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Chapter 4

“A Slav Can Live in Dirt That Would Kill a White Man”: Race and the European “Other”

When bread rioters attacked New York’s Waldorf-Astoria to target the high cost of living in the lead-up to World War I, a newspaper report quickly blamed the protests on “crafty Jews” and “a revolt, it is said, that was called out by foreign agents.” Seven years before this, however, a competing paper had a different culprit on which to readily blame New York and other cities’ recent crime waves: “[M]ost of these crimes can be traced to the nature of the Italian, for most of the crimes are those that require a treacherous, secretive, violent, fatalistic and bloodthirsty people. Such a criminal system could only have been developed in Italy, where superstition is prevalent and the people have a very lively imagination that is inclined to maniacal anger, the opposite of cowardly fear.”¹

These ethnic slights were frequent refrains in the Progressive Era, when those demanding immigration restriction were determined to bar the gates of Ellis Island to Southeast Europeans. What’s notable, however, is that these calumnies appeared not in nativist journals, but in Slovak papers. Edward Alsworth Ross and other Nordic “race experts” were important in influencing the creation of a hierarchical conception of not-quite-white-enough races. But immigrants’ own responses and practices in shaping their racialized identities have been neglected. A group itself regarded by many as a threat to the wage rates and self-government of Nordic Americans could read in its own papers the familiar slurs against violent, criminally minded Italians and rapacious Jews. Sadly these images were more ideas from the mainstream of American culture that were propagated in immigrant papers. While not as prevalent as the articles covering black lynchings or race riots against African Americans, derogatory depictions of European strangers suggest that in their first years in America Slavic migrants were as likely to view other “inbetween peoples,” to use Barrett and Roediger’s phrase, in a probationary light, not necessarily acceptable as neighbors or work mates. Only after a testing out of various racial guises did editors temper critiques of fellow Europeans.

"Backless Skulls" and Eastern "Hordes": Race and the Not-Quite-White

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigrants would have heard from a variety of authority figures that their whiteness was not necessarily unadulterated. The Dillingham Commission that was tasked with studying the immigrant "problem" documented 35 races of Europe sending migrants to the United States, and during World War I intelligence quotient tests were developed to confirm the unsuitability of Slavs and Mediterraneans for officer training. Sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross stated categorically that in one steel mill city, 54.5 percent of Slovak schoolchildren were mentally retarded, but he also devoted much room in his *The Old World in the New* to the deficiencies of Sicilians, possessed as they were of "a backless skull."²

Slovaks rejected the first assertion but indulged in coverage of supposedly innate Italian criminality that would have delighted Ross. Articles faulting Jews and Italians appeared in the same editions in which Slovaks read of lynchings and white workers' battles with blacks, cumulatively suggesting that the indeterminacies of race were being sifted by immigrant newspaper readers and editors as they tentatively aligned on the white part of America's cognitive landscape. Whether these assertions convinced armchair phrenologists is doubtful. Ross also stated, "A Slav can live in dirt that would kill a white man."³

Academic and popular press writers alike often characterized Slavic, along with East European Jewish, immigrants as "Asiatic" or "Oriental." Future Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, indulging these suspicions, commented that Slovak immigrants were regarded by the U.S. consul at Budapest as

not a desirable acquisition for us to make, since they appear to have so many items in common with the Chinese. Like these, they are extremely frugal, the love of whiskey of the former being balanced by the opium habit of the latter. Their ambition lacks both in quality and quantity. Thus they will work similarly cheap as the Chinese, and will interfere with a civilized laborer's earning a "white" laborer's wages.

Writers who feared that Slavic immigrants would undercut the wages of "real white men" stigmatized their "Asiatic" docility and lower standard of living. Political economists couched discussions of wage rates in alarmist rhetoric of invasion, as when Frank Julian Warne evoked Mongol hordes to describe the "Slavic invasion and the coal miners." Russian distinctions between cultured, Christian Slavs and Siberian, Asian savages were lost on such Nordic writers.⁴

Ross worried "the superfecund Slavs may push to the wall the Anglo-Americans, the Irish-Americans and the rest, until the invasion of our labor markets by

hordes of still cheaper West Asiatics shall cause the Slav, too, to lose interest in America. . . .” While cold comfort to slighted Slovaks, Ross seems to have differentiated between new immigrants such as Slavs, as big a threat as they were, and “West Asiatics.”⁵

Other writers weren’t so sure. 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 with alarm, “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, benighted Eastern Europe is what seems to have marked them as Asiatics, beyond the pale. 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.” Such exoticization of racial others was perhaps inevitable, for even a writer sympathetic to Slovaks wrote of “racial problems in Hungary.”⁶

Well into the 1930s, Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard lamented the “passing of the great race” and “the rising tide of color against white world supremacy.” The biggest wave of this threat, as conceptualized by such pseudoscientists, was not American blacks, who Jim Crow had seemingly neutralized, but the millions of immigrants who belonged to 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.’” Stoddard was just as dismissive of Slovaks and other Slavs trying to do the same. It wasn’t merely Slovaks’ lack of English or unfamiliarity with the wage rate in anthracite Pennsylvania that alarmed nativist writers. Racial liminality as an Asiatic, or, at best, quasi-Asiatic invader, was what really raised alarms.⁷

Slovak newspapers were intent on countering anti-immigrant rhetoric such as Ross’s. But could the ethnic press be heard above the eugenics chorus? 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 advocated Tomáš G. Masaryk’s independence movement. Where the immigrant press was critical was in contributing to the identity formation of immigrants themselves.⁸

Within industrial America’s many Slovak enclaves, the words of Ivan Bielek of *Národné noviny* carried more weight than those of Ross. The sociologist proclaimed with certainty that the Slav, unlike the white man, has “a horror of water applied inside or outside.” But Slavic immigrants themselves drew cognitive racial boundaries, courtesy of their own newspapers. As noted in Chapter 2, lynching accounts began the process of othering African Americans. But here,

too, some of the nativists' stereotypes—surely not against Slavs, though—were avidly reproduced in Slavic publications.⁹

A "Swarm" or a "Flood": Coverage of Jewish Immigrants

For one ethnic other, however, Slavic immigrants had arrived in America with a template of enduring stereotypes already in their cultural baggage; they didn't need E. S. Martin or Burton Hendrick to tell them about "Oriental" or "Asiatic" Jews.¹⁰ In Central Europe, Christian Slavs had long been exposed to prejudices against Jewish fellow townsmen. Not surprisingly, then, in their early, sometimes inflammatory depictions, some Slavic journalists indulged in defaming stereotypes that portrayed Jewish residents of both Central Europe and the United States as almost as alien and threatening as African Americans.

Old World assumptions about Jews crossed the ocean and sometimes appeared in immigrant newspapers. The Rusyn newspaper *Amerikansky russky viestnik*, for example, was skeptical of the accuracy of reports of the 1903 pogroms in Kishinev, in tsarist Russia. Instead the paper blamed Jews themselves for instigating the attacks, in which an estimated 49 were killed and hundreds wounded in a two-day melee in April 1903. The attack had occurred after a nationalist newspaper blamed the murder of a Christian on unnamed Jews.¹¹ When Jewish residents of America, England, and other countries began to organize emigrant aid societies to assist their coreligionists wishing to leave Russia and Russian-controlled parts of Poland, the paper again was more alarmed at the possibility of further Jewish migration to the United States, not the violence that had spurred the exodus.

The paper alleged that "News of the persecution of Jews in Russia at Kishinev was spread through the Jewish newspapers in America, so that all the Jews in Russia, as many as 65,000 of them, are wandering on the road to the United States." The paper asserted that it was alleged Jewish control of newspapers that caused them to defame tsarist Russia; similar charges of press control would be repeated in various Slavic papers such as *Amerikansky russky viestnik*, *Slovák v Amerike*, and *New Yorkský denník* into the 1940s. In language reminiscent of the Immigration Restriction League, the paper further warned that New York now faced a "Jewish flood tide," repeating the ominous phrase twice. "When these Jews who are in Russia arrive here, it's unlikely that the local Jews will know what to do with them or how to put them to work," the paper continued.

Already in New York there are half a million Jews, and in the whole United States there are five million. These Jews already have trouble supporting themselves and the newcomers would cost a lot of money to support. As a result we hear that they are now writing to the Jewish bands that they should remain in Russia and not come to America. The Russian Jews, in turn, have neither the

will nor the money to come to the United States, and therefore they won't come here. To this I say, with my band in America: "Thank God!" A Jew in London, Israel Zangwill, told a meeting that he would gladly pay 12 dollars for every Jew who could be sent back to Russia. But this resistance to the Russian Jews' emigration to the United States can no longer be just a Jewish task of the "*Geseres*." They must remain there so Slavs can earn their bread.

In the last sentence is reflected the fears of economic competition from another ethnic group, one that was often stigmatized in the Progressive Era in both English-language sources and Slavic newspapers as particularly predatory. The paper's treatment of the aftermath of the Kishinev murders, though, indicates more concern about the arrival of Jews in America than their murder in Russia.¹²

A week later the paper again focused on alleged Jewish control of newspapers in critiquing the harsh words leveled at Russia in the wake of Kishinev. "In recent times the gentlemen of the American press have very unpleasantly in their newspapers carped against Russia, the result of the special influence the Jews have on journalism, and at the urging of Jews America insists that the U.S.-Russian friendship has been transformed into enmity," an article stated. "[I]t's inevitable to see the need for a restoration of American friendship with Russia, and how the Jewish American newspapers have killed this traditional friendship between Russia and the United States."¹³

Many Rusyns looked up to the Russian Empire as a fellow Slavic big brother and potential defender of their interests, and editors at *Amerikansky russky viestnik* often seemed more interested in defending the tsar's good name than interrogating the truth about the regime's anti-Semitic policies. Moreover, like other Slavic papers, *Amerikansky russky viestnik* showed no hesitation when it came to publicizing other immigrants' grievances. On the same page as the dismissive reports on Jewish concerns over Kishinev, the paper told of a series of "indignation meetings" by Slovaks and Croatians in Cleveland and elsewhere protesting the heavy-handed rule by Budapest. Ethnic grievances were differentially assessed depending on the degree of kinship Rusyn editors felt with the complainants; Jewish concerns were treated with contempt and spurred slurs on "control" of the press and "flood tides" of unworthy migrants. And during World War I, a meeting of Slovaks in Palmerton, Pennsylvania, asserted that many Slovaks "are convinced that the most blackened people in those various 'journals' are actually not so black; not even the Jews are painted in such a manner [as the Slovaks]."¹⁴

