

## **“Negrov Lynčovanie” and the Unbearable Whiteness of Slovaks: The Immigrant Press Covers Race**

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Near the end of Thomas Bell’s novel of Slovak steelworkers, *Out of This Furnace*, the Americanized union organizer, Dobie, takes his immigrant grandpa for a visit to “the old neighborhood,” Braddock, Pennsylvania’s Slavic First Ward. Passing the vacant storefronts, he rattles off the name of departed ethnic shops. “Wold’s torn down, Gyurik gone, Spetz gone, Dzmura, Veroskey, Finish’s grocery, Froehlich’s dry goods, Pustinger the undertaker—they’re all gone now, hey, Dzedo?”

Within the memory of the old-timers, however, the First Ward lives on. Dzedo and Dorta, his oldest friend, get misty-eyed for their vanished tight-knit neighborhood. “Every Sunday two or three weddings. Every Sunday without fail. All you had to do was walk along the street until you heard the gypsies playing and there was your wedding.”

Dorta comments, “You should’ve seen it twenty years ago when it was full of stores. On payday nights it was almost as crowded as Main Street.”

“It was better than Main Street,” Dzedo proclaims.

“Everybody knew everybody else in those days, It’s not like that now anywhere . . . There was more friendliness. It was good then.”

“We had good times,” Dzedo says, sucking on his pipe. “Good times.”

Then the old-timers sigh and blame the usual suspects. “So it goes,” Dorta says. “It’s too bad the niggers had to come.” (While Dorta might have hurled an

only slightly less pejorative “*Čierny*” at her neighbors, the one word in English old Slovaks almost certainly knew by 1935 was the standard American epithet.) “They never bother me, but some of my neighbors have moved, especially the ones with daughters. The men are always getting drunk, and fighting, and you hear women screaming during the night. They all live together like so many animals. And so dirty!”

“They’re poor,” Dobie says.

“How much does soap and water cost?”

“I know. But I was just thinking that once it was the Irish looking down on the Hunkies and now it’s the Hunkies looking down on the niggers. The very things the Irish used to say about the Hunkies the Hunkies now say about the niggers. And for no better reason.”

“Dorta shrugged but didn’t say anything.”<sup>1</sup>

As scholars such as Matthew Frye Jacobson have noted, part of demonstrating one’s fitness for “republican citizenship” in the United States entailed, for Eastern and Southern Europeans, learning to be white. Very quickly “in-between people”<sup>2</sup> such as Dorta and Dzedo demonstrated by their language, preferences, and fine distinctions that they had indeed become Caucasian. This whiteness was not just a matter of “passing” in the physical, or biological sense, but an embrace of social whiteness, too. Sicilians were lynched in 1890s Louisiana not because, or not only because, they didn’t fit neatly into a racial binary of white versus black, but also because they refused to obey the societal rules of whiteness. They served blacks in their stores, lived near blacks, and even on occasion married across the color line. It was this behavioral component of unwhiteness, Jacobson suggests, that most infuriated the gatekeepers of racial purity.<sup>3</sup>

Yet by the 1930s at least, and even earlier, I’ll argue, Slovak immigrants learned the trick that had eluded Sicilians in Jim Crow Louisiana. They were not just passing *physically*, but *behaving* like freeborn, self-respecting white persons. And one of the highest signatories of their whiteness was the people they shunned.

Yet this only poses a further question: Where did the Slovaks grumbling about soap-and-water-less *Čiernys* learn the proper dance steps in this delicate matter of limboing under the New World’s color bar?

Immigrants formed a racialized sense of what it took to become real Americans from several sources of cultural production. Vaudeville offered its staple ethnic caricatures, including crude blackface comics, vestiges of the minstrel shows that became fixtures in immigrant parish plays. Silent movies were a popular and accessible form of entertainment for non-English speakers, and the new medium presented as its first blockbuster *Birth of a Nation*, the saga of redemption from supposed “Negro misrule.”<sup>4</sup>

As for English speakers, newspapers played a key role for Slavic immigrants in solidifying a racial binary that stigmatized African Americans as separate from, and supposedly lesser than, all other “racial” groups. Grace Elizabeth

Hale has demonstrated that English-language papers were full of graphic reports of lynchings. Such accounts served to create and reinforce, as well as publicize, the hardening caste system and shored up the solidarity of the Caucasian race.<sup>5</sup> But it wasn't only English-language papers that ran lynching stories; the Slovak press amply covered these atrocities, too. For Eastern Europeans not yet as invested in their whiteness, at least compared to native-born white Southerners, the immigrant press served an even more directly tutorial process in racial identity formation.

What I want to do, then, is to examine some of the articles immigrants read that enabled them to learn, as early as the 1890s, the racial codes of conduct that produced by the 1930s a First Ward so resentful of *Čierny*.

While I will not argue that the Slovak-American press alone accomplished the feat of making immigrants aware of their (potential) whiteness and their new country's *Herrenvolk* attitudes toward African Americans, the papers—such as *Narodne Noviny* (*National News*), *Amerikansky Russky Viestnik* (*American Ruthenian Messenger*), and *Jednota* (*Union*)—that they avidly read certainly played a part in influencing readers' world views.

*Narodne Noviny*, weekly paper of the National Slovak Society (NSS), by 1915 was sent to approximately 29,000 members of this secular fraternal organization, although wartime enthusiasm for Czecho-Slovak independence boosted membership above 50,000 by 1918. While emphasizing its members' Slovak identity and looking out for their ethnic interests, particularly in advocating independence from Austria-Hungary, the NSS required that its members eventually take out American citizenship. Although the NSS was often critical of industrial America, its frequent articles on black-white relations were short on criticism of Jim Crow.<sup>6</sup>

*Amerikansky Russky Viestnik* (*ARV*) was the organ of the Byzantine Rite's *Sojedinenje*, the Greek Catholic Union. Although speaking for a religious fraternal society, *ARV*'s coverage of social life in the United States, including race relations, was practically indistinguishable from *Narodne Noviny*. At the end of World War I *Amerikansky Russky Viestnik* reached about 90,000 readers.<sup>7</sup> *Jednota*, weekly of the First Catholic Slovak Union (*Jednota*), claimed more than 40,000 readers in 1918. In spite of its name, Greek Catholic Union (GCU) lodges were open to Roman Catholic Slovaks, too, while *Jednota* also accepted members from the Greek Rite. Moreover, immigrants frequently belonged to several lodges, secular as well as religious. In Philadelphia and Camden, for example, the same men were officers of both the GCU and NSS. While at the national level there may have been some animus or ideological differences between lodge leaders, on the micro-level these differences seem to have been less salient, and the editorials and articles of many fraternal's newspapers often reached the same immigrants.<sup>8</sup>

Readership figures may have to be multiplied beyond fraternal societies' members, too. In Philadelphia, Svatopluk Slovak Hall subscribed to various

newspapers—secular, religious, and even explicitly socialist—for club members and their guests. Within the same families various members belonged to the GCU, Jednota, or NSS, as well as other fraternal societies, and swapped newspapers with brothers, cousins, and uncles. The immigrant press thus gained a wide circulation, and its presentation of the news went a long way toward shaping readers' views, including on race.<sup>9</sup>

Just as the penny press had once helped orient Irish readers, among others, to the Caucasian race, Slovak papers provided a surprising amount of coverage of racial issues. Articles on lynchings, race riots, and America's imperial adventures helped tutor newcomers in who belonged and who did not in the "white man's republic."<sup>10</sup>

On February 5, 1914, readers of *Narodne Noviny* learned of the New World's "People's Justice." "Black man Ben Dickerson was on the 29th of January in Oklahoma City shot dead by a crowd of citizens," the paper reported. "A few days before that Chaffin, the business manager of the Kellogg Corn Flake Company, had been robbed, and out of anger, over a matter of \$4, the unfortunate man Dickerson was shot dead. The mob of citizens arrived at the jail, seized the Negro, and murdered him."<sup>11</sup> This, in full, is the text of an event that by 1914 had become all too common in American society. In examining the 18-year period from 1885 to 1903, Bishop Warren Candler of Atlanta was able to document 2,585 lynchings in the South alone.<sup>12</sup> Lynchings were likewise regularly reported in the Slovak-language press. One effect of such routine reports was perhaps to normalize the reign of terror against African Americans, even for those newcomers who were mostly living far from the scene of these crimes.

Even the most vivid lynching accounts offered little sense of outrage or shock. In 1904, *Amerikansky Russky Viestnik* reported that in Cartersville, Georgia, "a Negro," accused of committing violence against a white girl, "was burned alive after a mob of 200 grabbed him from the hands of the sheriff. A short time after that, while he was burning alive in the evening, he was hit by more than 500 shots."<sup>13</sup> *Narodne Noviny* reported on a 1914 case unusual only in that the lynching victim was a black woman. "The crowd summoned from the city murdered her and then hung her from a tree" after obtaining her "confession" to murdering a 12-year-old girl. "The corpse hanging from the tree was used as a rifle target by the crowd. At the scene of the lynching spectacle were some 30 blacks, who were, however, prevented from interfering with the enraged people's justice."<sup>14</sup> In this account "the people" seeking "justice" were set in opposition to the black onlookers. Immigrants wondering which side of the divide they should occupy—"citizens" or helpless "onlookers"—were left to draw their own conclusions.

These routine and almost formulaic depictions occurred week after week, prodding immigrant readers to take from such tales morals not just on the brutality of *Amerikansky* but on racial identity formation in the New World. For Slovak immigrants, who was counted as white may well have come down to

who was least likely to face the justice of Judge Lynch. By the time of this “black lady’s lynching” in 1914 the naturalization of ritualized violence against blacks, as well as suspect immigrants with only a tentative claim to citizenship, had for two decades been an ongoing feature of the ethnic press. As early as 1894, *Amerikansky Rusky Vestnik* reported the grim circumstances of many a “lynchovanie.”<sup>15</sup> On January 16, 1896, *ARV* reported that, “Not far from New Orleans, there were two murders, the burning at the stake of Irishman Patrick Morris and his Negro wife. Enraged citizens quickly judged him to have grossly exceeded the law and carried out the dreadful sentence on the terrified Morris.”

