

## THE SLOVAK PRESS IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE SLOVAK-AMERICAN PRESS, 1885-1918

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In 1905 an exasperated governor of Abov county in the Kingdom of Hungary sent a memorandum to all his subordinates in which he declared, "*one stream of Pan-Slavism comes from Turčiansky Svätý Martin and the other from America*".<sup>1</sup> He could not have said it better. Slovak nationalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries spanned the Atlantic Ocean and was most clearly reflected in the newspaper press. This article will attempt to show how closely the Slovak-American press mirrored and helped shape the course of modern Slovak national aspirations.

Most Slovaks who emigrated to the United States did not come for nationalist reasons. Rather, in the absence of sufficient land for farming or jobs in industry, they migrated to the United States of America in order to earn a living. From a mere trickle in the 1870's to a deluge (50.000) in 1905, 650.000 Slovaks left their homeland in Northern Hungary for the coal mines, steel mills, oil refineries and textile mills of the industrial northeast of the United States. By 1914 500.000 of them (one-fifth of the Slovak nation) has settled permanently in the New World.<sup>2</sup>

Only a few intellectuals accompanied this migration of peasants and unemployed workers. Among them were priests, ex-seminarians, teachers, expelled students, journalists and adventure-seekers. Most had a dream or political program and each would try to find a following among the hundreds of thousands of their countrymen in America.

The founders of the first Slovak newspaper in the United States were teachers-turned-adventurers. Ján Slovenský and Július Wolf, cousins of mixed German-Slovak parents from the town of Krompachy, county Spiš, arrived in the New World almost by

accident. Shortly after they had graduated from their teacher's college at Kláštor pod Znievom in 1879, they set out on a trip to Africa, ostensibly to go lion hunting. Immigration agents prevailed upon them to go to the United States instead. They arrived in Pittsburgh in late 1879. Wolf found work in grocery stores and saloons while Slovenský eventually became an information officer at the local Austro-Hungarian consulate. It had recently been established to cater to the thousands of Slovaks who had previously made their way to western Pennsylvania in search of work.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically enough, the first Slovak-American newspaper was launched from the Austro-Hungarian consulate in Pittsburgh. As information officer, Ján Slovenský found himself deluged with eastern Slovaks seeking news from home. The largest number had come from the northeastern counties of Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín and Abov. To make his job easier, Slovenský began to issue a weekly *Bulletin* in 1885. He ran it off on a simple mimeograph machine and its four pages featured "news from home" and "news of the world". Moreover, Slovenský wrote it in his native Spiš dialect because he had had no schooling in literary Slovak. He also utilized Magyar orthography. Slovenský sold individual copies for 2c and mail subscriptions for 10c an issue. Július Wolf, who owned a saloon by 1885, allowed Slovenský to sell the first copies there and eastern Slovaks quickly snapped them up.

Perceiving that a living could be made in the world of journalism, Slovenský and Wolf established a partnership in 1886 and on October 21 began to publish a genuine weekly newspaper entitled *Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny* (American-Slovak News). From a slow start it soon acquired subscribers from across the country and as far away as Fort William, Canada. By 1888 it had a circulation of 1600. Ján Slovenský did all the editorial work and, had no other Slovak intellectuals come to America, Slovenský's newspaper might have continued to publish in an eastern Slovak dialect, with Magyar orthography, and with a pro-Hungarian political philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

Other Slovak intellectuals did come to America, however, mostly from central and western Slovak counties, and these individuals saw to it that *Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny*, and most other Slovak newspapers in the United States, eventually used literary Slovak. The first of these was Edward Schwartz-Markovič, who was born in Ľepľa, Liptov county, in 1850. Liptov

was a center of Slovak nationalism and its people spoke and wrote in one of the purest forms of literary Slovak. Markovič had been the police captain of the city of Levoča, Spiš, in the 1880's and he had not prevented one of his friends and subordinates from committing some acts of fraud. Rather than face a humiliating trial, he left for America in 1888 and settled in Streator, Illinois, which already had a large Slovak community of soft coal miners. Furthermore, his nephew, the Reverend Erwin Gelhoff, was the pastor of St. Stephen's Slovak Roman Catholic Church there. Shortly after he settled in Streator, Markovič persuaded his nephew to lend him some money in order to publish a newspaper, entitled *Nová vlasť* (New Home). With his nephew's support, Markovič launched a weekly in literary Slovak in May of 1888.<sup>6</sup>