Five months later the paper was still reporting, with some alarm, on "The Flight of the Jews to the United States." A meeting of "the Jews of New York," the paper noted, was held, "designed to serve all the Jews of Russia by bringing them to the United States." The plans of the Baron de Hirsch Fund were discussed, as well as proposals to tax "the rich Jews in the United States" to establish a steamship line between Odessa and New York to aid in colonization. Images of a monolithic,

wealthy community were suggested in this report, and a critique was also leveled at the United States's "liberal immigration laws" that might permit an influx of Russian Jews. The irony of such a statement is palpable, coming as it did from a Rusyn newspaper, the official organ of *Sojedinénije* (Greek Catholic Union), a fraternal association representing the interests of Slavs who themselves were disparaged by many Nordic critics of the invading "incoming millions." But the writer reassured his readers that the colonization of five million Russian Jews in New York was impractical, so that "this Jewish organization's plan seems like a dream. . . ." Still, the writer noted that the meeting looked beyond New York and "also considered plans to settle Jews in Argentina, in Palestine, in East Africa, and in Manchuria." As in June, *Amerikansky russky viestnik* again said "Thank God!" that only a fraction of Russia's five million Jews were heading to America.¹⁵

The relief was short-lived. The following month the paper reported "American Jews Again on the Move." This time the paper denounced "the great Jewish international 'Geseres' and American Jews in its service in the U.S." for asking President Roosevelt to give the Russian Jews protection after rumors circulated that another massacre was planned for Kishinev on January 7th, Russian Christmas. *Amerikansky russky viestnik* dismissed these rumors and again defended Russia, instead attributing any unrest in East Central Europe to the victims themselves, arguing that

the Russian government was only protecting the Russians. . . . Every man knows well that the Jews in Russia are working to create a revolution there in all possible sides through revolutionary societies, and that is why the Russian government is working stringently on all sides to protect Russians against the Jews. The Jews have practiced revolutionary ways of hatred and now have screamed that the Russians lack Christian charity.¹⁶

This refrain bears some similarity to the far more prevalent lynching accounts that *Amerikansky russky viestnik* and other Slavic papers had already run by 1903, and would continue to run through the 1920s. Here, as in lynching accounts, a victimized, marginalized ethnic/racial group is blamed for bringing a massacre onto itself through supposed deviant behavior. But while a few assertions of black organized conspiracies against whites were floated in the immigrant press (repeating the alarmist transference of mainstream white American papers and books), more typically blacks' lone crimes, sexual or otherwise, were said to have triggered the lynching.¹⁷ In this account, established slurs of Jewish "revolutionary societies" justified for the writer anything innocent Christian Russians might have done. Assertions of an international conspiracy, with revolutionary aims, regrettably greeted many Jewish immigrants from a variety of conspiracy-minded sources.

Sadly, *Amerikansky russky viestnik* was not alone in blaming East Central European Jews for their persecution. *Národné noviny* also reported that a Jewish boy had been murdered in the province of Kiev. There, the paper reported, "the

most recent spate of ritual murders is still going on." The bloodletting began when "a small Jewish boy was murdered, with an infamous 13 blows like a farm animal, the infamous method of slaughtering the Jews, akin to hog-butcherer for ritual purposes." The paper further explained that "During Lent . . . the farmer believed that the 12-year-old son of a Jewish tailor in the neighborhood had been taking liberties with two little [Catholic] girls. . . . The farmer gave him the first blows on the boy's neck and chest, at which the boy let out a blood-curdling cry. The farmer confessed that he had murdered the boy, but he was not prosecuted, but rather found innocent by reason of insanity."

As in the case of so many lynchings of black Americans, rumors of "cross-racial" or deviant sexual activity, especially against children, were said to be the justificatory trigger for a community's collective vengeance. As in the most horrific American lynchings, that vengeance here took the form of a ritualized torture and murder, but as with the vast majority of lynchings reported in the immigrant press, here, too, no condemnation supplemented the murder's report.¹⁸

An even longer account of violence against Jews, also published in *Národné noviny*, sought to explain, not condemn, the origins of many East Central Europeans' belief in the infamous "blood libel," the vicious rumor that Jews needed the blood of Christian victims during Passover. A story from Kiev, headlined "Ritual Murder," reported that a Jewish man named Menahem Mendel Beilis, a factory superintendent, had been accused of murdering Christian children. The case became another international scandal and embarrassment for Saint Petersburg. Yet as in numerous lynching accounts rewritten for the Slavic press, in this lengthy account Beilis's guilt is never questioned, even though he was still to be tried in a tsarist court. Rather, the paper's account noted that "Beilis stands charged that he murdered a Christian boy, and that he engaged in a blood sacrifice as is needed in the synagogue for the Jewish religious ceremony." Such superstitious hatreds were likely familiar to many immigrants reading this account; even decades later Slovak informants could laughingly recall the foolish fears their parents had imparted to them regarding Jewish neighbors in Philadelphia.¹⁹

Still, the writer for *Národné noviny* endeavored to explain the origin of the blood libel, since, regarding Beilis, "[t]he question now occupies the entire educated world, whether the case will go further. . . ." The author noted the use of lambs' blood when the Exodus occurred, as well as in Abel's sacrifices. These early sacrifices "began the presumption that later developed into a suspicion that the Jews need human, Christian blood for their religious ceremonies, especially, however, that Christian blood was used in Passover Matzoh. . . ." The author continued his speculations for several paragraphs, guessing that the metaphorical evocations of a sacrifice, or references by early Christians to the Lamb of God, caused them to literalize the metaphor and suspect their Jewish fellow townsmen of some barbaric human sacrifice. "In the time of Christ, at the Jewish holiday

Passover a lamb was sacrificed with great religious ceremony, before the high priest," the author wrote. "But this has been gone some time, and now only the myth of the ritual murder remains. . . ." In all of this folk theology, no condemnation of the persecution that greeted Beilis or other Jewish East Europeans was offered.²⁰

The socialist newspaper *Rovnost ludu* was one of the few journals that treated seriously reports of East Central European attacks on Jews, as in a post-World War I outbreak of violence near Košice, Czechoslovakia; the paper was also atypical in deploring these attacks.²¹ *New Yorkský denník* likewise reported on post-World War I "pogroms in Russia," but noted, perhaps as exculpation for the rioters, that "of the 479 Bolshevik leaders in Russia, 428 are Jewish."²² The paper again revived charges of innate "Jewish bolshevism" in an editorial under that headline decrying the short-lived Béla Kun communist regime in Hungary. The editorial repeated the phrase "Jewish bolshevists" several times in denouncing the "barbaric" and "monstrous" regime. Jewish, radical, and monstrous were conflated here.²³

Even more vituperatively, Slovak and Rusyn papers bristled at the criticism of fellow Slavs, and accepted slurs of Jewish conspiracy and deviance that "explained" the animus they faced. Soon after World War I, *Amerikanský ruský vjestník* editorialized in a manner quite unsympathetic to Jewish victims of postwar pogroms. In an editorial titled "The cry of the Jews: Terror and Pogroms," the paper commented, "All over America, in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and elsewhere protests were held against the pogroms committed by Russian people and Polish soldiers against the struggling Jews; and Christian Americans read with amazement these battles and the harassment of innocent females." But within a paragraph any hint of sympathy dissipated. "The struggling masses are not murderers, not menacers, but instead are only attacking parasitic Jews!" the editorial writer argued, "who, according to ten letters, are perennial lawbreakers, disturbers of the peace, and not worthy of our time."

While this lengthy editorial clearly indulged in anti-Semitic stereotypes, it also offered some history of the accomplishments of Jewish musicians, writers, philosophers, and doctors in spite of the many pogroms and expulsions that they had endured, whether in Navarre, Seville, and the rest of Spain in the fifteenth century or in Tsar Alexander III's Russia. Nevertheless, the editorial dismissed the stories of anti-Jewish atrocities in 1919 as fabrications, the work of journals that were in Jewish hands, repeating a frequent refrain of Slavic immigrant papers. The writer asserted, "[W]here political troublemakers, anarchists, revolutionaries, and so on, are found, they [the Jews] provide the main roles." As proof he cited, for example, "Lenin and Trotsky, better known as Bronstein," who had played a role in toppling the tsar.

An editorial that began with reports of American protests against East European pogroms ended with a distressingly familiar refrain of blaming the victim. Referring to Russian Jews, the writer declared, "They've discredited Russia, they've murdered

their best moral and material sons, so the first thing the nation must do is throw these weeds in the stream!"²⁴ Even before the war, *Jednota* had run a similar editorial, "The Jews and the Slavs," which spoke of the Jews' supposed control of all businesses, banks, and shops in Slavic realms, as well as their many bomb-throwing anarchists, to explain the attacks in Poland and Russia. The paper faulted American Jews for demanding that President Roosevelt "intervene with Russia in the interest of the Jews." The paper said Jews seem to have forgotten that Russia had never intervened to look after America's affairs, even though "every second black in the United States was 'lynched' by the indignant people." As noted in Chapter 2, no editorial explicitly called for the end of American lynchings; U.S. collective violence only was employed as a discursive device in immigrant papers, to criticize foreign adventures or, as in this editorial, defend tsarist Russia.²⁵

During World War I the Rusyn newspaper *Amerikansky russky viestnik* curiously also ran a poem, "Jews," by Lev. A. May. Among other things, the poet mused, perhaps ironically, "Jews, Jews! What a strange word, / What a people [nation] [*národ.*] / How strange and foreign, / Obedient to their killers—and cruelly jealous, / With high Jewish threats to high heaven. / They want to live—and threaten to strike many places. . . / A nation at risk wanders in the desert, / Their god in the clouds sits on a fiery throne."²⁶

American lynchings could even be used discursively to assert the comparative leniency of Russia toward its Jewish subjects, and to suggest American hypocrisy in condemning that country. A triple lynching in Cairo, Illinois, or "Glorious Cairo," as the headline put it, was covered by *Jednota*, but not to express sympathy with black victims. Although the article sneered at "pious white people" who had strung two of the blacks on trees, the main point the editor wished to make was American hypocrisy in faulting Russia's treatment of Jews: "And if a little Jew in Russia bombs and kills a policeman, the U.S. magazines call it a protest against atrocities in backwards Russia." Solidarity was expressed with fellow Slavs in Europe, not black fellow Americans.²⁷

Interestingly, the most notorious case of a Jewish man lynched in America elicited no anti-Semitic venom in Slavic immigrant newspapers, unlike in many Southern English-language journals.²⁸ In 1913, when Mary Phagan, a pencil factory employee in Marietta, Georgia, was found murdered, suspicion fell on the factory's manager, Leo Frank, who as a Jew and a Northerner, was regarded with hostility by many Georgians who saw the incipient industrialization of the New South as a threatening intrusion. Moreover, as in many Southern cases involving black men, phobias of sexual crossing of race, or, at best, ethnic lines were on display in the courtroom and in mainstream Southern press coverage of the case. Frank was accused of having made sexual advances to the young woman. In spite of contradictory testimony and many courtroom irregularities, Frank was found guilty of murder and sentenced to die.