By reading these news items, even more “provisionally white” people such as Slovaks and Ruthenians learned how lightly they had to tread in America. An additional lesson, though, may have been that in America, who was a white person may well have been someone who did not get lynched, or did not *permit* himself to get lynched. Learning the social component of whiteness, how to behave in a manner that left mainstream America with little doubt as to which side one occupied in the black-white divide, may have been the ultimate lesson learned from the story of Patrick Morris.<sup>16</sup>

Most such accounts noted, with little skepticism, that the lynching invariably followed a conviction of the black victim for some horrific crime (rape, robbery, or murder) that was frequently used to justify the atrocity that followed. This was the case on February 15, 1906, when *Amerikansky Rusky Vestnik* reported that a “lynčovanie Nigra” had occurred in Gadsden, Alabama, after a black man named Richardson had been sentenced only to life imprisonment for the murder of a white woman during a train robbery.<sup>17</sup> A 1913 *Narodne Noviny* account of a double lynching in Harrison, Mississippi, of two teenage black brothers stressed not the vicious hanging and shotgun execution of the teens, but their alleged murderous rampage that had left “Eight People Dead.” After drinking alcohol, “The two youths, it was reported, were walking along the street with loaded revolvers, when they began firing on the people.” A troop train was dispatched from Natchez to restore order, but before it could arrive the citizens took matters into their own hands.<sup>18</sup>

Given the documented record of white outrage and reprisals for behavior perceived as insufficiently deferential by blacks, it is always problematic whether violence by blacks represented the spark that set off the lynch mob. In the aforementioned study of lynching, Bishop Candler asserted, “Lynching is due to race hatred and not to any horror over any particular crime.” Time and again, blacks were lynched on the slightest suspicion of insolence, not criminality.<sup>19</sup> But whatever the circumstances leading up to this double murder, Slovak newcomers were learning something of the violent, racialized sense of justice in their new country. Spectacle lynching, with the ritual evisceration of black bodies in a carnivalistic atmosphere of license and reassertion of white supremacy, was, as Leon Litwack put it, a “response to growing doubts that this new generation [of blacks] could be trusted to stay in its place without legal and extra-legal force.”

Eastern European immigrants, too, were regarded by many “old stock” Americans as usurpers of the prerogatives of “real” white people. Reading of the 500 shots fired into the “Cartersville Negro,” such liminal immigrants likely simultaneously felt horror, contempt for the victims, and sober awareness of their own tenuous place in America’s color scheme.<sup>20</sup>

Slovaks toiling in coal fields or steel towns may not have faced a lynch mob, per se. But they were familiar with the violence of the New World. In 1912 a *Narodne Noviny* editorial charged that “the offenses of the capitalists are more excessive in their barbarism than those of the Persian tyrants in darkest Asia,” citing West Virginia’s coal country as a particularly benighted realm. This editorial indicates that race thinking among *Narodne Noviny*’s editors had already proceeded to the point where assumptions of Asian despotism had become part of their cognitive atlases. But the slur word “capitalists”—more despotic, another editorial claimed, “than anything since the time of Nero”—suggests it wasn’t *Negrov lynčovanie* that caused Slovaks to recoil at American brutality, but scabs and hireling state police (“the Cossacks,” as depicted in *Slovak v Amerike* during a 1906 coal strike and the socialist paper *Rovnost L’udu* during the 1920s.)<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, massacres of uppity “Hunky” miners had been known to occur. Even in the pro-citizenship NSS, editors were not averse to criticizing those features of the land of freedom they found particularly brutal or unjust.

Readers thus were well versed in distinguishing between America ideal and real, and may not have accepted reports of black criminality at face value. Such accounts seem to have operated, though, as cautionary tales. Who’s to say what was occurring to blacks couldn’t happen to *them*? Organizing for self-defense in the United Mineworkers and in ethnic self-help fraternal clubs was all too often found lacking. More effective as a shield against Judge Lynch was to learn to identify with the rest of the white guys.

This fashioning of an identity as part of the “Caucasian race” was something of an unwitting collaboration between native-born actors and ethnic elites, or perhaps a three-way collaboration, as Slovak readers frequently provided letters to the editor that reflected their own racialized sensibilities, too. Dispatches reprinted in *Amerikansky Rusky Viestnik*, *Narodne Noviny*, *Jednota*, and other Slovak newspapers were not the work of immigrant reporters, but rewrites from English-language wire services. As Gunther Barth has demonstrated, the metropolitan press of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was instrumental in homogenizing and modernizing a polyglot urban population. The mass-circulation press played a significant part in instructing the citizens of mass society in the proper behavior necessary for negotiating an increasingly anonymous, complex society. On New World race relations, immigrant newspapers culled Associated Press rewrites of the mass press’ homogenizing, “received wisdom,” and thus played their part in instructing their readers in how to behave as responsible Americans.<sup>22</sup>

As Benedict Anderson has noted, the press created the illusion of a common national identity among members of a newspaper-reading public that may never have met one another but nevertheless began to conceive of itself as united by bonds of nationhood. Although Anderson concentrated on this process among colonial elites in East Asia, as well as the Magyars, something of the same “imagined community” formation was occurring within the United States.<sup>23</sup>

### Celebrating an Imagined Slovak Community

Among Slovak immigrants, creating an imagined community was a two-tiered process, first a matter of conceptualizing a common nationhood, and second fitting that identity within a “Caucasian” polity. *Narodne Noviny* and other papers melded together a national identity for immigrants who may have had at best only a regional conception of themselves as residents of Zemplín or Trenčín province, and not as Slovaks, when they first emigrated. When Dzedeo Kracha first emigrates to America in Bell’s novel, *Out of This Furnace*, the first “outsider” he makes fun of is not the Čierny but an immigrant from Zemplín, whom Kracha, a good son of Abauj, endeavors to convince is pronouncing his own language incorrectly.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, early immigrants established separate Roman Catholic parishes based on region of origin, not Slovak identity. In Philadelphia “they didn’t really regard themselves as the same people,” an informant recalled, so a separate parish was established in 1907 for immigrants from Trenčín “who didn’t want to sit with these Easterners here,” who had a second, Zemplín-based parish.<sup>25</sup>

Some of these regional frictions eroded in the face of discrimination against Hunkies by *Amerikansky*, and as M. Mark Stolarik notes, newspapers’ use of the central Slovak literary dialect broke down regionalist friction between westerners and easterners. Slovak-American papers’ editorials on the need for independence from the Hapsburgs also solidified inchoate resentment against Magyars.<sup>26</sup> The immigrant press was instrumental in developing a “Slovak” imagined community.

But such identity formation didn’t occur in a vacuum, rather in a society in which blackness remained the ultimate mark of the outsider. By reading lurid accounts of the ritualized evisceration of American outcasts, Eastern European immigrants not fluent in English could at least potentially join in the construct of whiteness.

Regarding Jewish immigrants in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Karen Brodtkin has distinguished between ethnoracial assignment—what other groups said about Jews’ status as “off-white” immigrants—and ethnoracial identity—the sense of peoplehood created for themselves, at least partially in reaction to other groups, especially African-Americans, with whom they interacted in the New World. In post-World War II America, Jewish whiteness became more “naturalized,” in large part because of the migration of second-generation Jews (as well as Eastern and Southern European Catholics) into

the suburbs. Increasingly, too, Jewish intellectuals began to emphasize their group's "prefigurative whiteness," their alleged affinity with the white Protestant mainstream, and their cultural distance from African Americans' "tangle of pathologies."<sup>27</sup>

Early-twentieth-century Slovak immigrants likewise constructed identities out of an admixture of "assignment" and self-proclaimed "identity," a process they had known even in Austria-Hungary, where "racial" differences certainly had been emphasized. Caricatures disseminated in *fin de siecle* Austria mocked Czech, Moravian, and Slovak day laborers in Vienna, indicating that Slavs were often on the receiving end of racial slights.<sup>28</sup> But Slovaks, too, made fun of those who didn't make the grade, at least as they saw it. Initially, Kracha mocks these foreigners, immigrants from Zemplín, for not speaking their language correctly. After 15 years in America, he and his friends in Braddock still use "*Čierna*" not to refer to African Americans but to dark and Gypsy-like characters from Eastern Europe. His mistress, *Čierna Zuška* (Black Susan), earns the condemnation of Braddock for her free and easy ways, but there is also a racialized condemnation of her Gypsy looks. Forty years later in the novel, the Slovaks are using "*Čierna*" exclusively to slur African Americans.<sup>29</sup>

What had been added to the "assignment"/"identity" mix in the intervening decades was Slovak readings in black and white. Should Kracha have scanned *Jednota* on October 15, 1902, he would have read yet again of a "*lynčovala Nigrov*": "In the town of Newbern, Tennessee, it is reported that a mob of nearly 500 people hung two Negroes from a telephone pole. . . . The marauding rabble arrived at the jail and seized the struggling Negroes, pronouncing justice at once that very day, condemning them, tearing the Negroes from jail and lynching them." This account is typical of the rewrites found thus far in the Slovak press. In this instance, however, the editors tacked on a concluding sentence: "We are incapable of doing justice to these rabble judgments by the most unadorned Americans." This editorial emendation is unusual, for most stories of lynchings, no matter how graphic the details on victims' torture, omit even such a cursory editorial remark. These few isolated words of condemnation were greatly outnumbered by the more dispassionate accounts of black lynchings. After reading dozens of lynching reports, year after year, differences between natives of Zemplín and of Abauj may by the 1930s have seemed less important than the line between black and white.<sup>30</sup>

## Lessons in Race Thinking

But was the publication of these lynching accounts by Slovak editors an explicit call to join America as citizens of a racist, *Herrenvolk* republic? Did Slovak editors such as Ivan Bielek of *Narodne Noviny* or Rev. Stefan Furdek of *Jednota* share the same race phobias as South Carolina Senator Pitchfork Ben Tillman?

Certainly, Slovak papers published much material that did not reflect a racist sensibility. Intent as the paper and the NSS were on Americanizing Slovak immigrants, *Narodne Noviny* published detailed biographies of "Juraj Washington" and other notables in a regular series of "Ľivotopisy veľ'kych mužov" (*Lives of Great Men*).<sup>31</sup> During World War I, such features became even more common,<sup>32</sup> progressing to a hagiographic booklet, "Short Lives of the Presidents of the United States" published by Pittsburgh's *Americkeho Slovaka* in 1922.<sup>33</sup> Papers even printed courses on American citizenship, such as one offered in 1924 by *Dennik Slovak v Amerike*, a working-class daily published in New York.<sup>34</sup>

But alongside these straightforward catechisms, the Slovak press continued to offer a steady diet of lynching stories, even though most occurred in places few Slovaks lived. What was a Slovak supposed to conclude when reading in *Jednota* that "in the town of Berkley, Va., . . . the black man George W. Blount . . . was released by the police and before their very eyes strung up from a lamppost and burned alive." Before this, though, "masked men had seized Blount and taken him to a field, where he was beaten and then shot into pieces." All of this occurred despite the fact (or was it because of the fact?) that "Blount was said to be the political leader" of blacks in the region.<sup>35</sup> Whether editors explicitly intended it or not, immigrant readers may have drawn the conclusion that even successful blacks were, in the New World, fair game for the blood lusts of the rabble.

