

Preface

Friedrich List was a prophet of the social market economy, national economy and the infant industry theory. My book, *Friedrich List (1789–1846)—A Visionary Economist with Social Responsibility*, Wiesbaden 2014, is a comprehensive biography of his extraordinary vita and the worldwide influence and reception of List's theories as well as their current significance. His basic theory is that of productive powers and the need to protect infant industries until they are mature enough to compete with international products on world markets. List was a liberal and a democrat who promoted an extended representative democracy, including respect for human rights and civil liberties to accompany industrial development.

List's exile in the USA between 1825 and 1832 played a very big role in his biography. I have devoted another book to this part of his vita entitled: *Friedrich List—An Historical Figure and Pioneer in German-American Relations*, Munich 1989.

In the fall of 2014, I had the good fortune to trace List's life and work in Pennsylvania. During this visit, I gathered new impressions of List's life in USA and found interesting, unknown sources. These new findings are collected in this booklet.

In the discussions that took place after the lectures I held during my short stay, I realized that public knowledge about List was very limited; furthermore, there was no awareness of the fact that the emigration survey List took in 1817 marks the beginning of public opinion research.

In 1816/17 Württemberg experienced dearth as had not been known since the Middle Ages. The preceding years had been cold and rainy, which had led to crop failure. Food stocks were exhausted. When, in 1816/17, weather conditions were again unfavorable, the population suffered greatly under the extreme rise in prices. Hunger and misery were widespread and numerous businesses failed. Many people had no other option but to sell everything they owned and emigrate to the United States.

The emigrants assembled at the harbor of Heilbronn in the hope of travelling down the Neckar and Rhine Rivers to a better future. In doing so, they often followed the lure of unscrupulous vendors of "coffin ships," who, en route from Holland to the US, bilked them out of their last bit of savings.

In the second half of April 1817, Friedrich List was ordered by the incumbent Minister of the Interior, Karl v. Kerner, to go to Heilbronn, where a large number of emigrants were waiting to leave the harbor. His task was to find out the reasons for this mass emigration and, if possible, to persuade the emigrants to stay. List interviewed approximately 200 persons. Many of the men were the heads of families; thus, the number of emigrants actually amounted to 600–700 persons. Although List warned the people about the dangers of emigration, he was only able to persuade three families to stay in Europe.

On May 7, List informed the Minister of Interior of the results of his study, stating that the intention to emigrate was due to:

1. Prohibitive requirements; reparations for past wars, exorbitant taxes and tolls, high local and district taxes due to bad financial management and corruption
2. Oppression by local and district civil servants
3. Unnecessary bureaucracy, i.e., exorbitant scrivener fees
4. Lethargy of the judicial system, in particular in the event of bankruptcy and foreclosure sales
5. Oppression by foresters and damage caused by wild game
6. Oppression by lairds.

In addition, List mentioned harvest failure, inflation, lack of work, excessive religious devotion, and blandishment from civil servants who wanted to be rid of undesirable persons or speculate on the cheap purchase of property.

At the end of his report, List made suggestions as to how emigration might be curtailed. Among other things, he recommended that the Consul of Württemberg in Holland should gather information about the “coffin ships” in Holland in order to better inform persons who were planning to emigrate. Furthermore, he proposed reintroducing the waiting period of one year between the date of emigration application and emigration in order to preclude overhasty decisions based on wrong information.

This was indeed the world’s first survey of public opinion; we can believe that List conducted it very professionally.

From 1972 until 2004 I was professor for international marketing, consumer behavior, and communication at Reutlingen University. From the beginning, I was interested in the economic theories of Friedrich List. It has always been important for me to shed light on the life and merits of our “genius loci.” For my List research of more than 40 years, I was given the state award for homeland research in Baden-Württemberg, as well as the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* and the Medal of Merit of the city of Reutlingen.

In 1992 I founded the “Friedrich List Institute for Historical and Current Economic Studies” at Reutlingen University, which I directed until 2014. My successor is Prof. Dr. Stephan Seiter, who is a professor of the ESB Business School of the university. Together with Prof. Dr. Harald Hagemann from the University of Hohenheim, near Stuttgart, we organized an international conference in honor of List’s 225th anniversary in October 2014.

This booklet is in remembrance of Reutlingen's most famous citizen, who is also one of the world's three great economists: Adam Smith (1723–1790), Friedrich List (1789–1846), and Karl Marx (1818–1883).

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