The Slovak press's coverage of the Leo Frank case and the victim's subsequent lynching was cursory, although the protest by Jewish organizations in the aftermath

of Frank's questionable conviction in a trial rife with judicial misconduct was given somewhat lengthy coverage in *Národné noviny*. The article was fairly sympathetic to this effort, and seems to have shared the outrage of groups such as B'nai B'rith that a travesty of justice had been committed in Georgia. On May 28, 1914, the headlines of the paper, the official journal of the National Slovak Society, announced "Prosecution against the Jews rouses our attention" and "It was the duty of the authorities to do something to protect the defendant, after this death sentence was pronounced." Such concern, as noted in Chapter 2, was rarely expressed in even the most egregious travesties of justice involving African Americans, suggesting that for all the Old World prejudices held against Jews, some recognition had developed for Slovak editors on the similarity of the vulnerable positions of the Jews and Slavs in nativist America. An additional subhead informed readers that "Jews all over America will do their best to save their friends from the disgraceful murder—Many witnesses are accused of perjuring themselves, and with untruthful testimony, with which the court conspired."

Indeed, after Frank's lynching the following year, it developed that several prosecution witnesses had been coerced into perjuring themselves; one of the witnesses against Frank was a black employee of the factory where the defendant was manager, surely one of the few cases in early twentieth-century Georgia in which a black man's testimony was believed over a white defendant's. Again, though, the different, sympathetic treatment of the Frank case compared to the many unsympathetic lynching stories involving black men indicates a hierarchy of compassion was by 1914 developing for Slovak immigrants, who assessed injustices against whites, even Jews, as more worthy of their attention and indignation.

Perhaps it was the almost immediate suspicion of official misconduct that aroused the editors, but, again, such frequent judicial farces involving black victims had already passed without comment. In any case, *Národné noviny's* writer fumed,

The little justice, which at one time in America we knew, and which inspired some confidence, has dwindled after the summary judgment against Leo Frank, who was condemned to death for the brutal murder of 14-year-old Mary Phagan. Frank was the manager of a factory, where the girl worked. He was an exceptional Israelite, and was, at the time of his death sentence the newly elected president of the Atlanta city office of the national organization B'nai B'rith. It could perhaps be said that his death sentence dealt a blow to all Jews in America.—There are some people who are convinced that in America you can buy anything with money, and maybe they aren't that far from the truth.

As proof money had here greased the wheels of justice, the writer noted, "About this interesting murderer there were numbered several witnesses who differed.—Some who said it was a black man—others a white, and already (at the trial) there were some who recognized that all the witnesses couldn't agree on

the truth.” The article concluded by documenting several cases of perjury, and the campaign by authorities to remove from the state witnesses who favored Frank’s alibi.²⁹

The writer of this article was critiquing the conviction of Frank, which, although characterized as such, was not yet a literal lynching. That fate awaited the Northern Jewish defendant a year later. The writer may have had predictive powers, or perhaps his darkest fears had a way of coming true for those persons caught in the provisional white person stage—the inbetweenness that historians Barrett and Roediger refer to in commenting on the perilous lives of Southeast Europeans in early twentieth-century America, a country with racial phobias obsessing many citizens.³⁰ Sure enough, when a year later Georgia’s newly inaugurated governor commuted Frank’s death sentence to life in prison, an enraged mob broke into the jail and lynched Frank.

In contrast to the lengthy article devoted to the trial’s aftermath, the actual lynching was reported with almost fatalistic sorrow by *Národné noviny*. The paper related the lynching in two brief sentences before concluding, “The next morning his lifeless body was found hanging in the tree.—He was lynched. After a brief investigation, nothing more is expected to be done about this lynching.” *New Yorkský denník* likewise devoted only a two-sentence story that noted Frank’s abduction from the jail and that he was hanged by a mob from a tree. While the stories were mercifully free of anti-Jewish invective, the actual lynching elicited no outcry in these Slovak papers.³¹

Conversely, even the lynching of the German man Robert Prager in Illinois during World War I was condemned in an editorial in *Národné noviny*. The paper deplored the lynching, arguing it was necessary for “a civilized people to end this savage practice,” “the practice of wild, savage anarchists.” In the aftermath of the war, though, it was anarchists and other radicals who were quite vulnerable to collective mob violence. Extensive, front-page coverage was granted by *New Yorkský denník* to army and mob assaults against radicals, suspected Bolsheviks, and union organizers, as in the lynchings of Industrial Workers of the World organizers at Centralia, Washington, in 1919. “Enraged people lynch the leader of the radicals,” the paper reported, while in subsequent issues the paper declared “In the whole country there is truly a war against anarchism,” also promising, “Bolshevik aggressors are to be strictly punished.” Not just blacks, but Jewish newcomers, and laboring men seeking justice, too, were in danger of violently being put in their place, the pages of the Slovak press seem to have warned. Likewise, news of the dispatch of a special excursion train, the “Diamond Special,” full of vigilantes bent on expelling all the “radicals” and “communists” from Springfield, Illinois, ran on the front page of *New Yorkský denník*. “In Springfield, the lynching of the reds is feared,” the headline proclaimed. (The paper noted that all but one of the anarchists were foreigners.)³²

These lynchings of supposed radicals and union men were presumably of interest to working-class Slavs, or alarmed editors wary of Bolshevism or fearful

of being tarred with the red brush in World War I's aftermath, as a national anti-Red scare ensued.

Compared to this coverage of mob violence against radicals, the Frank case elicited minimal commentary, but thankfully was not used as an occasion to rehash familiar ethnic slurs.³³

On other occasions prior to World War I, however, fears of Jewish radicalism at times were expressed by editors who saw something intrinsically radical or anarchist in an alien ethnic group. *Amerikansky russky viestnik*, which as noted regarded Kishinev as caused by Jewish troublemakers, attributed the failed 1905 Russian revolution to a Jewish plot that had abettors in America. "How American Jews are revolutionary," the headline declared, while the article's text explained,

In the city of Baltimore, on January 21 it was announced that America's Jewish congregations would honor the occasion of the anniversary of the slaying on January 22 in Saint Petersburg of Jewish Russian revolutionaries. At the New York congregation, the Jew James Pauken, with permission from a large congregation of Jews, called for the raising of money to buy arms for Russia's revolting, revolutionary Jews. Consequently, those American Jews present at the time offered money lavishly and thus became partners in that week with the Russian rioters [rebels, agitators] [*buntovnikov*], those Jewish revolutionaries; the Jewish revolution in Russia was thus made with the support of American Jews.³⁴

The following year the paper devoted coverage to "Philadelphia's revolutionary Jewry." And in 1908, to be ecumenical about it, *Amerikansky russky viestnik* denounced anarchists, socialists, the Black Hand allegedly controlling Philadelphia, and Italian and Polish Jewish workers in that city.³⁵

In reporting on a Zionist meeting in Philadelphia, *Jednota* exhibited more interest in class than ethnicity or race. The article noted that delegates to the convention endorsed Palestine as the optimal site for Jewish settlement and founding of "a Jewish kingdom," rejecting previous proposals for colonization in Africa or South America as "a useless act." The reporter further noted, "As usual, to carry out this plan the convention encouraged the wealthy Jews to act, but they do not care to, they lose courage, unlike the poorer class; it is famously known that every living thing comes down to class." The reporter concluded, "True to their wealth, the rich don't do much, their activity is usually limited to the deceptions necessary to conducting business." While this sentiment possibly contains a slur at allegedly endemic Jewish business practices, such sentiments were mild compared to a rather vitriolic letter from "G. H. of Syracuse, New York," that *Jednota* published 13 years later. The correspondent accused Austria-Hungary of being in the thrall of socialists, anarchists, Magyars, and Jews. Allowing for the anger many Slovaks felt at the Habsburg Empire in its final year of existence, the letter indicates distrust and worse sentiments regarding Jews persisted among

many immigrants.³⁶ The pro-Czechoslovak independence journal *Obrana* likewise published a poem, "Easy Questions," accompanied by a cartoon in which the Habsburg double-headed eagle strangles helpless Slovak, Romanian, Czech, and Serbo-Croatian peasants. The eagle is crowned with the Star of David (see Figure 4-1.)³⁷

Čo to za nestvor tam hore
v šesťhranatej hviezde znaku?
Dve hlavy má dravčie ono,
pojednom z chlapov v zobáku.
Na hlavách dravčích koruny,
pravé to znaky — kultúry.
V krídlach umŕtie má lebky,
a v drapoch tiež ľudské tvory,
pod chvostom čertoy rohatých,
a v prostriedku Tatier — zory.
V cimere madžar fúzatý,
s ozrutným fokošom čaká
a v druhej ruke s pálenkou,
s "terkeľom" kohosi láka.
Nuž kto to uhádne, ktorý
čo značí obraz tej potvory?

Jestli sa Vám "Obrana" ľúbi, odporí-
čajte ju svojim priateľom. Ak máte trochu
času, napíšte niekoľko priateľských slov o
našej "Obrane" do úradného časopisu orga-
nisácie, ktorej ste údom. a napomôžete nás v
boji: ZA TÚ NAŠU SLOVENČINU!

MONESSEN, P.A.

Pre nedostatok miesta v tomto
čítele, mená "Smútočných Rytie-
rov" museli vystať.

FIGURE 4-1: "Easy Questions." The Habsburg empire is depicted as in the clutches of Jews. *Obrana*, March 14, 1918.

Even in America the actions of Jewish residents were often depicted in these newspapers in an unflattering light. As noted, *Národné noviny*, which on other occasions was quite supportive of strikes and other worker initiatives, condemned the 1917 food riots as the work of "foreign agents" and "agitating Jews." In that year *New Yorkský denník* advertised a coming serial novel it was running, *The Eternal Jew* (see Figure 4-2.) Four years later, the New York daily spoke of the "Jewish slavery" under which the new Czechoslovakia suffered, and also reported on the publicity Henry Ford gave to old phobias of an international conspiracy. "Americans are warned of the Jewish menace," the paper wrote in the article about Ford.³⁸

NEW YORKSKÝ DENNÍK

konat, nanu jedinu nemohol nahnevať. celá niečo previesť, da nejakú žiadosť, Judku u muža do- hly bol po pánoch v obci, on to veľmi a preto i jeho 15 musela v oblekoch iné dievčence. Ona a mať novomódny cty, najdrahšie hod sové ručníky a stůž. Dost' razne kázaval az proti nadhere a a Judku skoro pra- ukazoval. Otec m. povoril: o knaza týče, či mo- do knihy, či sa smial keď sa iní hnevali, napady zlost- ných ľudí so žartom odbil, s každym vyšiel pekne na koniec a to i s príslym testom sena- torom. Svoju mladú ženu úprim- ne miloval, ak sa i za nejaký neporiadok v dome i nahneval, hnev jeho trval len zatiaľ, za- kial nevypovedal čo mal na srd- ci a potom už hnevajúcu sa Jud- ku pohladkal, pobožal. Judka mala, protivný povahu, ona neuznávala svoju chybu, keď sa nahnevala, tak ľahko sa ne- odhnevávala lebo jej hnev i viac dal, trval, vždy chodila po do- me paježená a fúcala ani ková- čove mechy. Ona sa i zato hne- vala, že sa jej muž len za nie- koľko minút hneval, preto mu hovorila: — Ja neviem aký je to len hnev u teba? Teraz sa hneváš a po chvíli ma objímáš a bo- kávaš. Tak robia deti!