The very act of repeatedly selecting these stories for inclusion on page one says something, too, about what ethnic elites thought was important. The prominence of lynching coverage leads this third-generation Slovak American to conclude that this sanguinary folkway, about which an aspiring citizen would never be quizzed on a naturalization exam, was critical in becoming fully acculturated to American life.

Even if editors placed these stories at least partly for their shock value, we are left to ponder the readings immigrants themselves drew from an almost weekly dose of lynching stories. Far more numerous than *Pan Redaktory* (Big-shot editors) were the average Slovaks and second-generation Slovak Americans who continued reading these papers for decades. Their responses to stories of black victims were more salient factors in building a "white" polity than a single editor's purpose in running a story.

A Slovak in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, reading that in neighboring Indiana County "blacks had been expelled," may have drawn his own conclusions on the victims' fate, and his own precariousness as a suspect white person, regardless of editors' intentions. In this case, after "a black man had killed a white boy," "the whites in a body took care of the matter themselves, despite the black man's prattling that he was innocent." The mob "in the second place told all those blacks of his fellow race who lived in that place that in another day they had to entirely clear out of the place." When "the blacks didn't heed them, the

whites as a body returned and destroyed the homes of all the blacks and expelled them from the place." Whatever editors intended, conclusions that "The [whites] have established a strict new form of order, that no one can come back to the place, so long as some living there don't want them," clearly communicated blacks' pariah status in the social order.<sup>36</sup>

Michael Rogin has noted a similar process among immigrant Jews. In noting that Abraham Cahan included in the inaugural issue of his *Arbeiter Zeitung* a condescending translation of a *Scribner's* article on "Life Among the Congo Savages," Rogin observes that Jewish immigrants "began to move from being the objects of exotic interest to being the reading subjects interested in exotic places, from what they shared with cannibals to what they shared with readers of *Scribner's*."<sup>37</sup> So, too, Slovaks moved from being objects of persecution to readers of persecuted *Negrov*.

Nor need these readings have been univocal, even within a single Slovak. As Eric Lott has argued regarding antebellum audiences at blackface minstrel shows, desire for the supposed liberty of pre-industrial labor, embodied in stage "slaves," as well as more carnal desire for the "black" body, coexisted with a biting and savage mockery of the racialized underclass held in bondage. Likewise, an immigrant may have simultaneously experienced terror at the atrocities of lynching; contempt for the hapless victim who had exhibited his lack of manhood by "allowing" himself to be hung; repugnance at the brutality of *Amerikansky* engaged in this barbaric ritual, and a sober awareness that a similar fate might await Slovaks if they weren't careful. All these emotions and more may have contended, until repetition, and years of residence in the racialized United States, taught the reader which sentiment was preferable.<sup>38</sup>

Rather than enraging immigrants about injustices done to African Americans, these accounts may have served as moral anesthesia. Lynching stories followed a predictable format: a few lines of crisp reporting on alleged Negro crimes, white outrage, and mob justice. Accounts appeared in *ARV*, *Jednota*, and *Narodne Noviny* in single columns followed by other *USA Today*-sized nuggets on matters as diverse as the Democrats' nomination of Alton B. Parker for president, mine strikes, hurricanes, and unrest in Cuba. These brief snippets normalized America's racial caste system. Lynchings were just one of many routine matters read about on the way to the lists of *Sokol* charity balls, notices of job opportunities, and calls for strike funds.<sup>39</sup>

As Grace Elizabeth Hale notes, lynching became naturalized through formulaic newspaper accounts, merely another part of the ebb and flow of daily occurrences. Hale says that Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) regretted that "an uncomfortably large percentage of Americans can read in their daily newspapers of the slow roasting alive of a human being in Mississippi and turn, promptly and with little thought, to the comic strip or sporting page. Thus has lynching become almost an integral part of our national folkways." These spectacle lynchings, Hale ar-

gues, were fashioned by middle-class Southern whites alarmed by both the intrusion of market forces to their region and the presence of a small but persistent black professional class during the 1890s. Spectacle lynchings, she writes, “eased white fears of a raceless consumer society even as they helped structure segregation, the policy that would regulate this new southern world.”<sup>40</sup>

But it wasn’t only unambiguously white “old stock” Southerners who embraced these titillating accounts, or felt their whiteness reconfirmed by the victimization of outcast others. Through their readings on *Negrov lynčovanie*, even working-class Eastern Europeans (who themselves might have elicited Southern fears of a “raceless society” almost as much as the shibboleth of “Negro misrule”) were able vicariously to participate in this gruesome national pastime. As David Roediger has written, analysis that presents working-class struggle as occurring merely between capitalists and exploited workers fails to address the central question of why the white working class settled for being white. The “wages of whiteness” could be redeemed by Slavic newspaper readers reconfirming (or perhaps discovering for the first time) their racial identity. Slovaks and Ruthenians knew of the dangerous conditions they faced in mine and mill. But as Roediger reminds us, no less a social critic than W. E. B. Du Bois recognized that white low men on the totem pole were compensated for their low-wage, miserable work at least in part by a “public and psychological wage,” the satisfaction in their whiteness.<sup>41</sup>

Thus newspaper coverage of suppression of strikes was juxtaposed with accounts of even more violent evisceration of the bodies of distant Southern black men. “In the states of Georgia, Alabama and Louisiana there lately has actually been a noticeable uprising, a war of the white people against the blacks of those places,” a first-page item in *Jednota* reported in August 1904. “. . . Whites have hunted blacks down like rabbits, and even flogged them to death. The indignation of whites has been greatly roused against blacks in all regions of the southern states.” As if to confirm this, directly beneath this report was a second short item from Statesboro, Georgia, where on August 16th, “the rabble seized two Negro men, Paul Reed and Will. Cato, tied them together with chains, poured gasoline on them and burned them alive. The Negroes were quickly baked. . . . Neither the American authorities nor the unfortunate Negroes have been able to stop these terrible deaths.”

Yet on this same page there appeared reports of strikes in Chicago and elsewhere, and it is these items, not lynching accounts, that drew the anger of Slovak letter writers. Jozef Petak of Birmingham, Alabama, for example, in the same issue that brought the atrocity in Statesboro to immigrants’ attention, excoriated his company for recruiting scabs in all regions of two states to break a strike. While such letters denouncing the brutality of bosses, strikebreakers, Cossacks, and scabs were recurrent features in the Slovak press, one searches these papers in vain for letters of outrage regarding the epidemic of lynching about which immigrants so frequently read.<sup>42</sup>

Because even American presidents as late as the 1940s never mustered the courage to back federal anti-lynching legislation, it would be asking a lot of working-class Slovaks to make lynching their highest priority. But such uniform silence on lynching from a readership quite voluble and opinionated on other matters hints at just how indifferent Slovak immigrants quickly became to the fate of African Americans, even those who were tortured to death. In the land of the Coal & Iron Police, they could at least take solace that no one was likely to cut off their fingers, or worse, as souvenirs.

Even the specter of dynamited black churches, as reported in *ARV* in 1903, couldn't arouse a stronger condemnation than "Those people were greatly incited against the blacks, who obviously need some strong defensive society."<sup>43</sup> An unsettling combination of contempt, sympathy, and indifference or distancing from the plight of African Americans emerges in even the most sympathetic of these stories.

### Race and the "Not Quite White"

Blacks were not the only ones in need of defense. The fluidity of racial notions in the early-twentieth century as the United States confronted "probationary white" peoples has been well documented by contemporary scholars, and this liminality is reflected in the immigrant press. Just as earlier the Irish had to "prove" their whiteness, now it was the Slav's and Italian's turn.<sup>44</sup> As Jacobson has noted, Sicilian immigrants in Louisiana ran afoul of America's rigid caste system not solely because of their swarthy skin or suspect "Saracen" ancestry. Rather, their social behavior reinforced their "non-white" status, and they suffered at the end of a noose for their fraternization with African Americans. Native-born America, jealously guarding the "Nordic" germ plasm of the country from Eastern and Southern European invasion, was nervously suspicious not only of the phenotypes but also the social behavior of newcomers.<sup>45</sup>

But it wasn't just nativists who worried about "non-white" groups. Slovak editors, too, were judgmental of newcomers of certain "races" and the social, political, and cultural threat that these allegedly innate racial differences posed. This was particularly so in the case of Italians. Like more widely circulating newspapers such as *The New York Times*, Slovak papers judged "*Talianov*" quick to reach for dynamite or stiletto when settling personal grudges. "The *Čarna Ruka* (Black Hand), better known as the Mafia to some, has been busy extorting money from the richest American Italians throughout the land," *Amerikansky Rusksky Viestnik* reported in 1894. In 1913 *New Yorksky Dennik* (*New York Daily*) reported, "Police break up the whole band of the Black Hand" with the arrest of "24 *Talianov*." Two months later, the news was less happy. Two bombs rent the air in "the Sicilian quarter, between Prince and Elizabeth streets."<sup>46</sup>

More graphic violence was reported, as when "In the city of Youngstown, Ohio, recently a high-spirited Italian organization set fire to the office of Judge

W.C. Haseltine, because he had attempted with the utmost energy to hinder that society’s murderous business.”<sup>47</sup> In 1894, reports of more prosaic inter-Italian knife fights were interspersed with livelier accounts of fatal dynamitings—as when Eugenio Geneva was eviscerated by his rival, Michael Salvatore, over a woman. These accounts couldn’t have left readers of *ARV* with a good opinion of the Mediterranean “race.”<sup>48</sup>

To *ARV*’s horror, two years later a full-blown “nationalities war” erupted in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania, an event that required at least some editorial comment tacked onto the usual dry news-service rewrite. “In Hazleton, a bloody strife erupted between the Italians and the Americans (mostly Germans, Irish and English) who at night visited the place where the Italians dwell, blasting their camp with revolvers. The Italians have found a war everywhere they’ve gone in America. Evidently, they didn’t need to stay in their country to go find a war in, say, Abyssinia.”<sup>49</sup>

In this regard the attitude is light years ahead of the solicitation usually shown to African Americans. No story of *Negro lynčovanie* made reference to blacks’ relative security back in Africa, and it was only the infrequent article that expressed even mild shock at the atrocities reported. This jibe, though, at the kind of opportunity awaiting Italians, who at least were fellow Europeans, suggests editors were coming to regard fellow “provisional whites” as somewhat deserving of their solicitation.