The struggling *Nová vlasť* caught the attention of another intellectual who would eventually dominate the entire field of Slovak-American journalism. A young seminarian in Cleveland, Ohio, named Peter V. Rovnianek was heartened by the appearance of *Nová vlasť*. He hailed from Dolný Hričov in Trenčín county, which was also a region of Slovak nationalism. Rovnianek had previously been at the Budapest Roman Catholic Seminary but was expelled in 1888 for "Pan-Slavism" because he had been caught reading Slovak books. He had subsequently left for Cleveland in response to Bishop Richard Gilmour's appeal for priests from Hungary to serve his growing flock of Slovak immigrants. Rovnianek subscribed to both *Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny* and to *Nová vlasť* but preferred the latter because it appeared in literary Slovak and espoused Slovak nationalism. He started contributing articles to it in hope that it would unite American Slovaks and make nationalists out of them.<sup>6</sup>

Ján Slovenský and Július Wolf, meanwhile, feared the competition that emanated from Streator, Illinois, and decided to do something about it. They contacted Markovič and persuaded him that, rather than compete, he should join forces with them. They offered to open a New York branch of their newspaper if he shut down his and he did so in December of 1888. When he arrived in New York in the new year, he discovered to his dismay that the Christmas issue of *Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny* featured a sharp attack upon him. Slovenský had uncovered the reason for his departure from Levoča and accused him of having defrauded widows and orphans in the Old country and of having

fled Streator because the police were after him! Markovič, thus, lost his *Nová vlasť*, became a saloonkeeper in New York City and eventually returned to Slovakia where he died in poverty in 1933.<sup>7</sup>

Peter V. Rovnianek, not knowing the true circumstances surrounding Markovič's fate, offered his considerable writing skills to *Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny* and Slovenský and Wolf gladly accepted. He wrote nationalist articles in superb Slovak for this paper between January and May of 1889, and then opportunity knocked. On May 13, 1889, the editorial offices of the oldest Slovak newspaper in America were destroyed by fire. Slovenský and Wolf were so discouraged by this misfortune that they were ready to give up. P.V. Rovnianek, meanwhile, had finished his theological studies but decided against ordination. He saw the fire at the editorial offices as a golden opportunity for him to become editor and to further promote Slovak nationalism in the United States. Therefore, at the end of May he left the seminary and moved to Pittsburgh where, with the blessing of Slovenský and Wolf, he quickly transformed *Amerikanszko-Slovenské Noviny* into the leading Slovak nationalist newspaper in America. Henceforth its masthead read *Amerikánsko-Szlovenszke Noviny* and it was printed in literary Slovak. By the end of the year it had 2700 subscribers, making it the largest Slovak newspaper in the world.<sup>8</sup>

Rovnianek's success with *Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny* was only the first round in the battle between nationalism and loyalty towards Hungary among Slovaks in America. One of the reasons why he joined this newspaper was that his Slovak nationalism had made him some dangerous enemies. Chief among these was the Reverend Jozef Kossalko, a Magyarone (a Slovak who is pro-Magyar) priest from Košice, in eastern Slovakia, who had come to the United States in 1884 to administer the Slovak parish of St. Stephen's in Streator, Illinois. Kossalko had also submitted articles to *Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny* before Rovnianek became the editor and he polemicized with the latter about loyalty towards Hungary. When Rovnianek sent articles to *Nová vlasť* in 1888, Kossalko (who by then was in Plymouth, PA), sent in opposing views but Markovič refused to print them. Infuriated, Kossalko then contacted the rector of the Cleveland seminary and accused Rovnianek of heresy! While Kossalko's charges proved groundless, Rovnianek never forgot them. Kossal-

ko, seeing that Rovnianek was gaining more and more influence over Slovenský and Wolf, decided that the best way to combat this growing "Pan-Slavism" was to set up his own newspaper. He did so on February 1, 1889 when he published the first issue of the weekly *Zástava* (Flag) in the Šariš dialect. Kossalko tried to convince his readers that eastern Slovaks were "true" Slovaks whereas those from the center and west were Czechs. He failed in this first of many efforts and his paper folded in November of 1889.<sup>9</sup>

