major attractions for the Liechtensteiners. By the 1880s Guttenberg seems to have attracted as many as a hundred Liechtenstein immigrants, not counting their offspring. In view of the fact that in 1882 the total population of Guttenberg was only 1076, the Liechtenstein contingent was substantial.

During the 19th century, Guttenberg and Dubuque were by no means the only areas attracting Liechtenstein immigrants. The Triesenbergers decided to settle in Freeport, Illinois, and so far we have no clue why Xaver and Alois Lampert, the first who left Triesenberg for America in 1850, chose Freeport as their destination. It is very interesting that thereafter practically all Triesenberg emigrants went to Freeport, and the majority of them a few years later moved on again and joined the exodus west to Oregon.

We find another settlement of Liechtensteiners in Wabash, Indiana. Figuring prominently in this bucolic destination was the Alber family from Mauren. Over a span of two generations a clan of close relatives chose to emigrate and joined the settlement in Wabash. The chief architect behind the Alber Wabash settlement was Philipp Alber who became a very successfull businessman. Together with his brother-in-law, Frank Anton Rettig, who married Philipp's sister Magdalena, he established in 1865 the Rettig & Alber Brewery, one of the most successful breweries in Indiana at that time.

Another interesting discovery is a somewhat smaller settlement of emigrants from Ruggell, who went farther west, in the area of O'Neill, Holt County, Nebraska.

Finally in connection with the emigrantion to America, the convent at Schellenberg in Liechtenstein remains to be mentioned. This convent was established by the Sisters of the Precious Blood of Dayton, Ohio, and was designed to attract young women from Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein who desired to serve as nuns in America. In short, this convent was designed to qualify these young women for their life as nuns in America.

Second Part: Emigration in the 20th Century

VIII. Emigration until the First World War

After 1885 the second wave of 19th century emigration slowed markedly and was annually limited to an occasional individual or family. The number increased to ten in 1905 and thirteen in 1906, but slowed again in 1907. The slowdown coincided with the first attempt to industrialize Liechtenstein. Following the establishment of textile factories in the 1880s there occurred in Liechtenstein a steady increase in economic activity down to the time of the outbreak of the First World War. In 1912 Liechtenstein had five industrial plants employing approximately 750 people together with about 700 small businesses.

Liechtenstein was not the only country where economic activity was on the upswing. Other large regions in central Europe participated in this advance. Consequently emigration from central Europe eased off while the number of immigrants arriving in America from less-developed southern and eastern Europe skyrocketed. In 1905 the number entering the

United States soared beyond the one million mark. Alarmed not only by the huge numbers but also concerned about their countries of origin, American authorities began to adopt measures to restrict immigration. Thus, even though arrivals slowed to a trickle during the First World War, it was ordered in 1917 that every immigrant be able to read and write. Furthermore, in accordance with postwar isolationist sentiment, the United States Congress in 1921 adopted the first immigration quota system.

IX. Jobs and Good Wages Tempt Many to Emigrate

The outbreak of the First World War constituted a serious blow to Liechtenstein's economy. Because Liechtenstein had a customs union with Austria, even though it remained neutral during the war, the Entente allies uniformly curtailed the importation of raw materials into Liechtenstein. This brought about a partial closing of industrial plants in the country. Following the war the Austrian Krone, which was also the official currency in Liechtenstein, completely collapsed, and with its failure nearly all the savings in Liechtenstein were lost. Shorty thereafter Liechtenstein dissolved its customs union with Austria and signed a postal and customs agreement with Switzerland. Yet despite this reorientation the economy remained in stagnation. In 1927 another blow struck when the Rhine once again flooded the land. Then, only a year later massive speculation by the government-chartered national bank brought enormous losses. Liechtenstein was threatened with economic ruin. As a consequence, another significant wave of emigration to America occured in the 1920s. Unlike their predecessors in the 19th century, these new emigrants were seeking urban areas where jobs and income possibilities were much more plentiful then were those in an earlier day in rural areas. They were attracted especially to Chicago and the neighbouring community of Hammond, Indiana. Smaller Liechtenstein settlements were also formed in metropolitan Cincinnati, Ohio, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Apart from these major concentrations, Liechtenstein immigrants began to settle almost anywhere in the United States.