More brutal persecution awaited “*Talianov*” who journeyed to Louisiana, where they refused to honor the hardening binary racial castes of Jim Crow. *ARV* reported in 1896 that “In Hahnville, La., three Italians were seized from behind their doors and murdered. On Aug. 9th a ‘national mob’ showed up on the door of three Italian workers accused of a crime, and lynched the three together.” The paper solemnly added, “In that part of the country all Italians are regarded as disturbers of the public order, as highwaymen and the like, and are therefore murdered.”<sup>50</sup> For all sorts of racial minorities, the promised land depicted in the Slovak press was a dangerous place.

Papers also reported inter-racial conflicts. A 1910, *Narodne Noviny* headline read, “Brother attacked by Italians.” Italians armed with stones and knives attacked two members of the NSS as they walked through a tunnel. Following the assault, “Mister Jozef Galovic telephoned for a policeman, who that evening arrested some Italians. The following day the rest of the Italians were also arrested.”<sup>51</sup>

Slovak editors hastened to point out that they also had had their share of run-ins with blacks. On May 14, 1896, *Amerikansky Ruscky Viestnik* reported that, “In Bluefield, W.Va., there was a large battle between Slovaks and Negroes, which ended with the murder of two Negroes and one Slovak, and two Negroes were seriously wounded.”<sup>52</sup> These press accounts seem designed to demonstrate that there was no danger of “un-white” behavior in a *social* sense on the part of Slovaks.

Social scientist Edward Alsworth Ross and other Nordic “race experts” were important for legitimizing a hierarchical conception of not-quite-white-enough races. But immigrants’ own responses and practices in shaping their racialized identities have been neglected. Replying to the likes of Ross, who stated categorically that in one steel mill city, 54.5 percent of Slovak schoolchildren were mentally retarded,<sup>53</sup> immigrants could point to their own battles with African Americans to establish their alignment with the white part of America’s cognitive landscape of race. Whether this convinced armchair phrenologists is doubtful, for as Ross also stated, “A Slav can live in dirt that would kill a white man.”<sup>54</sup>

Academic and popular press writers alike often characterized Slavic, along with Eastern European Jewish, immigrants as “Asiatic” or “Oriental.” Senator Henry Cabot Lodge commented that Slovak immigrants “are not a good investment for us to make, since they appear to have so many items in common with the Chinese.”<sup>55</sup> Economists who feared Slavic miners would undercut the wages of “real white men” stigmatized their “Asiatic” docility and lower standards of living, warning of a “Slavic invasion.”<sup>56</sup>

When Burton Hendrick warned in 1907 of the dangers of “The Great Jewish Invasion,” the double focus of his phobia was on display. “New York . . . seems destined to become overwhelmingly a Jewish town,” he wrote. But what really alarmed him was that since 1881 “Jewish immigrants have come largely from Eastern Europe.” Hence, he concluded, “New York is not only largely, and probably destined to be overwhelmingly, a city of Hebrews, but a city of Asiatics.” Not Jewishness per se, but immigrants’ residence in uncivilized Eastern Europe marked them as Asiatics, beyond the pale.<sup>57</sup> Earlier, E.S. Martin’s condescending magazine safari to the slums, “East Side Considerations,” had been illustrated with a picture of a Jewish immigrant girl captioned “An oriental type.”<sup>58</sup>

Well into the 1930s, Madison Grant’s and Lothrop Stoddard’s lament at the “passing of the great race” and “the rising tide of color against white world supremacy” struck a responsive chord throughout Anglo-America. The biggest waves of the threat were the non-Nordic races of Europe, Slavs included. As Michael Rogin notes, “Lothrop Stoddard . . . dismissed Franz Boas’ denial of racial difference between immigrants and old-stock Americans as ‘the desperate attempt of a Jew to pass himself off as a white.’”<sup>59</sup> One can only guess at Stoddard’s opinion of Dzedo and Dorta trying to do the same.

Slovak newspapers were intent on trying to address and counter anti-immigrant rhetoric such as Ross’. But could the ethnic press be heard? Native-born opinion of Slavs was probably little affected by what was written in Slavic-language journals, or even in English-language publications such as the World War I-era *Bohemian Review*, which supported Tomas G. Masaryk’s independence movement.<sup>60</sup> Where the immigrant press was critical was in contributing to the identity formation of immigrants themselves.

Within industrial America’s many Little Slovakias the words of Ivan Bielek of *Narodne Noviny* carried far more weight than those of Ross, who could proclaim with the declarative precision known only to academics that the Slav, unlike the white man, has “a horror of water applied inside or outside.”<sup>61</sup> But Slavs themselves redrew cognitive boundaries around racial groupings. A conception of whiteness that could include Ruthenian and Slovak, as well as luminaries like Southern sheriffs, required deft bricolage. And the immigrant press was happy to provide the glue and scissors for this cut and paste.

### “Yellow Peril,” American Empire

As early as 1904 the Russo-Japanese War provided Slovaks with an occasion to distinguish among whites, European Slavs, and non-white Japanese. *Jednota* congratulated Pavel K. Kadak, a member of the First Catholic Slovak Union, for answering American newspapers’ anti-Russian editorials and their approval of “the glorious Mongols” (i.e., Japanese). In a letter to American newspapers that *Jednota* reprinted in both English and Slovak, Kadak subsumed Slavs within the category of Caucasian and situated the Japanese as the racial other against whom Caucasians would inevitably clash. “What is it that induces this pro-Japanese enthusiasm on our part?” Kadak demanded.

Is it . . . because Russians belong to the same Caucasian race as Americans or because the Japanese are of the Mongolian race? Because the Russians are . . . spreading Christian civilization in northern and eastern Asia, and the Japs are pagans and enemies of Christianity? . . . Do they not dream of uniting the whole Mongolian race under their leadership for the purpose of chasing out of Asia the “white devils”?<sup>62</sup>

Later that year, *Jednota* was more to the point. “Yellow Peril” was the English headline to a Slovak editorial conflating the Japanese menace on the world stage and in the United States under an “open door” immigration policy that, the editors argued, left America susceptible to a flood of docile Asian laborers who worked for distressingly low wages. “Asiatics once inundated Europe,” the editors warned. “The Huns of Attila were actually wild savages who slaughtered women and children like bloodthirsty animals. . . . Why it is impossible to educate the world, that Japan similarly wants to destroy us, is difficult to say.” Such an editorial would likely have found favor with Senator Lodge and other immigration restrictionists, even if they might have tacked on a paragraph or two on “the Slavic peril” not altogether to the liking of *Jednota*’s editors.<sup>63</sup>

As for many Americans at the turn of the century, race was also configured for Slovaks through the incipient United States empire, and in this regard they participated fully in the melding of a white identity. Several scholars have noted that Irish immigrants had, in part, secured their place in the white man’s repub-

lic by serving in the mid-nineteenth-century Army subduing Mexicans and Indians.<sup>64</sup> In 1898, Slovak newcomers likewise established their white credentials by waving the red, white, and blue, cheering President McKinley's shouldering of the "white man's burden" with full-page, flag-draped homages to the president, Admiral Dewey, and General Miles.<sup>65</sup> The more ambiguous aftermath of the Spanish-American War, with the gift Trojan horse looked in the mouth by Cubans and Filipinos, was likewise reflected in the immigrant press. An editorial in *Amerikansky Rusky Vjestnik* explained the situation in Cuba in terms of the islanders' infuriating nerve in not immediately accepting the Platt Amendment granting America trusteeship over Havana. *ARV* later ran dispatches from a Slovak-American soldier stationed in the Philippines, commenting on the natives' "savagery," and when Emilio Aguinaldo refused to concede the justice of American domination, the paper ran editorials condemning "the brutality of the dictator Aguinaldo," who was "the chief leader, the dictator, of all the misguided Filipinos in rebellion."<sup>66</sup>

As the colonial nature of American rule in Asia became apparent, such crude characterizations were at times tempered, even reversed, by the editors of *ARV*, who in 1904 expressed the opinion the real culprit in the Far East was "American tyranny." "Americans are wont to show off before the world, that they are the friendliest and the tamest, also the most educated, people on earth. We've seen some of this friendliness on sentry patrol in the scandalous Boxer Rebellion, which has been carried out by the American gladiators. Also we've seen the American 'water cure' practiced on the enslaved Philippines. This doesn't strike us as particularly civilized." *Jednota* likewise fretted over the wisdom of America embarking on "Imperialism."<sup>67</sup>

Such ambivalence toward the United States' imperial project suggests editors were not always sure the Anglo-Saxon race was so very superior, or something into which self-respecting Slavs would even *want* to assimilate. *ARV*'s conversion to anti-imperialism, though, came two years after Aguinaldo's surrender, and was drowned out by other items more in keeping with mainstream opinion. In a 1914 story headlined "35 Hindus deported," *New Yorksky Dennik* noted that a federal judge in California had ruled Filipinos to be "foreign Asiatics, and declared that they be deported." *NYD* similarly reported a strike in Panama by Chinese merchants and small shopkeepers after they learned that the United States was intending to deport them from its newly acquired colony.<sup>68</sup> And when *Jednota* objected to U.S. policy in the Philippines, it was not because of mistreatment of Filipinos but only to protest U.S. confiscation of Catholic church property.<sup>69</sup>

By 1911 some of the American soldiers patrolling a by-now pacified Philippines were members of the NSS who sent *Narodne Noviny* their impressions of the natives. What these opinions were might be gleaned by the headlines: "Mohammedan Fanaticism" and "Savage Love Ends in Murder." The following year, a more optimistic letter from Jan Dianish, stationed on Mindanao,

promised “Let There Be Peace on Earth—The Unbelievers are Coming Around Through Hearing the Word of Our Father.” Still, Dianish said he always prefaced his sermons by waving his revolver in the air, so it is likely the peace was of the colonized kind. Dianish was behaving like any other American infantryman, with some of his own foreignness thus effaced. Slovaks and other ambiguous racial stock became white at least partly by helping to subdue races even more “wild” than themselves. When standing behind the business end of a rifle, even a Slovak in uniform came to regard himself as “white,” and at least compared to “Mohammedans,” became increasingly so regarded by some native-born Americans.<sup>70</sup>

### Whiteness in World War I

When the Slovak press urged the American government to recognize Slovak difference from Magyar, and during World War I called for their own independent nation, some of the tools at their command had racist underpinnings. Prior to the 1910 census *Narodne Noviny* was editorializing against the indignity of forcing immigrants to identify themselves solely as natives of Hungary, with no way to indicate their ethnic affiliation. To make clear just what an outrage this was, editors turned to racialized language. In an editorial, the paper urged its readers to answer the question “place of birth” with “Slovakland—Slovakia!” Editors fumed, “On the one hand, we are branded by all officially as ‘Hungarians,’ which has given rise to the derogatory ‘Hunky,’ while on the second we have been amalgamated on the other side of the water by the old rulers, in statistical assignments as Magyars—‘What are the Slovaks?’” The editors continued with all the racial indignation they could muster, “‘Hungarian’ and ‘Magyar,’ it is not all the same! They are two different things and the difference is huge! That DIFFERENCE is acknowledged by every linguist, that the Magyar will never lose his INNATE MONGOL-CHINESE CHARACTER!”