— A deti sú šťastné, lebo ich

Novinka !

Cteným čitateľom New-Yorského Denníka oznamu- jeme, že počnúc od budúcej soboty každý deň uverejňovať budeme svetoznámy román

"VEČNÝ ŽID,"

ktorý pre svoj zaujímavý obsah preložený je do všetkých moderných rečí. Kto je s predplatným pozadu, nech taký dopíše, aby tento svetochýrny román od začiatku do kone- čiatu mohol.

NEW YORKSKÝ DENNÍK,
502 E. 73rd Street New York City

Novinka !

I tu si ženu poprosil, zebý sa z ohľadu na deti imernila a je- mu jeho krátky život nestripco- vala, hovoril jej, že keď zostane vdovou, zebý si prevádzala. Na tie slová bola ešte horšia.

(Pokračovanie.)

Od úradu Slovesného-Národ- ného Sdruzenia.

Máme aplikácie na prvý ob- čiansky paniet. Ktorý členovi nemajú ešte prvý papier, ned- sa prihlásiť v úradovní Sloves- ského Národného Sdruzenia. ve- čer od 7. do 9. hod. a v nedeľ od 10. do 12. predpoludním, po- čís. 316 E. 72nd St. New York

Kto má neakú vec na preda- nech dá malú ohlášku do N. Denníka a kupec sa v krátko- čase najde.

PREČO JE MEDZINÁRODNÁ VOJNA V EUROPE?

Kniha "Božský plán veko- poukazuje o veciach: nielen p- slych, ale i budúci. Časť 2.: Dovoľenie zlého a jeho pon- ku plánu (Božiemu. Časť 2.: súdnom dni. Časť 3.: Vykú- nie a napravenie. Časť 4.: kráľovstve tohto sveta a j- úpadku." Kniha obsahuje 3- strán a stojí 65 centov. Pi- si pre ňu ešte dnes na adres- MICHAL ŠALATA, P. O. Box 94, Duquesne, Jan. 29—apr.

Malý oznamovateľ

FIGURE 4-2: Advertisement for a serialized novel, *The Eternal Jew*. *New Yorkský denník*, March 26, 1917, 4.

Such coverage could quickly segue into ethnic slurs against duplicitous shopkeepers or businessmen. As early as 1896 *Amerikanský ruský věstník* reported on a “Jewish swindle” run by con men in Berlin. *Slovák v Amerike*, too, reported on a strike called by Slovak, Polish, Magyar, and Italian workers against the Acheson Harden Handkerchief Company in Passaic, New Jersey. The “greenhorn” workers protested against making only 65 cents after working 13-hour days and having wages deducted for the cost of new uniforms. While news of such job actions against intolerable conditions was standard fare of this and other immigrant papers, the filer of this report regrettably made sure to note that the business was “owned by a Jewish company.”³⁹

Similarly, *Národné noviny* reported on an Old World “Revolt against the Jews.” In Veľký Gemereš in Zemplín province peasants who had founded a cooperative grocery society were certain that “Jewish merchants have done everything possible to thwart this society, and consequently the people have become enraged against the Jews, who had to flee. A whole lot of troops were sent in to the place.” Just as when militias or police forces were called to the scene of lynchings in the United States, one has to wonder if the victims could expect much help from the forces of law and order; Slovak newspapers, though, were silent on such symmetries, and reports didn’t question established, unflattering stereotypes regarding “Jewish merchants.”⁴⁰

As they printed these canards, perhaps it’s not surprising that many Slovak newspapers sometimes also expressed resistance to Jewish emigration to America. Vituperative articles in *Slovák v Amerike*, for instance, asserted Jewish control of all the world’s newspapers, explaining in this manner the bad press that tsarist Russia had received after anti-Jewish rioting as at Kishinev and again in the wake of the failed 1905 Russian revolution. A 1908 article innocuously enough headlined “Something about the Jews” led off in purple fashion, asserting as fact the existence of a secretive, world-dominating cabal:

The Jews are holding in their hands the seventh great power of the world, which is called journalism. All the newspapers of the world are in their hands. They fix the national economic and political courses, they cause the wars, they influence all businesses and industry. When Rothschild heaves a sigh, the whole globe reverberates; if anybody steps on the corn of a Jew, the whole world reads about it, even in Japan.

A lengthy list of German, English, French, and Austrian newspapers was given as “proof” of this “foreign” control of the world’s newspapers. As *Amerikanský ruský věstník* had already claimed, here, too, the bad press that the tsarist regime received was attributed to “[t]he Jewish press . . . wailing and crying for help, scolding, cursing. . . .” The paper asserted that it knew the real, understandable reason for the people’s attacks on Jewish residents of Russia. “[F]or the most part they are defending themselves against the [Jews’] riots, their impertinence, their

leeching parasitism, against all those tricks by which the Jews know how to plunder."

The writer provided a long list of outrages he asserted justified the Russian people's rioting against them. As in American lynching accounts, a similar trope was employed by which the "enraged people" acted to *restore* justice. When a group regarded as non-citizens was assumed to violate communal morality, the "enraged people" acted not as lawbreakers but law preservers—of course, the social order in tsarist Russia, no less than in Jim Crow Mississippi, was a racialized hierarchy. And as in the United States, the supposed "leniency" that the writer here asserted was practiced by enlightened tsarist officials toward their Jewish subjects only caused a secretive cabal of Jews to rise up, which "the people" had to resist as a matter of self-preservation. A mass upsurge of indignation (and violence) was here characterized and explained away as an understandable mass action.

Indeed, *Slovák v Amerike's* writer asserted that, "Through the weakness of the Russian officials . . . the Jews have organized a whole army. . . . They were about 40,000 strong and were armed with revolvers. They burned down, pillaged and devastated everything. . . . And when the people, undefended by the authorities, took into their own hands the whip of justice, the government has sent a military force against them to defend the Jews." The self-denying psychology of transference is on full display, as is the writer's anti-Semitism.

The writer further asserted that "[T]here was no conspiracy, no assassination, no robbery of state moneys, no nihilistic, anarchistic bomb-throwing band where the Jews had not occupied the front place." Warning that "more than 800,000 Jews in the last few years" had settled in America, the writer darkly proclaimed, "Neither will Russia regret when the side-curl-whiskered patriots will leave her, but woe it will be to our free America, which they will overflow."⁴¹

With less venom, and more distance from the sentiments it reported, *Národné noviny*, too, published articles on the calls for restrictions on Jewish "swarming" of America. "Native Americans have recently encountered the wandering Jew, and while various other immigrants were regarded as guilty, and a sort of danger to him, the Native American looked on the Jew favorably, or at least indifferently," the paper reported. "Consequently, the Jews have been welcomed in the land and swarmed in."

The paper then noted the rise of anti-Semitism in America, comparing it to earlier measures taken in ancient Egypt and tsarist Russia leading to the recent pogroms. But the writer argued that somehow the persecuted always arose from this adversity more successful, arguing that "the Russian pogroms have brought them . . . the great sympathy of the world's press, which is in the hands of Jews." The familiar assertion of a pariah group's domination of the media is repeated here.

But *Národné noviny* noted a recent backlash against Jewish immigrants, citing the publication by the *New York Herald* of a "diatribe" by the author Poultney

Bigelow. In that newspaper Bigelow had asserted that “during my recent journey through the state of Connecticut, all I saw were multi-lingual Jews of a disgusting kind, living in place of the people whose ancestors originally purified this country from the Indians and the tree stumps.” When rabbis and other correspondents objected, Bigelow continued the attack:

I can't see how a Jew who has newly wandered under the American flag as he conducts his business is my equal fellow citizen. He could just as easily find his homeland by wandering to Australia, France, Germany or Russia. A Jew who can just so easily trade in his patriotism as he shuttles between two railway stations and roll it [the patriotism] into his jacket is a dangerous witness indeed. He shouted that he is just as good an American as me, whose family had been pioneering in this land nearly three centuries ago, in a land that Jews had never even heard of—and started to feel at once a protective duty to pave an easy path for these speculators and money lenders.

Bigelow praised the *Herald*, repeating the calumny already asserted by Slavic editors that it was “one of the few living newspapers yet under the control of a non-Jew,” asserting the paper could help America by “point[ing] out the difference between a true American, one of those disappearing among the hordes of Jewish patriots. . . .” After several more enlightened sentences from Bigelow, the editor of *Národné noviny* added an amused last word: “Well, in America, the Jews have never before been talked to like this!”⁴²

That such a diatribe appeared in a mainstream New York daily indicates that immigrants were exposed to anti-Semitism from a variety of sources, and not just Slavic papers. And by reprinting nativists' laments that had first appeared in the mainstream *New York Herald*, the editor of *Národné noviny* could put some distance between himself and anti-Semitic nativism. Still, the immigrant paper's editor did not see fit to provide any condemnation of Bigelow's screed. And the last line, an interpolation by the Slovak editor himself, not Bigelow, offers some bemusement, perhaps amusement that the hitherto uncriticized Jews are now being talked to in this way. The sardonic remark that Jews in America had never before faced criticism would itself likely have been read as either willed ignorance or a subtle dig at Jewish Americans. Evidently the employees of *Národné noviny* had allowed their subscriptions to *Amerikanský ruský vjestník* and *Slovák v Amerike* to lapse.