William Marok is generally believed to be the founding father of the Liechtenstein settlement in Hammond, Indiana. He emigrated in 1865 to Indianapolis, Indiana, and worked as a newspaper reporter for the Indianapolis Star. It is not known exactly when he moved north to Hammond, but by the beginning of the 1920s when the first postwar Liechtensteiners arrived there, he owned a very profitable construction company and gave support to the new arrivals from Liechtenstein.

The establishment of the Liechtenstein settlement in Cincinnati and vicinity goes back to the 19th century when the Ritters from Eschen arrived there. In 1880 Andreas Ritter purchased a farm just across the river in Melbourne, Kentucky, which is still in the family today and is protected as a national historic site. The most prominent Liechtensteiner in the Cincinnati area was Otto Hasler from Eschen who was elected mayor of Elmwood Place, a suburb of Cincinnati, in 1943, twenty years after his arrival in America. He remained in that office until his death in 1970.

Emigration slowed during the depression of the 1930s and was nonexistent during the Second World War.

X. Emigration after the Second World War

After the Second World War emigration to America increased again. Even though the economy in Liechtenstein was on the upswing during this period that saw Liechtenstein transformed from a relatively poor farming community to a prosperous industrial state, some people felt insecure about the staying power of the booming economy. But as the local economy continued to grow and more well-paying jobs became available, people gradually gained confidence in the future of their country.

Fifteen individuals or families leaving the country in 1948 represented the greatest numer of

emigrants after the Second World War, and thereafter the departures declined to a trickle. During these years, due to its strong economy, Liechtenstein changed from a land that saw its people leaving for America to better themselves to a country where people came from abroad to improve their livelihood in Liechtenstein.

XI. Emigration to Canada

In the 19th century emigration from Liechtenstein to Canada was nonexistent. It might have been the harsh climate as well as the prevalence of the English and French language spoken there. Emigration to Canada commenced only in the 1920s.

The first emigrants worked on the big wheat farms of the prairies of Saskatchewan. Later, as more Liechtensteiners arrived, they moved on to Prince George where they had their own farms and also worked as lumberjacks and in the mines of the far west in British Columbia. Prince George became the center of Liechtenstein emigration to Canada where yet today one can find a Fehr Road and a Banzer Drive named after two Liechtenstein pioneering families. Between 1945 and 1957 an additional twenty people emigrated to Canada. After that immigration slowed markedly.

XII. Emigration to South America

The emigration from Liechtenstein to South America was never significant. Argentinia with nineteen individuals and Brazil with thirteen represent the largest number of emigrants to South America. About half of the emigrants bound for South America either returned to Liechtenstein between the two world wars or journeyed to the United States where they settled permanently.

Especially noteworthy in connection with emigration to South America is Jakob Matt from Bendern who went to Brazil in 1913 where he acquired a substantial amount of wealth. Before he was to return to Liechtenstein he made an extensive trip through Brazil where he was unfortunately robbed and beaten by guerillas. His wounds were so severe that he died several days after the attack.

There is another group of six young Liechtensteiners to be mentioned who emigrated to Argentinia in 1920. They led a hard life working on one ranch or another as common laborers or as herdsmen on the pampas, only to find each other again working in a cheese factory in the vicinity of Buenos Aires.

Epilouge

In the register in this book we have the record of about 1050 individuals or families - about 1600 Liechtensteiners altogether - who, principally for economic reasons, emigrated to America. Today, as mentioned before, the roles are reversed. For some time Liechtenstein has been an in-migration rather than an out-migration country.

Register of the Liechtenstein Emigrants to North and South America

In the register, as noted above, we have a total of 1050 cases of Liechtenstein emigration to North and South America. Any of these cases might include a single person, a married couple, a widow or widower with children or whole families. There is only one entry for each case.

The following symbols and abbreviations are used in the register:

* date of birth

† date of death (a † alongside a name of child indicates that it died early in life)

E parents

B profession/job

A year and place of emigration V spouse R year of return to Liechtenstein FB family book

The dates are written the European - or American military - way with the first number indicating the day, the second the month and the third the year.

Any additions, deletions or corrections to the register are welcome. Kindly contact

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