A linguistic curiosity—that the Magyar language was not Indo-European—was transformed by Slovak editors into a racial distinction—a matter of “huge” difference over “innate character.” Pointing out to Washington the travesty of classifying a Slovak as a Magyar might only get one so far. Spelling out that a Caucasian, even from the Carpathians, was in danger of being amalgamated with a race (“Chinese-Mongolian”) acknowledged as inferior, on the other hand, almost certainly would be acknowledged as a far graver sin.<sup>71</sup> The Slovaks, who 20 years earlier had been denigrated by Senator Lodge as “not a good acquisition for us to make, since they appear to have so many items in common with the Chinese,” were now highlighting their Caucasian kinship with Anglo-Saxons by belittling Magyars as Asians. As early as 1904, in the same *Jednota* article slurring “the pagan Japs,” Magyars were derided as “Hungarians of the Mongolian race.”<sup>72</sup> The Census Bureau relented to immigrants’ complaints, and in 1910 added a question on “native tongue” to record Central Europe’s varied ethnicities.<sup>73</sup>

During the Great War, assertions of Slovak identity reached fever pitch. As early as 1915, *Jednota* published its declaration of identity:

Us?  
 No. We are Slovaks.  
 The Magyars say that we are Magyars.  
 And the Czechs that we are Czechs.  
 But we are Slovak!  
 And may God grant that we remain Slovaks.  
 We say so nevertheless clearly.  
 Why is it our brother Czechs do not understand us?<sup>74</sup>

Slovaks took great pains to differentiate themselves from both the hated Germans and the Magyars. “WRK” of Philadelphia wrote to *Obrana* in February 1916 insisting “we are not Germans, not Magyars,” but rather “thoroughly-purely Slovaks.” He railed at “the deaf-mute-blind idiocy” of Americans who couldn’t tell the difference. In 1918 with the United States in the war, Anton Chlebuch, also of Philadelphia, rhetorically asked, “Am I happy at being called an Austrian?” before going to a “Mr. Honorable Notary to draw up an affidavit that I am a Slovak and not an Austrian and not a Magyar! And that neither Germany nor Austria-Hungary are my true country!”<sup>75</sup>

Chlebuch was right to worry. In April 1918 the front-page headline in *Jednota* again screamed, “Accused in lynching.” Only this time it was a German who met this fate. The story chronicled the murder of Robert Prager, noting that one of those accused of the lynching had “said that the crowd claimed it was acting under the authority of the army of the United States.”<sup>76</sup> Two weeks later several other Teutons narrowly escaped Prager’s fate. “Two Austrians Tared and Feathered,” *Jednota* announced, telling of two miners who were “grabbed from the mine in Mineral Spring” near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, “and then smeared with tar and covered in feathers because they had refused to buy Liberty Bonds.” A German nearby was likewise assaulted by a mob of “maybe 200 workers,” who “tied him with a rope and said they were going to lynch him.” After the German begged for mercy they “marched him to the bank, where he pledged to buy a Liberty Bond for \$500.” Perhaps superfluously, editors placed as a tag line to this and every other story the message “KUPUJTE LIBERTY BONDY”—BUY LIBERTY BONDS.<sup>77</sup>

Amid all this German- and Magyar-bashing, the Slovak press didn’t lose sight of blacks. Alongside professions of Magyar “Asianness,” there appeared in 1916 a grinning, Rastus-like cartoon of “The Wounded African” designed to remind Slovak readers that “Us? We are white people!” too. The accompanying poem mocked both blacks and British imperialism, but the broadly racist cartoon left little doubt as to the real target of the satire

A Nigger from Africa serving in the war  
While reaching for some honey  
Hurt himself on the shelf.  
On the shelf, but also in his hand  
He woke up in the hospital with his hands bandaged up.  
In the hospital all the nurses,  
They petted him and treated him like a king.  
The African was happy with this but not a little puzzled  
Because it was the first time the Brits hadn't greeted him with curses  
and blows.  
Finally he asked a nurse, who told him it was, everyone knew,  
Because a Negro with a broken hand can't swing a razor so well.  
At that he looked happy.  
But suddenly exclaimed,  
Quick, Miss, send me back to Africa before I get better!<sup>78</sup>

Slovaks on the world stage had already made an invidious comparison between themselves and despotic semi-Asiatic Magyars (at least as told by Slovaks.) Paeans in Bohemian Bazaars to Slovak kinship with the principles of Juraj Washington, *Otec Vlast* (Father of Our Country), also appeared during the war.<sup>79</sup> Now came “The African.” Comparison to an even more benighted group could only heighten—did somebody say whiten?—chances for inclusion as part of the self-ruling elite.

### **Blacking Up to Become White**

Such pejorative comparisons to both Magyars and blacks were not isolated. In 1918 a Slovak from Brooklyn wrote to *Jednota* declaring “Our people have had quite enough of this comedy!” The not-so-funny comedy to which he referred was the indignity of sitting in the same parish with both Magyars and Magyarones (Slovaks who had adopted Magyar as their first language.) But Slovaks had finally succeeded in expelling the unwanted element. “Magyars and Magyarones are no longer welcome in our parish. Now we can announce that our parish is purely Slovak, free of any filthy polluting Magyars.” Language of purity and filth that in decades to come would almost exclusively be used in sneering references to *Čierny* was still used to distinguish Slovak from Magyar.

In order to drive the message home, the parishioners had also founded the “Slovak American Citizens Club” to replace the former Hungarian-Slovak Citizens Club. To highlight this transformation, the writer cited the club’s

many noble intellectual deeds. Such as our St. Joseph’s young people’s organization, which presented its first “Minstrel Show” in our Slovak Hall before more than a thousand people,

and many more had to be turned away for lack of space. The young people sang and acted beautifully, such that everyone marveled it was really only their first performance. Thus this is only a glimpse at what kind of a future our youth have before them.

It is not clear which aspect of the Brooklynites' new identities—into Slovaks—into Americans—into Citizens—the use of blackface was supposed to cement, but it did indeed seem to point to the anti-black attitudes in the future of many Slovak youth.

As Slovak anger at Magyarones—"the traitors to our Slovak language," the Brooklynite wrote—makes clear, language usage was central to many immigrants' sense of identity. But if Magyar was unacceptable as an alternative, we must wonder if blackface minstrelsy made the English language a little more palatable for those in the Slovak American Citizens' Club.<sup>80</sup> The question of which language to speak, which led many Slovaks to bitterly resist Magyarization, became less salient if English and Slovak could both be used, at least in part, to belittle an even less privileged group, African Americans.

Language acquisition has rightly been regarded as one of the hallmarks of immigrants' acculturation to the United States. Considering that some of the first English texts Slovaks learned were minstrel-show songs, a compelling case can be made that racialized identity formation was just as important in becoming a regular American.

During and shortly after World War I, minstrel shows were also performed by Slovak Greek Catholics and German Lutherans in Passaic, New Jersey. The easiest way for such enemy aliens (most Slovaks and Ruthenians were, whether they liked it or not, subjects of an enemy Kaiser) to deflect attention from their ethnicity was to highlight their ostensible racial consanguinity with other Americans.<sup>81</sup> Some second-generation German-Americans in Philadelphia and elsewhere also chose minstrel shows as their premiere English-language productions.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, at the Christadora House settlement on New York's Lower East Side, as early as 1908 Jewish and Slavic children performed in plays such as "The Nigger's Night School" and "Darktown on Parade," which, like citizenship classes, presumably told them much about becoming American.<sup>83</sup>

Eric Lott has written on the ambivalent attitude antebellum working-class audiences expressed while watching minstrel shows. Along with racist mockery, increasingly Irish immigrant attendees projected onto blackface representations of slaves their longings for supposedly idyllic life down South, far away from the time clock and encroaching factory system. Envy of course mixed with degradation, and desire never went so far as to spur minstrelsy's audience to make common cause with captive blacks.<sup>84</sup> A similar ambivalence existed in Slovaks' reading of lynchings in their newspapers. Horror, titillation, racism, anger at the brutality of Americans—all these coexisted, with the less admirable of human emotions perhaps eventually triumphing. Through their production of

minstrel shows, Eastern European immigrants likewise expressed a range of emotions. Racism certainly was expressed. But also, as with Lott's 1850s Irish, Slovak immigrants watching and performing minstrel shows after finishing their 66-hour work week engaged in a similar transference onto blacks of their envy for a mythical care-free life.<sup>85</sup>

Other plays published in the Slovak press express the desire of immigrants to perform the role of regular Americans. Plays such as *Cesta k americkemu občianstvu* (*The Road to American Citizenship*) were published by *Dennik Slovak v Amerike* and *Narodny Kalendar* as early as 1897, while 40 years later, by-now second-generation Slovaks and Ruthenians at Philadelphia's Holy Ghost Greek Catholic Church were still performing a self-mocking *Grinorka* (*The Greenhorn*.) The play contains no black characters, instead mocking the immigrants' own comical process of acculturation—albeit with some digs at "Tony the Italian Iceman." The bill on that 1937 evening, though, also included a selection of American songs—including that minstrel standby, "My Old Kentucky Home."<sup>86</sup> Earlier "greenhorn" plays had been twinned with immigrant "Banjo Jass Orchestras," which may have performed in blackface.<sup>87</sup> Greenhorns were set along the road to Americanism, if not exactly citizenship, by a process of blackface, and reading of blackness in black and white.