Still, the perceived success of Jewish Americans sometimes led *Národné noviny* to express a grudging admiration for these immigrants, and suggest that Slovaks should emulate them as they sought to advance in the world. In 1910 and again in 1911, editorials ran in the organ of the National Slovak Society urging readers to “Learn from the Jews.” The editorial writer began, “It is not the first time I've said that we can learn from the Jews, and when I say it I'm not saying anything bad against the Jews, but rather even the reverse, I pay them respect. . . . I was

glad that the Slovaks have embraced at least one characteristic of the Jews, namely, to jointly promote trade as well as nationalist movements. May we learn, we Slovaks, from others' experience." Still, the admiration was a bit left-handed, as in urging Slovaks to go into business, the writer urged his co-ethnics to "Learn from the cleverest and learn to be so clever, or even cleverer than he is. . . ." Stereotypes of sharp businessmen seem resurrected here. The following year, the paper again editorialized, "Learn from the Jews," but argued for developing culture and the educated professions, not just moneymaking, as forms of group advancement. "Slovaks often still have a lot to learn to fully catch up to the level of culture of other nationalities," the writer argued. Even if admiration mixed with envy and, at times, worse traits, Jewish fellow immigrants were a known quantity, and one from whom some Slovaks believed they might be able to learn ways to advance one's "race."⁴³

Such articles offering praise were rare, however, and coexisted with stories of Jewish criminality, especially in matters of white slavery, which several nativist commentators argued was controlled throughout the country by Jewish immigrants. *McClure's Magazine* had in 1909 run a celebrated series exposing the alleged Jewish control of prostitution throughout the country, even in the rural West, through its politically connected tentacles. More locally based stories of Jewish crime followed in Slovak journals. *New Yorkský denník* reported in 1915 on the arrest of William Rosenbloom, Len Silverstein, and Joe Treidberg for running a Coney Island whorehouse. *Amerikanský ruský vjestník* ran an article on the Brooklyn gangsters, "'Lefty Louie,' alias Louis Rosenberg, 'Gyp the Blood,' alias Harry Horowitz.—They live at the house of Goldstein." Even violent Jewish gangsters were featured at times, as when the notorious Monk Eastman was murdered on a streetcar. While less frequent than the numerous evocations of black criminality, or the frequent articles on the Italian "Black Hand" that, as we'll see below, appeared with regularity, stories of Jewish criminality reflected the assertions of English-language papers and some officials that Jews were a criminal "race."⁴⁴

Slighting jokes at the expense of this group appeared in newspapers' humor columns, too. *Slovák v Amerike* published a joke in 1896 chiefly concerning Gypsy musicians who worm their way out of paying the bill at an inn, but a Jewish innkeeper figured here, too. On another occasion the paper's humor column, "*Kmoter Švablik z Kakošovec*" ("Godfather Švablik from Kakošovec"), had the readers' fictional, fulminating relative repeatedly denouncing the doings in "Judapest." Švablik's more frequent target was the hated Magyars, but as noted above, Slovaks such as letter-writer "G. H. of Syracuse, New York" often conflated the supposedly pernicious Hungarian and Jewish influence in Budapest.⁴⁵

Either some readers were influenced by these "comical" diatribes, or more likely they reflected long-standing suspicions of Jewish control of East Central Europe's metropolises. The screeds continued into the 1920s. *New Yorkský denník* in 1924 published a humor column item that mocked Father Andrej

Hlinka, leader of the Slovak People's Party in Czechoslovakia, for allegedly being in thrall to the usual suspects: "Our Holy Father Hlinka" began, "Our Father who art Hlinka, blessed be the sell-out in Judapešt, hallowed be thy name." In this case, there is strong evidence that these prejudices reflected views that were out there among the readership, for this "humorous" catechism was contributed to the paper by a "Slovak woman from Brooklyn." But as with crime stories, Jews were only occasionally the target of such humor columns, where ethnic jokes more frequently mocked Gypsies, Italians, and, by the 1920s, blacks. "Edna from Scranton" contributed a minstrel show-like joke against blacks two weeks before her Brooklyn peer's submission. Similarly, German newspapers in that decade printed scathing black cartoons as fears of blacks accelerated in the years that migrants headed north during the Great Migration.⁴⁶

The most offensive anti-Semitic stereotypes appeared less frequently from the 1920s on, as second-generation white ethnics increasingly subsumed ethnic differences and focused attention on black residential incursions into Northern and Midwestern cities during the Great Migration.⁴⁷ And for all the suspicion of Jews depicted in some Slavic newspapers, residential proximity to Jewish neighbors never aroused the enmity that, as we'll see in Chapter 7, black migrants elicited.⁴⁸ Still, while as Ewa Morawska notes, Jews and Poles and other Slavs shared residential neighborhoods with minimal friction, compared to antiblack animus, in the late 1930s and 1940s some Slovak papers expressed angry diatribes at Jewish criticism, even as authors prefixed their diatribes with an attempted exculpatory protestation that they weren't anti-Semitic. Such caveats had been rare 30 years before this, but in the more liberal New Deal era, such protestations may have been regarded as necessary.

The disputes developed around many Slovaks' support for the authoritarian Slovak regime of Monsignor Jozef Tiso, which after 1939 was granted independence, of a sort, under the aegis of Nazi Germany in Hitler's reordered Europe. Understandably Jewish Americans viewed this situation with alarm, for even before Bratislava gained independence, the paramilitary Hlinka Guard's newspaper said that the "Jewish question" had to be settled. This settlement lamentably followed the pattern that had already been established by Berlin, as *Slovák v Amerike* in 1940 reported, "Slovakia sharpens the laws against the Jews." Jews were barred from the professions, from owning property, and from owning shops or businesses. Still, the paper, and many individual Slovak Americans, continued to admire Tiso's regime.⁴⁹

Two months later, *Slovák v Amerike* bristled at criticism leveled at the Slovak League of America for supporting the Nazis' Slovak allies. The *Jewish Review* had condemned the group, and now the Slovak journal fired back. The paper's editorial writer prefaced his defense of the journal from charges it was pro-Nazi by writing, "I am not anti-Semitic. On the contrary, I have always been against anti-Semites. But neither do I believe that Jews were separately the chosen people

to reign over the rest of the world, whether intellectually, territorially or politically." The writer assured readers that he was against the Nazis, but also condemned communists. And here he resurrected old suspicions:

The Jews, I think, are the intellectual elite, but a good half are Communists or pro-Communists. . . . I am not trying to blame all the Jews. But it is certain that if the Jews everywhere hadn't claimed more than their rightful place and been satisfied with their lot, then truly, anti-Semitism would be defanged. Their arrogance is what stirred the masses against them. Some Jews have seen this and have criticized their fellows for their extremism, but such voices it seems are voices crying in the wilderness.

This was an odd way to reassure the editors and readers of the *Jewish Review* that one wasn't anti-Semitic. Assertions that some people had overstepped "their rightful place" were heard in many alarming places in 1940.

Other, older charges were revived, too, as the writer charged "a significant portion of our newspapers is in their hands." Similarly well-worn class resentments ended the editorial: "We Americans of Slovak origin are good American citizens and democrats. There are in truth only a million of us in the U.S. A few dozen Jewish individuals here could easily buy all of our worldly assets, but our Americanism is just as good as theirs even though we earned it by the sweat of our brow. . . ." In bitterly critiquing the communist and rich Jews that he asserted predominated, the editorialist resurrected two familiar canards—the predominance within this beleaguered group of revolutionary plotters on the one hand, and plutocrats on the other.⁵⁰

In a few years, however, sober news of the Holocaust made it back to America, and as Matthew Frye Jacobson argues, the ferocious implications of anti-Semitism made unpalatable overt expressions of prejudice against white ethnic groups of all kinds. Anti-Jewish bias most especially became anathema. Yet as Jacobson further notes, the emergence of a unified, all-American white "race" composed among others of recently ostracized Southern and Eastern Europeans, only brought more starkly into focus the other groups, African Americans and Chinese and other Asians, against which legal restrictions still very much remained in force for another two decades.⁵¹

This synthesis of the white "races" was already well under way in the Slavic press. As early as 1920, *New Yorkský denník* offered a group photograph captioned "Americans All." The gathering was of "thrift leaders of twenty-eight racial groups in America," with Slavic, Jewish, Irish, Italian, and other white leaders of ethnic fraternal associations assembled for a joint meeting. The assertive "Americans All" suggests that the melding of European groups into one polity was tenuously progressing. While they were still regarded in common parlance as separate "races," they were acceptable Americans. Even as some Slavic newspapers, as noted, continued trading in anti-Semitic, and as we'll soon see, anti-Italian, slurs, a "Perora" could sit beside a

"Konigsberg" or "Modelkovich," who could break bread with a fellow American named "Jankus." Tellingly missing from this conference, and the photographic coverage of it, were any black or Asian Americans. The races represented as suitably American were European groups; other "races" were not yet in the picture.⁵²

In 1943, though, the gravity of anti-Semitism's effects was demonstrated when *Národné noviny* ran news of extermination camps in Slovakia. A camp initially designed to contain foreign Jews prior to their deportation had recently been converted to slave labor, and "under the 'supervision' of the Hlinka Guards there died in the labor camp 240 persons. . . . These days in Poland, it is known that there are death camps. Those who were living in Slovakia for almost three years are now deemed no longer employable. Therefore they were deported to Poland, where it is expected they will be exterminated."⁵³

Intriguingly, one of the few condemnations of antiblack bigotry to be found in Slovak papers of the World War II era appeared in *Národné noviny* on the same day as news of the Slovak death camp. In that issue an editorial deplored the white attacks on blacks that had occurred in Detroit at Belle Island Park and other locales. As we'll see in Chapter 7, coverage of race riots in previous decades had been less sympathetic to blacks, and even during World War II only a few articles spoke of the need for greater tolerance of African Americans. But on at least a few occasions the pernicious effects of race-thinking for both European ethnic groups and black citizens was on display.⁵⁴

As it became apparent how grave the Holocaust was and where anti-Semitism had ultimately led, other papers began running appeals to combat prejudice. *Amerikanský ruský viestník* reprinted an English-language article by Archbishop Francis J. Spellman of New York, "We must check the spread of bigotry." The prelate summoned patriotism and the spirit of "Valley Forge and . . . other American shrines" to combat bigotry, "a contagious, virulent disease." Near the end of World War II Popular Front appeals to tolerance and icons of Americanism in support of one's cause were common. But perhaps with the savagery of Nazi atrocities in mind, it was some Catholics' anti-Semitism that Spellman singled out, with nothing said regarding the antiblack animus that had already been demonstrated by many Catholics combating black residential incursions into Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia and other Northern cities. Following the war, *New Yorkský denník* likewise endorsed an educational film coproduced by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith called *The High Wall*. "This film deals with the discrimination and prejudices which greatly affect a Polish family. The film is very important for parents, teachers and others who deal with youth and their education," the article said. Nothing, though, was mentioned of antiblack racism. Prejudice was still conceived as something that affected Jewish and Slavic Americans, as no doubt in 1952 still was the case. By this time, too, for many Slavic Americans, discrimination that smacked of anti-Semitism could be decried, but, as we'll see in Chapter 7, less was said, here or elsewhere in their newspapers, regarding antiblack actions and attitudes. White ethnics hitherto marginalized

were embraced under the rubric of patriotism and Valley Forge, but the concerns of black Americans still rarely were featured in Slavic papers.⁵⁵

The following year *New Yorkský denník* even publicized an upcoming Purim Ball to be held in New York by natives of Košice. Of course, many Jews who were natives of Slovakia had been holding such affairs for decades. But only in the post-World War II years did the activities of non-Christian Slovaks garner the paper's favorable attention. White ethnics had melded to such a point that this notice appeared with none of the biting criticisms that accompanied news of Jewish citizens 40 years before. Then, too, as the East European communities of New York and other cities were dissipating, facing the "threat" of racial integration and suburbanization/assimilation of second-generation white ethnics, the paper may have sought to attract any readers—Christian, Jewish, or nonbeliever—that it could. *New Yorkský denník* went out of business in 1962.⁵⁶

Acceptance of Jewish and other white ethnic Americans as acceptable neighbors may have been eased by changes within second-generation ethnics themselves as they came to embrace American folkways, not least concerning race. 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, she argues, 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' supposed "tangle of pathologies."⁵⁷

While Brodtkin sets her saga of Jewish whitening as a primarily post-1945 phenomenon, in the case of Slavs, and other ethnic Catholics, the binaries of black-white race-thinking appear to have hardened earlier, at least as early as the 1920s. Russell Kazal demonstrates a growing German Catholic wariness toward African Americans during that decade in Philadelphia.⁵⁸ And Slovaks had already slighted blacks in humor columns as well as news stories of lynchings and race riots by the twentieth century's opening. But whatever the starting point, various white ethnics' distancing of themselves from black fellow citizens eased the amalgamation of a white ethnic identity.