From the ashes of *Zástava* rose another weekly that eventually became the chief rival of *Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny*. Anton S. Ambrose, a Slovak-born Moravian who had come to America as a youth, who had worked as an organizer of the Knights of Labor, and who had sold subscriptions to *Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny* in the coal fields, teamed up with the former typesetter of *Zástava*, who was still in possession of its printing press, and decided to publish a newspaper out of Plymouth, PA, for the local coal miners. They launched their weekly *Slovák v Amerike* (The Slovak in America) on December 21, 1889 in the Šariš dialect but until 1891 it had to struggle to survive. Ambrose could not make a living from the newspaper and sold it to the grocer Ján Gosztonyi of Phoenixville, PA, in 1890. The latter was a rare eastern Slovak nationalist from Terňa, Šariš, who also could not make the venture profitable. Therefore, in 1891 he sold the newspaper to Ján Spevák of New York City. Spevák was a professional typesetter from Turiec county, the bastion of Slovak nationalism in Hungary, and he in turn hired Gustáv Maršall-Petrovský to edit it. The latter hailed from Petrovce in Bačka county (present-day Yugoslavia) and had been expelled from the Lutheran Lyceum in Prešov for "Pan-Slavism" in 1886. He then made his way to America with a chip on his shoulder. A gifted writer, Petrovský transformed *Slovák v Amerike* into a fearless champion of the Slovak worker, a foe of the Hungarian government, a leading publication in literary Slovak and the main economic rival of *Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny*.<sup>10</sup>

While the five newspapers discussed above concerned themselves with Slovak nationalism versus loyalty to Hungary, and with the use of various dialects versus literary Slovak, they all avoided religious issues. It was not surprising, therefore, that some Slovak priests in America, feeling a need for a religious

press, set out to create one. The first of these was the Reverend Ignác Jaškovič who had come to the United States in 1882 to serve his countrymen in the Hazelton area, and who founded the Slovak parish there in 1884. Jaškovič was an eastern Slovak who was neutral in the struggle between Slovak nationalism and loyalty to Hungary. His first concern was that his people remain Catholics and, therefore, in March of 1889 he founded for them the weekly *Katolícke noviny* (Catholic News). Since he was a tryannical publisher who fired editors at will, the newspaper folded in late 1891. It had employed literary Slovak.<sup>11</sup>

Jaškovič planted a seed that flowered in unexpected ways. When Rovnianek had contributed articles to *Nová vlast*, he had suggested that Slovaks in America unite their small, local fraternal-benefit societies into one large, national organization. This idea appealed to some Slovaks but frightened others. Those who liked it met with Rovnianek in Pittsburgh on February 15, 1890 and established the National Slovak Society of the United States of America. Rovnianek was elected its president and his newspaper became official organ of the society for the next twenty years. This link between the Society and Rovnianek's paper helped the latter to grow and flourish because of the revenue that the Society's advertisements generated. Rovnianek's dual role as editor and national president was also typical of the direction that leadership of the Slovak-American community would take. Editor became synonymous with leader.<sup>12</sup>

Rovnianek's success with both *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny* and the National Slovak Society infuriated Reverend Jozef Kossalko. He railed against Rovnianek in his weekly *Zástava* while it still existed and decided that the best way to cripple the new Society was to found a competing organization that would be based upon religious affiliation.

To this end Kossalko began to suggest that Catholic Slovaks organize themselves into a nationwide society. His appeals fell on fertile ground and, for a while, Kossalko found a powerful ally in the Reverend Štefan Furdek of Cleveland, Ohio. Furdek was a nationalist who was born in the village of Trstená, county Orava, in central Slovakia. He had preceded Rovnianek to Cleveland and had helped found the Slovak parish of St. Ladislaus there. While Furdek was sympathetic to nationwide Slovak fraternal, he feared for its future if it were not religiously-oriented. As the pastor of a Czech parish in Cleveland, he was very

much aware of the rise of Czech anti-clericalism and free-thinking in America and he had seen that the Czech Slavonic Benevolent Society had taken an openly antireligious stand. Therefore, he agreed with Kossalko's suggestion and on September 4, 1890, established the First Catholic Slovak Union in the United States of America ("Jednota" for short).<sup>13</sup>