These racial masquerades occurred around the time Al Jolson performed the same feat in the classic 1927 film, *The Jazz Singer*. Just as Jacobson and Rogin note one no longer notices Jackie Rabinowitz's Jewishness under the obviously sham blackface, but rather his whiteness, the Babushkas of Brooklyn were lost beneath burnt cork. Newspaper accounts of "*Negrov lynčovanie*" were perhaps forgotten, too, in the fun evening of beautiful singing and acting.<sup>88</sup>

## Race and Class Conflict

Only the radical press wrote unambiguously against lynching and racial oppression. In the 1920s *Rovnost L'udu* (*Equality for the People*) extended its calls for justice to include all Americans, and, beyond that, the colonized races. This paper was the organ of the Slovak Socialist Workers' Section, which was affiliated with the Workers' (Communist) Party, so this is perhaps not too surprising. In its account, "Two Negroes Lynched," *Rovnost L'udu* exhibited a degree of anger at the crime, and skepticism toward the official line of black criminality excusing the lynching, that is impossible to find in fraternal-based papers, secular or religious. "Hal Winton and an unidentified black person were with savagery grabbed by a mob from the arms of town officials and lynched. Officials reported that he had killed Willey P. Martin, manager of a plantation, but does anyone think that this was actually likely? Indeed, lynching is the worst form of barbarism. This travesty was executed with the complicity of the court, which knew of it, and yet permitted it."<sup>89</sup>

Also in 1925, *Rovnost L'udu* sneered at the work of the Baptist Young People's Union. "Good Christians Approve of Lynching" was the dog bites

man headline. "Respectable and dear Christians," the editors intoned. "They've organized into a 'fine' body, 'the Baptist Young People's Union.' The lynchings of blacks are justifiable, under certain conditions, their 34th national convention has decreed . . . And these are Christians?!"<sup>90</sup>

Elsewhere *Rovnost L'udu* wrote approvingly of Gandhi's campaign of massive resistance in India<sup>91</sup> and anti-colonialism on the world stage. A 1924 cartoon showed a muscular rifle-toting man ("the Communist International") confronting a rich, top-hatted "British imperialism," dragging "Egypt" by a rope fastened round his neck. "The Fops of English Capitalism in Egypt Foiled by the Solidarity of the International Proletariat," the cartoon proclaimed. A second cartoon had workers labeled "China," "India," and "Africa" carrying hammer, pickaxe, and gun greeting marching workers. In the middle, a rather oblivious "Kipling" scribbles on a pad, "The East is the East and the West is the West, and never the twain shall meet." A class-conscious cockroach tells him, "You're a liar."<sup>92</sup>

Yet even at radical *Rovnost L'udu*, by 1925 editors were sadly becoming increasingly white. An English-language cartoon told of the exploits of "Squire Edgegate." A lawyer tells his black bootlegger client, "Frogeye," "You told me you were innocent, and I was able so to convince the squire—Now what do you think my services were worth?" The stereotypical shiftless, lying bootlegger replies, "Mistah Stone, Ise broke flatter'n a pancake. But ah kin bring you a quart ob dat liquor Ise bin sellin for leben dollars." Try as I might, I can find little racial enlightenment in a cartoon of black moonshiners. Rather, it is consistent with the cartoon strip minstrelsy so prevalent in English-language dailies. To find it here even among the radical paper's calls for an end to lynching is lamentable.<sup>93</sup>

Such a contradiction may be lamentable, but it is not surprising. For if they backed "Negro rights" Slovaks did so from afar. In Philadelphia, the Slovak Socialist Workers' Section met from 1921 at Slovak Hall, where they drew the line at the clubhouse door. As a social worker noted, "Slovak Hall was available for rental by all other groups, but Negroes were excluded because it was feared that their cleanliness standard would not measure up to that of other groups."<sup>94</sup> By 1921 Slovaks had already read for years the hazardous cost of being caught on the wrong side of the color line, and by then they also had a substantial stake in behaving like whites. Even socialists had internalized the racialized etiquette of their new homes.

The suspicion of all things foreign during World War I and its aftermath often had a chilling effect on individual Slovaks, spurring them to conform to American folkways wherever possible. Yet the social worker's report cited above suggests that radical Slovaks were not merely being prudent in barring blacks from their socialist fraternal hall, but were acting according to generally accepted "fears" of unclean *Čierny*. Certainly not every Slovak learned the same attitudes regarding race simultaneously. But the characterizations of blacks in

the Slovak press contributed to and reinforced Jim Crow thinking at Slovak Hall.<sup>95</sup>

All across the country, Eastern Europeans were learning, with halting steps, that barriers to blacks were a "natural" part of the urban landscape. A daughter of Magyar immigrants who grew up in the South Ward of Trenton recalled that one day in the 1930s her father had entered the Hungarian Club with a black acquaintance. Before the astonished members could say anything, her father reassured them, in Magyar, that this guy was all right. The black man further surprised the members by speaking in Magyar, which he had learned as a waiter on a European steamer. "So they served him," this Trentonian said, hastening to add, "Of course, they *had to* break the glass once he left."<sup>96</sup>

This cross-cultural encounter poignantly captures immigrants balanced between Old World prejudices and New. A potential linguistic ally enters the club, but he is a black man and therefore problematic—at least according to the code of the streets of Trenton. That the man was served his beer or *slivovice* speaks to a tentative, evanescent alliance based on linguistic lines. That the members, "of course, . . . *had to* break the glass," indicates just how deeply internalized barriers based on American conceptions of race had already become.

In the 1930s stigmatization of Eastern Europeans as "off-white," though lingering, had become less virulent, and many immigrants and children of immigrants likewise asserted their "Caucasian" identity. This was evident in the pages of *The American Slav*, a Pan-Slavic, English-language monthly edited by the president of the National Slovak Society. *The American Slav* sought to reach second-generation Slavic Americans from Bulgarians to Ukrainians, but as unambiguously white people. In its inaugural issue in January 1939, *AS* asserted, "If you are of Slavic origin, you are a member of the biggest family of white people on earth. There are over 215,000,000 Slavs in the world. 15,000,000 of them in America." Two months later *AS* defended Russians as "the natural defenders of the western christian [*sic*] civilization which has been endangered by the invasions of barbaric hordes of Asia," and lauded "Russian martyrs of the Christian faith and white race." By May of 1939, *AS* decided that "the leadership of our white men's civilization and culture depends now mainly on America," although editors hastened to add that Slavs were part of that white men's civilization, too. "The Slavs, who are just as pure 'Aryans' (Caucasians, Indo-Europeans) as their real cousins—the Anglo-Saxons, the Latins, the Celts, etc., have exactly the same claim as these other nations to be counted Europeans."<sup>97</sup>

The conflation of several categories—white men, Aryans, Caucasians, Indo-Europeans, Europeans—suggests that the indeterminacy of race still persisted in 1939. In October 1939 *AS* slipped and again was referring to the Slavs as a "racial group," albeit "the greatest racial group in modern Europe."<sup>98</sup> But a certain status anxiety was perhaps understandable among Slavs who had so recently been stigmatized as Asiatic and "a bad investment" for the United States. Editors were on more familiar ground in March 1941 when they dismissed Hungary as "an artificial state composed in the main of renegade Slavs around a

small nucleus of Mongolian Magyars,” updating their rhetoric to denounce this “disturbing element in the natural Slavic sphere of influence and living space.”<sup>99</sup> By World War II Slavic-Americans were determined to be treated as white people.

Along with a naturalized Slavic whiteness, an anti-black animus solidified over time. While *The Jazz Singer* is often regarded as the last gasp of acceptable white ethnic use of blackface, evidently news of its demise never reached many Slovak First Wards.<sup>100</sup> Minstrel shows were proudly advertised and performed at many parishes as late as 1949. A photo reproduced in the hundredth anniversary souvenir journal of a Byzantine Catholic Church in Wilkes-Barre provides a graphic example of Slavs blacking up to emphasize their whiteness.<sup>101</sup>

Strident assertions of whiteness were soon to follow. In 1951, the federal government proposed building public housing in the marshes of Point Breeze, Philadelphia. A phalanx of Holy Ghost parishioners, led by Father George Powell (already anglicized—dare we say “whitened”?—from Pawel), blockaded the building site in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to keep out “these undesirable outsiders.”<sup>102</sup> No one in the crowd had a good word to say for blacks who had evaded *Negrov lynčovanie* covered in *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*. More violent protests occurred in Slavic sections of Detroit and Chicago when blacks attempted to move into those neighborhoods.<sup>103</sup>

Point Breeze Slavs, though, had no qualms about living in proximity to the Italians of nearby St. Monica’s, for in spite of earlier unfavorable coverage of violent *Talianov*, both provisional white groups had become naturalized as Caucasians. By 1951 some of these parishioners had already availed themselves of the whitening properties of the GI Bill, the FHA, and other government subsidies from which African Americans were almost universally excluded. Escape from these “outsiders” into both the suburbs and whiteness was possible for Slovaks courtesy of Uncle Sam. Yet the epistemological seeds of Slovaks’ own identification as white people had already been planted decades before, through the columns of the immigrant press. For decades they had been prepared, through their readings, to redeem their “possessive investment in whiteness” once the New Deal began to make this possible.<sup>104</sup>

Such rowhouse phrenology was an ongoing process, never a seamless matter in which all readers drew the same lessons, all at the same time. As early as 1918, though, in South Philadelphia it had only been the arrival of blacks that had caused full-blown race riots, with an attempt to burn down a rowhouse into which blacks had moved. The “outsiders” in this instance fired on the jeering, polyglot crowd, and the black-white battles continued for days. One of the slain whites was a policeman, Thomas McVay, whose mother exclaimed to a reporter, “He didn’t deserve to meet with such an end, to be killed by the bullet of a negro!”<sup>105</sup> No similar lament was heard about “my boy” being shot by a Slovak or *Talianov*. Nor was the city paralyzed by weeklong race riots when these groups bought houses in the neighborhood; for all the simmering hostility between provisional white groups, lessons on who was an acceptable neighbor were already being learned.

Every act of racial inclusion, of asserting one’s consanguinity with Nordics and even *Talianov*, contained a tacit act of exclusion, a silence on paths not taken. Just as Dorta “shrugged, but didn’t say anything” when confronted with her condemnation of blacks, by 1951 a profound silence existed in the Slovak community toward an earlier ambiguous “racial” status. Only African Americans remained as “these undesirable outsiders.”<sup>106</sup>

Reading of lynchings, immigrants learned which boundaries not to transgress and how to pass as white. Slovaks took from these accounts not just horror at the brutality of vengeful *Amerikansky*, but—more important for their own self-conceptions—new ways of conceiving of who they were and how they fit into their new homeland.