"A Bloody Minded, Violent, Treacherous People": Covering Italians

In their early years in America, though, for Slavs the lines were not just between African Americans and whites. Coverage was devoted by Slavic editors, too, to

other immigrant groups that were regarded as endemically deficient. As noted, coverage of Jews carried forward prejudices sadly all too often indulged in Central Europe. But immigrant papers expressed opinions of Italian immigrants, too, and these rewrites in the Slavic press often uncritically propagated Nordic stereotypes of Italian violence and criminality with which many Slavs were likely unfamiliar pre-migration. The press indulged in race-tutoring in inter-European ways, not just in disseminating antiblack animus. The most commonly recurring judgment on Italians accepted the myth that all members of this group were intrinsically violent, with many tainted by association with the Mafia, or, as it was more commonly labeled in the early twentieth century, the "Black Hand."

The Slovak press was full of accounts of violence by dark and secretive cabals of Italians, as well as the national wars between "American mobs" and Italians lynched from Pennsylvania to Louisiana. The instability of the notion of race in America circa 1900 as the country confronted "probationary white" strains such as Slavs and Mediterraneans has been well documented by contemporary scholars, and this liminality is reflected in the immigrant press, too. Just as earlier the Irish had to "prove" their whiteness circa 1860, now it was the Slavs' and Italians' turn.⁵⁹

Perhaps the most notorious case of collective mob violence against Italians occurred in 1891 in New Orleans, when more than 250 Italians were arrested for suspected Mafia complicity in the assassination of Police Chief David Hennessy. Eventually 19 of these Italians were charged in the Hennessy case, but when the suspects were found not guilty, a mob broke into the jail where they were being held and lynched 11 of them. The Italian government protested to Washington, but as in the far more frequent black lynchings, no lynchers were identified or brought to trial.⁶⁰

The 1891 New Orleans lynchings occurred before the major Slovak and Russian newspapers began publication, although the Slovak historian Konštantín Čulen, in his two-volume *History of Slovaks in the United States*, published in Bratislava in 1942, discusses these barbarous lynchings. In the following years, however, several accounts of other lynchings of Italians were published in these papers. Lynching accounts of Italian victims contained lurid details of mob violence, but, as with black lynching accounts, stereotypes of the victims' supposed deficiencies abounded, too. While the violence of Italians was assumed, this didn't diminish *Amerikansky rusky viestník's* alarm at violence directed *against* Italians. Indeed, Italian vendettas, it was reported, had quickly led to Americans' intervention. On July 17, 1894, *Amerikansky rusky viestník* 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.⁶¹

A somewhat longer article greeted *Slovák v Amerike's* readers in 1895 when a multiple lynching occurred in Colorado. There five Italians had been lynched. Race was a fraught concept not only for immigration restrictionists but for newcomers, too, and through the pages of these newspapers one sees a cumulative

attempt to try to figure out who fit in and who did not in the new country. Perhaps the instability of race for new Americans, and the perilous degree to which Nordic immigration restrictionists denounced Southeast Europeans as Asiatic or African, may account for the report that in this case the Italians had been mistaken for blacks and therefore lynched. Slovaks wanted to make sure they weren't so disastrously "misidentified."⁶² As this case indicates, blacks weren't the only ones threatened by lynching, and several notorious cases of the lynching of Italians disfigured America in the 1890s.

Brutal persecution awaited "*Talianov*" who refused to honor Jim Crow. *Amerikansky russky vjestnik* reported in 1896 that, "In Hahnville, La., three Italians were seized from behind their doors and murdered. On August 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."⁶³ For all sorts of racial minorities, the Promised Land depicted in the Slovak press was a dangerous place.

As with the coverage of black lynching victims, such stories seem to have inspired not sympathy but contempt. Other articles in the Slavic press depicted Italians as innately prone to violence, suggesting that, like African Americans similarly characterized in crime stories, collective mob violence was sometimes justified against a brutal "race." After all, the Hahnville Italians were part of a collectivity of "highwaymen and the like," against whom brutal measures up to and including lynching might regrettably be necessary.⁶⁴

Elsewhere in the world, Italian migrants experienced violence at the hands of mobs, but sometimes refused to accept their lot as a hyper-vulnerable people. In 1908 in Brazil, a murder of an Italian worker by Brazilians spurred an Italian anarchist to write, "[We reproach the other Italians for not having] had the least courage, or the dignity, to lynch the hero of this tragedy. Do you want to wager, Mr. Chief of Police, that lynching would be more effective than all your jails, all your cops, and the entire comic and grotesque apparatus of your system of justice?" Assertions that courts and officers of the law had failed in their duty to protect the public resonated in the American South as justifications for lynch law, and here even Italian radicals employed similar warnings. Elsewhere in Brazil's Italian anarchist press slighting assertions of Afro-Brazilians' laziness and deficiencies as a labor force appeared, too, suggesting yet again that new immigrants were not above employing derogatory epithets at others. Stereotypes of race and acceptance of collective violence could be embraced even by marginal immigrant groups who themselves were often subject to mob animus.⁶⁵

Even in the Northern United States, Italians could meet with brutal, violent ends, or be threatened with this fate. *Slovák v Amerike* reported in 1903 on the "Bloody Battle against the Italians" in Donora, Pennsylvania, that ended with two lynchings. That same year a crowd attempted to lynch an Italian in Jamaica, Queens. The "Loathsome Deed of an Italian" was proclaimed in a headline for a

story of the immigrant's violation of a 12-year-old girl near a school. While the term "lynching" was rather broadly deployed here, for the crowd seems only to have seized the Italian suspect with some degree of force, as in many black lynching accounts it is the supposed sexual deviance of the minority victim that was foregrounded.⁶⁶

Even law-abiding Italians were depicted as behaving in ways that were interpreted as innately violent. In 1920 a crowd of Italians on New York's Mulberry Street were reported to have lynched Alfredo Caruso for defaming police Lieutenant Joseph Pellegrino, "who is a hero to all the Italians on Mulberry Street. . . ." While as in the 1903 account from Queens, the usage of the term "lynching" seems to have been a rather elastic one, the by-1920 familiar trope of violent Italians was furthered by depicting even law-abiding Italians as hot-headed brutes. To be sure, such behavior, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, was prevalent among enraged white citizenry when black men were said to have violated moral codes, especially around matters of sex. In the South, however, proponents of communal morality characterized native-born white members of lynch mobs as disciplined and orderly as they set about restoring the peace. Here, on Mulberry Street, Italians were seen as quick to express outrage, possessed of explosive tempers.⁶⁷

As this account of a mob of his fellow countrymen assaulting Alfredo suggests, articles also appeared depicting Italians' violence against their own kind, reinforcing the belief that the vendetta was an Italian "racial" trait. As noted, it was the 1894 inter-Italian murder at a dance that caused an "American" crowd subsequently to lynch "Majk" Scomana. Later that year *Amerikansky russky viestnik* again featured feuding Italians, as factions in the Poughkeepsie immigrant community settled their differences by dynamiting each others' houses. In 1905 a card game between *paisans* ended in a violent tragedy, while *Amerikansky russky viestnik* reported that in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, near Scranton, the Italian Crescenzo Merola had killed Emanuel Loro because he refused to hand over 15 cents. *New Yorkský denník* noted that a battle between the Italians of Salemville, Pennsylvania, left one man dead and his brother critically injured.⁶⁸

In this respect, these rewrites from mainstream wire services reflected the sensational coverage of Italians' supposed deficiencies that appeared in many metropolitan dailies. The *New York Times*, for example, in 1906 reported on an "Italian's body found with hatchet." Police were "puzzled" by this Yonkers case, as the victim still had jewelry on him. Likewise, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1913 reported on three murdered South Philadelphia Italians who were "shot without cause." The immigrant papers were not the only source from which Slavs could learn of the "deviant" ways of Italian immigrants, but these organs nevertheless often followed the lead of English-language journals.⁶⁹

Fears of intrinsically violent immigrants and radical foreigners were expressed in the nativist, English-language newspapers, but also made their way into the Rusyn-language *Amerikansky russky viestnik*. That paper in 1903 reported on a case in Barre, Vermont, seat of a significant Italian anarchist community. "[A]t

an Italian socialist meeting," the paper noted, "Italian Eli Corti was fatally shot by Italian Alessandro Garreto. The fatal shot came in a battle between Italian socialist and anarchist parties. The latest reports indicate that Eli Corti has died from the injuries that he suffered."⁷⁰

While not exactly anarchists, Italian women factory workers on strike battled among themselves, not just the police, at a rally in front of New York's City Hall, while more prosaic Italian gunplay in East Harlem was twice splashed across the front page of *New Yorkský denník*. That paper also reported on an Italian man in Chicago who had murdered his wife; for good measure, the paper also reported when an "Italian woman kills her husband." Crime featuring Italians was often reported in the Slavic press.⁷¹

These seemingly quotidian crime stories (wife kills husband; husband kills wife) in and of themselves might carry no racial freight. But when they appeared in the same papers as news of Italians' lynchings, and, as we'll soon see, race wars against these immigrants and incessant coverage of the ubiquitous "Black Hand," these crime stories contributed to a habituated conception of Italians as an intrinsically murderous, pariah "race."

