



EAAS Postgraduate Travel Grant

Final Report

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I took all my flight back to Europe in order to summarize the findings of my research trip. Sitting in front of my computer with the idea of sending a quick report to my supervisors, I ended up producing a dense five long page document, which, I realized afterwards, will most likely provide the focus of my research for the remaining two years of my PhD. This report will summarize the results of the research trip I made to New York, Madison and Cincinnati between June 15th and July 26th made possible by the generous support of a EAAS Postgraduate Travel Grant.

My PhD discusses the ideas of race and ethnicity in the American socialist movement between 1877 and 1900. Through research into the party newspapers and primary sources (archives, correspondence, official documents, propaganda), my research seeks to shed light about the conceptions of race and ethnic diversity which shaped the policies of socialist militants in this period. The existing literature traditionally describes socialism as blind towards the problems of black and immigrant integration. My research aims to challenge this, with the help of new and under investigated primary sources.

My trip started with a three-week period in New York. I spent most of my time at the Tamiment Library, the former RAND School for Social Sciences, an institution for the study of radical movements hosted by the New York University in the Elmer Bobst Library in Washington Square. There, I investigated the archive of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) and read several party newspapers (often exclusive possession of the library): the “Socialist”, official organ of the SLP between 1877 to 1879, the “National Socialist”, a shortly lived national newspaper, and the “Wochenblatt der New Yorker Volkszeitung”, a weekly newspaper published by a New York German publishing company in close relation with the Socialist Labor Party. I also visited the Archival Division of the New York Public Library, where I searched the Florence Kelley Papers, and the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, which stores the archive of Abraham Cahan.

The Reading Room of the Wisconsin Historical Society



My second destination was Madison, Wisconsin. Thanks to the adoption of an early policy of evidence and document preservation, put forward by the scholar Richard T. Ely, the Wisconsin Historical Society has become an invaluable centre for any scholar of the American workingmen's movements. The SLP general archive was donated to the society in 1906 under specific request of Professor Ely, and was incremented in 1974 and in 1984. Part of my ten days in Madison was dedicated to this extraordinary archival resource. The remaining time was used to read some other newspapers, such as the “Workmen's Advocate” and the “People”, official

English language organs respectively from 1885 to 1891 and from 1891 to 1899, and the “Sozialist”, official German language newspaper from 1885 to 1891.

Finally, in the last three days of my trip I went to Cincinnati, Ohio. This Mid-western city was home of the first National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party. Also, it was the hometown of Peter H. Clark, arguably the first African American socialist. During the time I spent at the Cincinnati Historical Society, housed into the impressive Union Terminal train station, I had the chance to research the Peter H. Clark fund, recently donated to the Society by Nikky Taylor, the author of the first biography written about Clark.

The evidences gathered during my trip will be key for the proceeding of my research project. During these weeks I opened new strands of research, which I will investigate in the future. Immigrant militants massively animated the SLP. A confrontation between the official German and American newspapers helps to spell out the role of non-English speaking militants in the SLP. Key problems, such as the reaction to Chinese immigration in California or the relations of the SLP with Bellamite nationalists and populists, will be investigated with the aid of these evidences. Also, in these articles chattel slavery is systematically cited together with wage slavery. A careful reading of this material suggests that this theoretical parallel is so frequent and important that ends up being the pillar of the socialist political program. These are only a part of the problems that this research trip helped to tackle and investigate further.

My trip was also the occasion to discuss extensively my research. I wish to thank Prof. Thomas Bender (NYU), Prof. Paul Buhle (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Prof. Nikky Taylor (University of Cincinnati) and Prof. Tony Michels (University of Wisconsin-Madison) for the precious insights and contributions given to my research project.

In conclusion, the most important thank goes to the EAAS, without which this research trip would have not been possible.

The Union Terminal, home of the Cincinnati Historical Society