In the end, these depictions reinforced an incipient racism. By the 1920s, even radical Slovaks saw little contradiction in chuckling at racist cartoons or meeting in segregated halls to discuss the brutality of lynching. Less class-conscious Slovaks had already naturalized the country’s caste system through their readings on imperialism abroad and lynchings at home. In the abstract these practices were no doubt deplorable. In the here and now of Brooklyn or Passaic, a Slovak was just as likely to head to a minstrel show after reading his paper as any other “real American.”

In this regard the Slovak press had tutored its readers well in how to become white.

## Notes

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1. Thomas Bell, *Out Of This Furnace* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976, originally published 1941), 327-330.

2. James Barrett & David Roediger, “Whiteness and the Inbetween Peoples of Europe,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Summer 1997, 3-44.

3. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 57-58.

4. Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Michael Rogin, “The Sword Became a Flashing Vision,” in Rogin, *Ronald Reagan the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987); Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise, Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996), 8, 14-15, 76-79, 105, 108, 159-164, 172-173.

5. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 199-215.

6. M. Mark Stolarik, “The Slovak-American Press,” in Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987); Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization: The Slovak Experience, 1870-1918* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 79; R. Vladimir Baumgarten and Joseph Stefka, *The National Slovak Society 100 Year History, 1890-1990* (Pittsburgh: The Society, 1990) 80-85.

7. Paul R. Magocsi, “The Carpatho-Rusyn Press,” in Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987).

8. Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization*, 79; Robert M. Zecker, ‘*All Our Own Kind Here*’: *The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1998), 311-360.

9. Zecker, *'All Our Own Kind Here': The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945*, 344-345, 370-371.

10. Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* (New York: Verso, 1990), especially 95-108.

11. *Narodne Noviny*, February 5, 1914.

12. Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 297.

13. *Amerikansky Ruscky Vjestnik*, July 7, 1904.

14. *Narodne Noviny*, July 16, 1914, "Black lady's lynching".

15. *Amerikansky Ruscky Vjestnik*, May 2, 1895, "A brief trial (*Kratky Process*)": "Parsons, Tenn.: 26 April—Along the Tennessee River, 6 miles downriver from this town, lived a married Negro farmer, Thomas Gray. Neighbors bordering his land soon confessed to each other to feeling a less than neighborly feeling toward him, and thus they came to an agreement, and shot him dead."

16. *Amerikansky Ruscky Vjestnik*, January 16, 1896.

17. *Amerikansky Ruscky Vjestnik*, February 15, 1906.

18. *Narodne Noviny*, October 2, 1913, "Eight People Shot Dead."

19. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 297. Often it was blacks who exhibited the most economic or social success who were targeted for lynching. Three Memphis black men who opened a grocery store that competed with white businessmen were murdered by a mob after they refused to close their store. Ida B. Wells, who knew the men, began to rethink her acceptance of stories that black rapists had brought lynching upon themselves. "This is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was," Wells commented. Litwack, 148-156. On spectacle lynching in general, see 280-325.

20. Leon F. Litwack, "Hellhounds," in James Allen, Hilton Als, John Lewis, and Leon F. Litwack, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Twin Palms, 2000), 8-37.

21. *Narodne Noviny*, September 5, 1912, "*Ta svoboda americka*" ("That American Freedom.") See also *Narodne Noviny*, November 20, 1913. *Slovak v Amerike* in 1906 ran a cartoon excoriating the strike-suppressing Pennsylvania State Constabulary as Cossack-like "Brave murderers under the Russian law of the state of Pennsylvania." Mildred Allen Beik, *The Miners of Windber* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 219.

22. Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

23. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), especially 78-79, 84-85, 104-109 for Magyar nationalism.

24. Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, 5.

25. Zecker, *'All Our Own Kind Here': The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945*, 221-242; "75th anniversary jubilee book of St. Agnes-St. John Nepomucene Roman Catholic Church, Philadelphia, 1907-1982." Housed at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia. Michael F. interview for quotation. For similar regional-based parishes in Pittsburgh, see June Granatir Alexander, *The Immigrant Church and Community: Pittsburgh's Slovak Catholics and Lutherans, 1880-1915* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 11-12, 35-42, 100-116.

26. M. Mark Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization*, 22-23, 40-44, 77, 86, 133-148, 184-194.

27. Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998). A similar process of racialized prescription and ascription of group differences, consent and descent, is spoken of by Werner Sollors. Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity, Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier, The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies," *American Quarterly* (47, 3): 369-387 (1995); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), especially "The Construction of the Ghetto," 17-59.

28. *Wir: Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der Zuwanderung nach Wien* (Vienna: Sonderausstellung des historischen Museums der Stadt Wien, 1996). One cartoon of simian laborers that bears a striking resemblance to American caricatures of Irish immigrants shows "how the Czech day laborers help build the Parliament," which is, not at all.

29. Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, 5, 78, 327-330.

30. *Jednota*, October 15, 1902, p. 1.

31. *Narodne Noviny*, March 3, 1910.

32. The English-language *Bohemian Review*, for example, equated the Czecho-Slovak independence movement with Thomas Paine's "times that try men's souls," while the Czech-Ameri-

can advocate of independence, Charles Pergler, said of his cause, "They may well claim the American pioneers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century as their spiritual ancestors." Charles Pergler, *The Bohemians (Czechs) in the Present Crisis* (Chicago: The Bohemian National Alliance, 1916). Other discussions of American events such as the Monroe Doctrine and their salience for the Czecho-Slovak cause are given in *The Bohemian Review*, March 1917, 10; May 1917, 16.

33. "ivotopisy Presidentov Spojenych Štátov Amerických," *Amerického Slovaka* (Pittsburgh, 1922).

34. *O dosiahnutí americkeho občianstva (A Short Course in Attaining One's American Citizenship)* (New York: *Dennik Slovak v Amerike*, 1924).

35. *Jednota*, November 2, 1904, 1. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness*, especially 125-138, and Leon F. Litwack, "Hellhounds," note that in spite of white supremacists' self-serving rhetoric, lynchings and Jim Crow measures were often directed not at uneducated or landless blacks, but at successful middle-class African Americans such as Blount, who were far more of a threat to the racialized status quo.

36. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, February 26, 1903.

37. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, 122.

38. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

39. A brief survey of *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik* revealed 39 articles on lynching between 1894 and 1906. *Narodne Noviny* had articles on lynching in the editions of October 2, 1913, and February 5, 1914. *Jednota* ran 44 lynching articles between 1902 and 1906.

40. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 203-209.

41. David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6-12.

42. All references in *Jednota*, August 24, 1904, 1.

43. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, July 9, 1903, "Zas lyncovanie" ("The Practice of Lynching.")

44. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 116-121, 125-128, 132-133, 136-139, 148-152.

45. Barrett & Roediger, "Whiteness and the Inbetween Peoples of Europe;" Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 55-62.

46. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, February 1, 1894; *New Yorksky Dennik*, October 14, 1913, 2; December 28, 1913, 1. See also *Narodne Noviny*, January 12, 1911.

47. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, February 15, 1906.

48. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, July 24, 1894; November 8, 1894. While the violence of Italians was assumed, this did not diminish *ARV*'s alarm at violence directed against Italians. Indeed, Italian vendettas, it was reported, had quickly led Americans to intervene to restore "civilization," after a fashion. On July 17, 1894, *ARV* reported that after "Majk" Scomana murdered his fellow factory worker and countryman, Giovanni Perna, with a small revolver at a dance, a mob of Americans showed up at his doorstep the following morning and lynched him.

49. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, May 21, 1896.

50. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, August 13, 1896. The English-language report on this incident appeared in *The New York Times*, August 10, 1896, 1.

51. *Narodne Noviny*, October 20, 1910. See also *Narodne Noviny*, May 21, 1914, "Bitter bloodshed of the Italians."

52. *Amerikansky Rusksy Viestnik*, May 14, 1896.

53. Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World in the New* (New York: Century, 1914), 139.

54. Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 291.

55. Henry Cabot Lodge, "The Restriction of Immigration," *North American Review*, volume 152 (1891), cited in Jacobson, 42.

56. Frank Julian Warne, *The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1904); Warne, *The Immigrant Invasion* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1913). Peter Roberts followed suit, only slightly less angrily. Peter Roberts, *The Problem of Americanization* (New York: Macmillan, 1920); Roberts, *The New Immigration* (New York: Macmillan, 1912); Roberts, "The Slavs in Anthracite Coal Communities," *Charities and the Commons*, 13 (December 4, 1904), 215-222. Victor Greene notes that the Slavic miners of eastern Pennsylvania were initially belittled by both employers and union organizers for their "un-white" docility, but then were condemned by employers for their savagery in helping to wage the coal strike of 1902-1903. Greene, *The Slavic Community on Strike: Immigrant Labor in Pennsylvania Anthracite* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

57. Burton Hendrick, "The Great Jewish Invasion," *McClure's*, 28 (January 1907), 307-321.

58. E.S. Martin, "East Side Considerations," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 96 (May 1898), 853-863, illustration on 855. Such exoticization of racial others was perhaps inevitable, for even a writer sympathetic to Slovaks wrote of "racial problems in Hungary." R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (London: A. Constable & Co., 1908).

59. Lothrop Stoddard, *Clashing Tide of Color* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1935); Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization, The Menace of the Under Man* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922); Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* (New York: Scribner, 1920); Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York: Scribner, 1920); Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent: The Expansion of the Races in America* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1933). The Stoddard quotation is from Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 89.

60. Robert M. Zecker, "The Activities of Czech and Slovak Immigrants During World War I," *Ethnic Forum* XV (1-2): 35-54 (Fall 1995.)

61. Ross, *The Old World in the New*, 136.

62. *Jednota*, February 17, 1904, 4.

63. *Jednota*, September 14, 1904, 4.

64. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*; Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* (New York: Verso, 1990); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Frontier in the Age of Industrialization* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny, The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

65. *Narodny Kalendar*, the annual almanac of the National Slovak Society, in 1899 had coverage of the Spanish-American War, as well as hagiographic portraits of McKinley and his military commanders.

66. *Amerikansky Rusksky Viestnik*, April 4, 1901, "Aguinaldo the Brutal Dictator." Further articles on the Philippines are in *ARV*, January 24, 1901 and January 17, 1901. Dispatches from a Slavic soldier stationed on the Philippines are found in *ARV*, January 31, 1901. *ARV*, June 6, 1901, "Cuba and the Platt Amendment."