Indeed, Italians, like blacks, and other Southeast European immigrants, were sometimes regarded as impermissible outsiders that nativist mobs were determined to repulse at neighborhood borders or factory gates. The Slovak press was full of accounts of "the national wars" that "American mobs" launched against Italians. The instability of the notion of race in America circa 1900 has been well documented by scholars, and is reflected in the immigrant press, too. As Jacobson has noted, Sicilian immigrants in Louisiana ran afoul of the rigid caste system not solely because of their swarthy skin or suspect "Saracen" ancestry. Rather, they were not white in their customs, and suffered for their fraternization with African Americans in workplaces, neighborhoods, and in several cases, marriage beds.⁷² Native-born America, jealously guarding the Nordic germ plasm of the country from Eastern and Southern European invasion, was nervously suspicious of not just the phenotypes but the social behavior of newcomers.

As early as 1894 *Amerikansky rusky viestnik* reported on a fatal battle that had erupted in New York between Irish and Italian workingmen.⁷³ And, to the paper's horror, a full-blown "nationalities war" erupted in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania two years later, which now 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), in which the Italians suffered great casualties. More than 300 people faced off against 400 boys. . . . Yesterday at night the Americans visited the place where the Italians dwell, blasting their camp with revolvers. The Italians have found a war everyplace they've gone in America. Evidently, they didn't need to stay in their country to go find a war in, say, Abyssinia.⁷⁴

In this regard the attitude is light years ahead of the solicitation usually shown to African Americans. No story of *Negrov lynčovanie* made sarcastic reference to blacks' relative security back in Africa, and, as noted, 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. As we'll see, too, the Italian kingdom's sporadic adventures seeking colonies in Africa, even if thwarted, were admiringly cheered in Slavic papers as part of a civilizing mission. Italians were often regarded with suspicion, but, as in Hazleton, they could sometimes elicit a modicum of sympathy.

More frequently, however, back home in the United States, "Americans" continued to battle Italians, who were often regarded as a scab race, even though this appellation was hurled at Slovaks, Poles, and other Slavs, too. *Slovák v Amerike* ran news of a "Battle between American and Italian coal miners" in Giatto, West Virginia, where three people were killed. Two years later "The Outbreak of a Bloody War" occurred in Wellsville, Ohio, as American workers again battled Italians. In St. Louis the following year "American" workers battled Greek and Armenian rivals at the American Aluminum Works. But, ironically, when Slovak strikers reported from Washington state on their troubles on the picket line, they noted that "scabs for the most part are Americans, then Italians and Swedes." Still, Italians continued to be regarded by many native-born Americans as pariahs. As late as 1920 *New Yorkský denník* reported that a mob of 300 had taken over West Frankfort, Illinois, demanding all Italians be expelled as they assaulted the offending immigrants.⁷⁵

Of course, by 1920 such extraordinary assaults on Southeast Europeans were atypical compared to the far more common attacks on blacks by whites of many ethnicities during World War I and its aftermath. As we'll see in Chapter 7, Italians—as well as Slavs—by the early 1920s were joining with other white ethnics in antiblack neighborhood improvement associations. These organizations enforced restrictive covenants, which, in Chicago, Detroit, and elsewhere, prevented potential African American homebuyers from encroaching into white ethnic neighborhoods. The Slavic press noted, too, that white ethnics such as Italians participated in antiblack melees; as early as 1895, *Amerikanský ruský viestník* noted that 300 Italians expelled the "Negroes" from Spring Valley, Illinois. And during World War I, a Texas mob of 800 oil-field workers, composed of Germans, Italians, "whites," and Mexicans, castrated and lynched a black man accused of a sexual assault on a white woman. In lynch mobs even Italians could now be found among the participants defending white people's prerogatives through torture spectacles. While Italians in West Frankfort—and Slavs throughout America reading about them—no doubt felt that they trod uneasily on American ground, and still possessed a somewhat liminal white space in their new country, assaults such as the West Frankfort case were a disappearing

phenomenon, whereas antiblack assaults would persist for at least another three decades.⁷⁶

Of course, Slavic newspaper writers or readers had no way of predicting the acceptance that Italians, and Slavs, would eventually be accorded by mainstream white society. Papers therefore also initially reported on interracial conflicts that involved Slavs fighting their fellow newcomers. On October 20, 1910, *Národné noviny* reported, "Brother attacked by Italians." Italians armed with stones and knives attacked two members of the National Slovak Society as they walked through a tunnel in Vandergrift, Pennsylvania. 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."⁷⁷

On the job site, too, papers sometimes reported "Battles between Slovaks and Italians." That was the headline when *Slovák v Amerike* reported that Slovaks had for the most part voted to go out on strike in Mingo Junction, but the National Steel Company responded by calling in Italians to serve as scabs. A bitter battle ensued, and the writer editorialized that "the company silently acknowledged, that the Slovaks are better workers than the Italians." More genteelly, a Slovak wrote to *Národné noviny* to report on the progress of a strike in Lochrie and Dunlo, Pennsylvania. "Among our scabs there were several Poles, Italians and Englishmen, who the striking miners nicely (politely) asked not to scab," he wrote. How polite the asking was is subject to question, but other groups besides blacks—Italians among them—were often suspected of being prone to scabbing.⁷⁸ Slovak assertions that Italians were a race of scabs continued into the 1920s. A letter writer told *New Yorkský denník*, for example:

[H]ere in America it is said that other people, who are better than the Italians, do all the work. Indeed, during the war, the Italians weren't wanted for work in the factories. And Italians who were in factories where strikes occurred went and scabbed. Even today, wherever an Italian won't work, a Slovak is generally preferred, because of his cleanliness, quiet nature and the industriousness of our people.

The writer was answering a defense of Italians that had appeared earlier, and had a ready explanation for why anyone would defend an Italian: "You, dear Slovak, you must be married to an Italian, if you write so."⁷⁹

Evidently some Slovaks were contemplating this horrible act, or at least defending Italians. The previous year the paper had run a series of letters asking, "Can Slovaks Marry Italians?" The first letter writer warned, "If a Slovak marries an Italian, she'd better have a taste for gaudy clothes, because the only way to keep harmony and peace in the house is to have a taste for such clothes. And then to have him eat macaroni! . . . And then we know that almost every fourth Italian is in the 'Black Hand.'" All sorts of familiar slurs of Italian criminality, poor taste, and the like were on display in this letter, but it is evident from this diatribe that

some Slovak American women by 1921 were perceived as looking to marry outside their ethnic group. Indeed, the letter continued, "We fought for our Czecho-Slovak nation, and even our prostitutes wouldn't marry the Mongols [i.e. Magyars], but now they marry Irishmen and Italians." As we'll see in the following chapter, the Magyars who had ruled over Slovaks in their half of Austria-Hungary were often stigmatized as Asiatic and barbaric, but evidently Italian and Irish marriage partners were viewed by some immigrants with almost as much alarm, even as others took them to the altar.⁸⁰

As this letter indicates, the Irish, too, were occasionally criticized, as when a letter writer from Jersey City thundered in *New Yorkský denník* against Irish domination of Catholic schools. Referring to the Slovaks of his city, the writer noted, "They say they refuse to give one red cent to a school that sacrifices American history to Irish fanaticism. . . ." ⁸¹ More often, however, Italians were the target. Also in 1921, a second letter again asserted Slovaks couldn't marry, or even live among, the Italians. "How could a Slovak eat Italian dishes and live among Italians?" a writer using the pseudonym "Jánošík," legendary defender of the Slovaks, rhetorically asked.

I well know the Italians, a few families are living here and a couple of them are working in the shop where I am and I see many of them during their lunch time. They eat long bread, herring, and as they eat that bread and fish it's always dripping down on their sleeves. The bread's almost alive with maggots, the fish is wrapped up in paper, and then they take it out a second day, they eat that same fish and bread for the whole week.

This letter writer was only repeating nativist critiques of Italians' supposed barbaric foodways, especially that odd spaghetti, comments that *New Yorkský denník* likewise ran eight years before this.⁸²

For all these letter writers' protestations, Italians were different, and sometimes mocked, but not too different. Fellow Catholics, and while provisionally white in a social sense, Italians and Slovaks were both legally eligible to enter the country as immigrants, and there were no bars to Slovak-Italian marriages (whereas even as late as 1967, 16 states still prohibited whites of whatever ethnicity from marrying a black person). And while many old-stock workers scorned Slav and Mediterranean alike, such white ethnics were not statutorily barred from union membership, as was the case with blacks who were kept out of many American Federation of Labor craft unions.

Consequently in the pages of papers such as *Jednota* and *Amerikanský ruský věstník* at times even Italians were afforded a level of empathy largely absent when it came to African Americans. Some solidarity was expressed with Italians, especially when they were seen as exploited fellow workers. *Amerikanský ruský věstník* in 1894 decried the conditions of Italian women working 12 hours a day for an hourly wage of 12 cents. "What kind of paradise is that?" the writer asked.

When Slovaks read that "Three Slavic countrymen and an Italian were torn to pieces early yesterday in an explosion in Safe Harbor," near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, they might have realized that dangerous industrial conditions made distinctions between Slav and Mediterranean irrelevant. This incipient white ethnic solidarity only grew as black incursions into Northern cities expanded with the Great Migration. Kazal notes that, by the 1920s in Philadelphia, Germans, Slavs, and Italians tenuously shared parishes and neighborhoods, but drew the line at African American residents or worshippers.⁸³

Yet for all these few homages to work mates, most early Italian-Slovak encounters reported were of a more contentious nature, and some ended in tragedy. A report from Morrisdale Mines, Pennsylvania, related a "sad case that unfolded here. . . . " John Jurko, a boarding house resident, went for his pay. "But when he was on his way home he was attacked by some Italians who fatally wounded him. The unlucky traveler was transported to the hospital, where five days later he succumbed to his wounds." The writer added, "This band of murderers isn't like us." Italians' complete alienness was asserted here. Similarly, when the bartender at the Slovak Catholic Sokol Hall in Passaic, New Jersey, was murdered by an Italian, the crime was depicted as senseless, "without any cause." Rehearsals of which groups were to be ostracized, which embraced as fellow workers, or neighbors, were in evidence in the Slavic press. Italians were as yet on probation.⁸⁴

Just in case battles with vengeful, knife-wielding Italians weren't enough to demonstrate Slovaks' consanguinity with "white" Americans, editors hastened to point out they had had their share of run-ins with blacks, too. On May 14, 1896, *Amerikansky rusky viestnik* reported that, "In Bluefield, West Virginia, 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."⁸⁵ 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.

Some of that social whiteness seems to have been trying on guises reflecting distaste for the Progressive Era's racial pariahs. As we've seen, lynching accounts established blacks in the eyes of some new immigrants as America's permanent liminal people, but other groups were also regarded with skepticism in the Slavic newspapers. This was particularly so in the case of Italians, especially when images of violence were attributed to these immigrants. 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 rusky viestnik* reported on February 1, 1894, while on January 12, 1911, *Národné noviny* noted that 32 members of the Italian "*Camorra*" were on trial in Viterbo for the murder of Jacobo Cuocola, former chief of the society. *New Yorkský denník* noted, "Police break up the whole band of the Black Hand" with the arrest of

"24 *Talianov*," although two months later the news was less happy when two bombs rent the air in "the Sicilian quarter, between Prince and Elizabeth streets." "Fortunately, no one was hurt," the paper reported, although a store was destroyed.⁸⁶

More 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." In 1894, 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 *Amerikansky russky viestnik* with a good opinion of the Mediterranean "race."⁸⁷

The most vicious and common criticism of Italians centered on their supposed universal membership in the Black Hand. Tales of extortion, white slavery and dynamiting, as well as Italian gangland rubouts, appeared regularly in Slavic immigrant papers. While the lynchings following the Hennessy assassination occurred too early for coverage in Slavic papers, *Amerikansky russky viestnik* in 1895 reported on an alleged Mafia vendetta in New Orleans. "The Mafia is a secret organization of Italians that murders its fellow countrymen," the writer informed *his* countrymen.⁸⁸

In years to come the Black Hand, or Mafia, made a steady appearance in these papers' coverage of Italians. Among the articles were reports of fire bombings in East Harlem after extortion letters were ignored; the dynamiting of several houses in the Bronx, which was attributed to two Italian white slavers; another story of Italian white slavery rings, that is, houses of prostitution, in Mineola, Long Island; a report of "the Black Hand in practice" that related to a dynamited porch in Lansford, Pennsylvania; and stories of the "Camorra" destroying Italians' shops. In the last case Lieutenant Joseph Petrosino of the New York police's anti-Mafia squad cautioned readers that not all Italians are in the Black Hand. This may be why *Slovák v Amerike* in 1909 ran an editorial praising Petrosino and condemning the Black Hand. However, the paper also had to run the story of a "Funeral of a Victim of the Black Hand" after Petrosino was murdered during a trip to Italy in an attempt to eradicate the European center of the crime organization. Other stories told of further extortion letters and dynamitings in New York and elsewhere in the country that were the work of the Black Hand.⁸⁹

Inter-mob violence appeared in these papers, too, with news of "six slaughtered in Brooklyn" during a Black Hand war; notice that "the King of the Black Hand is murdered" in 1915 (and again in 1922 in Chicago); report of the demise of "Louis the Murderer," erstwhile head of the Black Hand in Newark, New Jersey; and the capture of the leader of the Black Hand in White Plains, New York.⁹⁰ In 1921 *New Yorkský denník* reported that "Frank Dago, bandit, complains of being shot." The story began, "Franco Tusciano, who is known to the police in New York as one of the most dangerous bandits, last Sunday was shot in a manner similar to that done to his friend recently and at very near the same site. At that time,

Tuscano was arrested, but as usual, released because he is always aware of how to get out of everything." Now that Tuscano, "who is known to police as 'Dago Frank,'" was himself shot, he decided to spill the beans on who was responsible. This surprised both the police and the writer, for "up to this point, none of the thieves disclosed the name of their gang members, even if they worked to get them murdered." The myth of *omerta* was rehearsed for Slovak readers in the tale of "Dago Frank."⁹¹

Stories of gangland murders were a staple of English-language tabloid papers by the early 1920s. But evidently more appalling to immigrant editors were the ways that even ostensibly law-abiding and venerated Italians were alleged to be vulnerable to the Black Hand's depredations, or be suspected of serving as the respectable face of this secretive cabal. *Jednota* reported that "Caruso, the world-famous singer, has also become a victim of the world-famous criminal 'Black Hand.' Both belong to this Italian parody [*párodnosti*]. But still there is resistance among those who love their motherland. You'll believe it, if you read this." The writer relayed the news that the famous tenor had received two extortion letters demanding 15 thousand dollars, but "since he'd ignored their demand for this significant sum, the crew, this 'Black Hand,' fit up a bomb for him, which exploded into small pieces." In a classic journalistic ploy, hints of dark deeds were planted that the paper could later say it was only reporting, not asserting. "Evil rumors whisper that Mr. Caruso is in cahoots with the 'Black Hand,'" the writer hissed. "If this is true, we see that they, the Italians, haven't learned anything from Americans." The following day a similar article on Caruso's troubles ran in *Slovák v Amerike*.⁹²

Other, less famous, law-abiding Italians also made it into Slavic papers only when they were targeted by the mob. A Brooklyn Italian priest was murdered in his parish house, after he announced that 300 dollars was stolen from his church. "It is said that the Italian Mafia murdered him." Another Brooklynite, an Italian tailor, was murdered after, like Caruso, he ignored extortion letters. Even a student at Columbia University was said to have been threatened with Black Hand letters. After he ignored them, a bomb blew up the building where he lived. Even successful Italians, these articles suggested, were susceptible to violent Black Hand crime; as the Caruso article indicates, they also were often suspected of being in league with their criminally minded co-ethnics.⁹³

With all of the negative coverage of Italians featured in their papers, it is perhaps not surprising that Slovaks often embraced anti-Italian views of their own. This was perhaps most evident in a vicious 1907 *Slovák v Amerike* front-page story, "The Movement against the Italians of Sicily," that equated all Sicilians with criminals:

Sicilians are a bloody minded, violent, treacherous people, thieves, liars, vindictive extortionists, many are members of the "Black Hand," and in general are the most outcast pariahs in human society. If the government of America wants

to have peace it should prohibit their emigration from Sicily. Deport them. Yes, we don't want them, we have no love for Sicilians. They aren't honest.⁹⁴

In a similar vein, *Amerikansky rusky viestník* reported on February 1, 1906 on "The Black Hand." "Italians who have come here to America have brought with them that custom from Italy, that secret society known under the name of the 'Black Hand,' generally known as the Mafia, which extorts money from all rich Italian Americans," the paper informed its readers. Still, the writer allowed that

The Italians themselves are angry at this highwaymen's organization, and generally do everything they can to end this secret bandits' society. These murderous cutthroats are already regarded by the U.S. authorities as a secretive, energetic and dangerous company of foot pads. But so far they have had very little success in penetrating or breaking up this murderous society.⁹⁵

Jednota, too, got in on the act, condemning both the criminal Italians and the ineffective New York police helpless to stop them. It was asserted that, in New York, "their dangerous criminal activity thrives. It is known that these robbers extort a large sum of money by menacing their countrymen. . . . They have their agents in all the banks, who communicate to them how much money their countrymen have in bank accounts." And, as noted, *Slovák v Amerike* in 1910 attributed the Black Hand's crimes to "the nature of the Italian," with his inbred "maniacal anger." Editorials inveighed against not just the Black Hand, but the criminal nature of the Italian.⁹⁶

With such editorials and news articles trumpeting this "race's" lawlessness, it was perhaps not surprising that some Slovak readers developed hatred of all Italians. A letter writer from Reading, Pennsylvania, wrote to *Slovák v Amerike* of the alarming invasion of his city by the Italians. While the writer eventually got around to describing the specifics of the capture of two Italians who he said had murdered Constable Kelliher, he was far more interested in condemning an entire ethnic group. "Dear editor! I will show you the horrible abominations which these Italians have committed in our town," his letter began. "It seems that the Italians are the most dangerous natural hazards among all ethnic groups in the United States. Wherever there are more Italians, there you hear about the 'Black Hand' and their murders. Our countrymen should give careful attention to this little bird [*vtáčkov*]."⁹⁷

In 1907 America, this Slovak "little bird" was not alone in making blanket statements about entire races, whether blacks or South and East European "races." For decades to come Italians would face the calumny that they were prone to violent vendettas. That another immigrant group's newspapers reprinted the received wisdom of America's mainstream society evidently affected the way at least some Slovaks perceived the wretched refuse arriving at Ellis Island from other parts of Southeast Europe.⁹⁸

For all of these slighting characterizations, Italians and Slavs found it tolerable, if not always amicable, to share residential proximity, sometimes right across the street, in cities such as Philadelphia. In that city parishes accommodated various white ethnic groups, Slavs and Italians among them. This was especially the case in the second generation. And, as noted above, members of both white ethnic groups made common cause in organizations that enforced restrictive covenants against African Americans. Italians were different but not too different.⁹⁹

This was especially the case when they were compared to African Americans. While in December 1924 a humor column joke could still mock an Italian green-horn who mangled the English language with disastrous consequences during a doctor's visit, blanket references to a "dago" race prone to extortion dropped away as greater numbers of non-European residents moved into the formerly Southeast European neighborhoods of American cities.¹⁰⁰ In Leechburg, Pennsylvania, Slovaks by 1927 were comfortable enough with their Italian neighbors to rent their Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol lodge hall to Italians. (To be sure, on at least one occasion in 1930, these Slovaks, who subscribed to socialist papers, rented their hall to blacks, too.)¹⁰¹ Following World War II, *New Yorkský denník* could still in 1951 report of "bloody youth gang battles" in New York's Queens Village between the "Breakers" of Ozone Park and the "Black Angels" of Queens Village. Two young gang members killed were John Fuzio, 21, and Pasquale De Rosa, 17. The article does not, however, make any editorial comments on the violent nature of all Italians. Conversely, the paper reported on East Harlem as "Jungletown," and warned that New York now faced a Puerto Rican invasion. While a few battling Italians still made it into the pages of the Slavic press, no articles referred to Queens Village as "Dagotown"; the prevalent discourse of white ethnics in the 1940s and 1950s and when recalling their "ruined" neighborhoods in decades to come, was of nonwhite pathologies and hard-working white ethnics.¹⁰²

This dichotomy is perhaps not surprising, for even 40 years earlier papers such as *Slovák v Amerike* had offered hierarchies of civilization in which Italians scaled the ladder of civilization, at least as compared to some peoples. Some of the few times that Slavic papers offered complimentary words to Italians occurred when articles covered Rome's attempts to "civilize" the "barbaric" Turks and Africans of Tripoli. These colonial wars proved unsuccessful, but at least established that ethnic group's bona fides as Europeans.¹⁰³

The shores of Tripoli were not the only place immigrant newspaper readers vicariously visited. Colonial and imperial matters figured prominently in immigrant papers, and established a hierarchy of civilized and savage, a discourse of barbarous and cannibal peoples in need of control. Colonial ventures of all kinds served to establish black, Caribbean, and Asian peoples as less developed, whether the object of the journalistic gaze was situated in the Philippines, Haiti, Cuba, Africa, or Asia. For all that Italians might be viewed warily they were never

regarded through the lens of potentially captive peoples. The same language of alterity leveled at black Americans was also employed in coverage of colonial matters, an unfortunate symmetry that Italians—for all the Mafia articles—were able to escape.

It is to the imperial adventures that spanned the earth during the Progressive Era that we will next turn.