67. *Amerikansky Rusksky Viestnik*, February 25, 1904. *Jednota*, July 20, 1904, 4.

68. *New Yorksky Dennik*, March 13, 1914, 1, November 20, 1913, 1.

69. *Jednota*, May 21, 1902, 4, August 27, 1902, 4.

70. *Narodne Noviny*, August 17, 1911, "Mohammedan Fanaticism;" *Narodne Noviny*, October 26, 1911, "Savage Love Ends in Murder;" *Narodne Noviny*, March 28, 1912, "Let There Be Peace—Unbelievers Are Coming Round Through Hearing the Word of Our Father."

71. *Narodne Noviny*, March 3, 1910, "Ten Census" ("That Census.")

72. *Jednota*, February 17, 1904, 4. What more lethal weapon could editors use in the battle for acceptance. Asians in 1910, and for decades to come, were ineligible for citizenship. See Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 11-21; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989); Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

73. Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization*, 59-60; Susan Watkins, ed., *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994). As the 1920 census approached, notables such as Albert Mamatey, president of the Slovak League of America, again urged his followers not to stand for being classified as Hungarians and instead answer census enumerators, "I was born in Slovakland!" *Jednota*, December 17, 1919, 1.

74. Cited in Gregory Ference, *Sixteen Months of Indecision: Slovak American Viewpoints Toward Compatriots and the Homeland From 1914 to 1915 as Viewed by the Slovak Language Press in Pennsylvania* (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 1995), 99. For Czech and Slovak nationalism during World War I, see Zecker, "The Activities of Czech and Slovak Immigrants During World War I." For expressions of Slovak nationalism by immigrants living in Philadelphia during this era, see Zecker, *All Our Own Kind Here*, 387-397. The issues of *Obrana*, *Kritika*, and *The Bohemian Review* give a good running account of the wartime activities of immigrants. See also Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization*, 96-97, 184-235; Jozef Kalvoda, *The Genesis of Czechoslovakia* (Boulder, Colo.: Eastern European Monographs, 1986); George J. Kovtun, *The Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, A History of the Document* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1985); Kovtun, *Masaryk and America, Testimony of a Relationship* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1988); Victor S. Mamatey, "The Slovaks and Carpatho-Ruthenians," in Joseph O'Grady, ed., *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies* (Lexington, Ken.: University of Kentucky Press, 1967).

75. *Obrana*, April 6, 1916, 14; *Obrana*, February 18, 1916, April 25, 1918.

76. *Jednota*, April 17, 1918, 1.

77. *Jednota*, May 1, 1918, 1.

78. *Obrana*, October 27, 1916, 12.

79. Zecker, "The Activities of Czech and Slovak Immigrants During World War I." *Jednota*, February 20, 1918, 1, for example, offered a reverent portrait of "Juraj Washington." Just before Loyalty Day, July 4, 1918, *Jednota* asserted that Slovaks had been loyal to the principles of July 4, 1776, even centuries before that date, citing Jan Zizka and Juraj of Podebrad as proto-American patriots, even though they had done their freedom-fighting in fifteenth-century Slovakia. *Jednota*, July 3, 1918, 1.

80. *Jednota*, October 2, 1918, 6. For an account of ambiguous immigrant ethnicity in mixed Magyar-Slovak parishes in the United States, see Bela Vassady Jr., "Mixed Ethnic Identities Among Immigrant Clergy From Multi-Ethnic Hungary," in Peter Kivisto, ed., *The Ethnic Enigma* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989); for an account of the fluidity of immigrant identities, see Kathleen Nels Conzen, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective From the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12(1): 3-41 (Fall 1992.). For an account of a New York Slovak selling a "Slovak song book" that contained "Stary Dzho," translated from the English "Old Black Joe," see *New Yorksky Dennik*, November 22, 1913, 2.

81. Photographs of minstrel shows of St. John's Lutheran Church, Passaic, New Jersey, and St. Michael's Greek Catholic Church, Passaic, circa 1919, in author's possession.

82. Berndt Ostendorf, "'The Diluted Second Generation': German-Americans in Music, 1870-1920," in Hartmut Keil, ed., *German Workers' Culture in the United States, 1850 to 1920* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 280-281; Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming 'Old Stock': The Waning of German-American Identity in Philadelphia, 1900-1930* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1998), 276. Thanks to Russell A. Kazal for pointing these citations out to me, and for reading an earlier draft of this paper.

83. "The Christadora House Yearbook, 1915;" The Christadora House, 147 Avenue B, New York. Columbia University, Rare Books and Manuscript Collections, Christadora House Papers Box 1, Folder 12; Box 25, Scrapbooks, playbill, April 4, 1908.

84. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft*.

85. *Narodne Noviny*, April 4, 1912, "Passaicci robotnici" ("Passaic Workers") denounces the speed-up in the woolen mills of that city.

86. *Cesta k Americckemu Občianstvo* (*The Road to American Citizenship*) published by *Dennik Slovak v Amerike*, 166 Ave. A, New York. Play script contained in *Narodny Kalendar*, 1897. *Grinorka* (*The Greenhorn*), performed on Nov. 28, 1937. Playbill contained in Holy Ghost Greek (Byzantine) Catholic Church, Philadelphia, collection at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia. A parishioner of St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church, Philadelphia, recalls performing at the parish hall in plays that were ordered through the Slovak-language daily newspaper, *New Yorkske Dennik*. The story was "lovers and all that kind of crap." Mary Sch. interview.

87. *Jednota*, August 13, 1918, 1, letter from Luzerne, Pennsylvania; *Jednota*, August 20, 1918, 1, letter from Larksville, Pennsylvania, describing the same play and "McDonough's Jass Band Orchestra," performing in different coal towns. The play, *V Službe* (*At Your Service*), contained the character of "An Italian, seller of fruits, books, and fish, also a vagabond," performed by Jan Kester in Luzerne and Jozef Benkovsky in Larksville. McDonough's Jass Band Orchestra had musicians with Slovak and Irish surnames.

88. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 119-122; Rogin, *Blackface*, *White Noise*, 78-97, 100-103.

89. *Rovnost L'udu*, February 20, 1925, 3, "Two Negroes Lynched" ("Dvaja Černosi Lynčovaní")

90. *Rovnost L'udu*, July 31, 1925, 8, "Good Christians Endorse (Approve of) Lynching" ("Dobri krest'ania suhlasia lynčovaním") See also *Rovnost L'udu*, June 26, 1925, 1.

91. *Rovnost L'udu*, September 13, 1922, 6 ("Mahatma Gandhi – Until the Masses are Stirred"); October 6, 1925, 8.

92. *Rovnost L'udu*, December 12, 1924, 1; May 1, 1925, 1.

93. *Rovnost L'udu*, September 11, 1925, 5.

94. Christine Zduleczna, "The Czechoslovaks of Philadelphia," in *The Foreign-Born of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: International Institute of Philadelphia, 1927). This policy stood, even though the Slovak Socialist Workers' Section *predseda*, Jan Kolumbus, was also manager of Slovak Hall. For a well-publicized case of a Finnish ethnic club in Harlem affiliated with the CPUSA that refused to serve blacks in 1931, see Jacobson, 248-256.

95. The best treatment of the conflation of anti-foreign and anti-radical sentiment during World War I and its immediate aftermath remains Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*. See also Paul L. Murphy, *World War I and the Origin of Civil Liberties in the United States* (New York: Norton, 1979); George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Arno Press, 1972, originally published 1920). For a non-too-subtle Committee on Public Information address exhorting absolute loyalty from immigrant groups, see Judge Joseph Buffington, "Friendly Words to the Foreign-Born," Loyalty Leaflet No. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Public Information, 1918). For Slovak immigrants' responses to Woodrow Wilson's Americanism campaign during the war, see Zecker, *All Our Own Kind Here*, 387-397. On ethnic groups reclaiming "Loyalty Day" and other public occasions as their own, see John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

96. Irene B. interview. A similar story of "natural" boundaries between African Americans and all others, even Southern and Eastern European immigrants, was offered by a Sicilian-born newspaper pressman with whom the author once worked. In explaining why New Brunswick,

New Jersey, had shut the municipal natatorium in the 1950s, this man said, "Then the blacks sued to go swimming there, so the city had to close it down."

97. *The American Slav*, January 1939, 19; March 1939, 5; May 1939, 8-9.

98. *The American Slav*, October 1939, 10.

99. *The American Slav*, March 1941, 3. For the post-World War II anti-Communist editorial policy of this magazine, see Philip Jenkins, *The Cold War at Home, The Red Scare in Pennsylvania, 1945-1960* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 145-146.

100. Jeffrey Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 363. Douglas writes, "Inevitably, the return of the black musical to Broadway, inaugurated by *Shuffle Along* in 1921, spelled the decline of white blackface, and hence of Jolson himself. . . ." but she fails to consider the use to which amateur "provisional white people" living far from the Great White Way continued to use blackface minstrelsy to solidify their racial identity through the 1940s.

101. St. Mary of the Assumption Byzantine Catholic Church, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, "Hundredth anniversary souvenir journal, 1888-1988." Photograph: "Parish plays—Minstrel show, 1949." Housed at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia.

102. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 8, 1951. Slovak former and current residents of Point Breeze reached a surprising degree of unanimity in saying that it wasn't the Point Breeze and Tasker Homes housing projects per se that "ruined" their old neighborhood, but the perceived uncleanliness of its African American residents. Interviews with George N., Julia S., Michael Kr., Peter Z., Mary P.Z.

103. On the attitude of white ethnic Catholics in the urban Northeast and Midwest toward African Americans, see John McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 89-101, and Eileen McMahon, *What Parish Are You From?* (Lexington, Ken.: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 118-125. On anti-public housing animus among white ethnics, see Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 61-75; Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 70-72, 80-84, 89, 97-99; Thomas Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1991), 160-161, 166-169, 196-197.

104. On the federal government's role in whites' suburbanization, see Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier, The Suburbanization of the United States*; Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies;" Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics*; Denton and Massey, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*.

105. Quotation is from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 2, 1918, 8. Coverage of the riot is in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 29-August 1, 1918, all p. 1. As with the question of whether Kracha and Dorta muttered *Čierny* or the standard American racial slur, one has to wonder, in reading this account, if "Negro" is what the woman really yelled, or what journalistic considerations dictated get printed.

106. Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, 330. Thanks to Ted Asregadoo for reading an earlier draft of this paper, and for pointing out the parallel between white ethnics' silences on the social construction of their whiteness and Dorta's silences in *Out of This Furnace*.