Less than a year after he had founded the First Catholic Slovak Union, Furdek also established its own newspaper. In 1890 Ignác Jaškovič's *Katolícke noviny* served as the official organ "Jednota" but Furdek found its editorial policy too erratic. Therefore, on May 12, 1891, he launched his own Catholic weekly entitled *Jednota* (Union) and shortly thereafter the First Catholic Slovak Union adopted it as its official organ. *Katolícke noviny* did not survive the switch in patrons and did not last out the year. Kossalko, meanwhile, managed to gain control over *Jednota* until 1893 when Furdek checkmated him and gained final control over it for the next twenty years. Thereafter Furdek, as editor, used *Jednota* to promote both Catholic religiosity and Slovak nationalism by following closely the society's motto: "*Za Boha a národ*" (For God and the Nation). He published it in literary Slovak.<sup>14</sup>

By 1890, then, some of the characteristics of the Slovak-American press had revealed themselves. There would be nationalist newspapers, Magyarone ones, some would be published in eastern Slovak dialects but most would employ literary Slovak. Some would be religiously-oriented, others would be secular, and a great rivalry for the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of Slovak immigrants would develop between competing editors. Altogether 121 newspapers would be published for varying lengths of time by Slovak Americans between 1885 and 1918, but only three would survive the entire period *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny* (1886-1922) in Pittsburgh, *Slovák v Amerike* (1889-) in New York and *Jednota* (1891-) in Cleveland.<sup>15</sup>

The successful appearance of two secular and one Catholic Slovak weekly in America by the early 1890's greatly heartened leaders back home. Slovak journalism, nationalism and even the use of literary Slovak in Europe were still in their infancy and the prospects for their survival in the 1880's did not appear good. Even though the first Slovak-language newspaper had appeared in 1783 in Bratislava, it soon folded and a viable and coordinated Slovak newspaper press did not really get underway

until the 1860's. Only in 1846 did the Lutheran Ľudovít Štúr codify the language, based upon central Slovak dialects, and only in 1857 did the intelligentsia of the Catholic majority begin to use it in its press. By 1864 nineteen newspapers in the Austrian Empire published in the Slovak language but, after the 1867 Compromise that created the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, the tables began to turn against the Slovaks. During the rule of Prime Minister Kalmán Tisza in Hungary (1875-1890), the Slovaks were subjected to increasing pressure to assimilate ("Magyarize") and their press began to decline. Under the threat of lawsuits, many publishers (who were also the Slovaks' political leaders) could not maintain the required bond of 10,000 gold crowns for a weekly and 20,000 gold crowns for a daily that government law required. Hence, by 1885, only ten Slovak-language periodicals survived in Hungary.<sup>16</sup>

When we look at the Slovak-language press of Hungary in 1885, we quickly perceive its weakness. Two newspapers were pro-Hungarian weeklies: *Svornosť* (Harmony), 1873-1885, succeeded by *Slovenské noviny* (Slovak News), 1886-1919 and *Vlast a svet* (Homeland and the World), 1885-1919, both published with the support of the Hungarian government in Budapest. Their main task was to counter the Slovak nationalism of the weeklies *Národné noviny* (National News), 1870-1948, and *Národný hlásnik* (National Herald), 1868-1914, both published by Lutherans in the little town of Turčiansky Svätý Martin, in central Slovakia. Their editors were prominent writers and Slovak national leaders such as Svetozár Hurban-Vajanský and Mikuláš Štefan Ferienčík. At this time three other periodicals also appeared in Martin: *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak Views), 1881-1916; *Dom a škola* (Home and School), 1885-1897; and *Černokňazník* (Black-friar), 1876-1910. These quarterly, monthly and weekly publications respectively devoted themselves to literature, education and humor. Roman Catholics, meanwhile, published a weekly *Katolícke noviny* (Catholic News), 1870-1905, out of Skalica and Trnava and the monthly *Kazateľna* (Pulpit), 1880-1900 out of Skalica and Ružomberok. Their editor was the much-respected scholar-priest and nationalist František Richard Osvald. Finally, the entrepreneur and national self-help leader Daniel Lichard published his monthly *Obzor* (Overview), 1863-1886, also out of Skalica, a small town on the Moravian border. The reason for Skalica's growing popularity as a publishing town for Slovaks



was that, if one got into trouble with the authorities over some newspaper article, and one did not want to pay a fine or be arrested, one could easily flee across the border to the Austrian half of the Monarchy relative safety. Nevertheless, when we consider that in the 1880's none of the above-mentioned publications had more than 1000 subscribers, we can safely conclude that the future of Slovak journalism in Hungary appeared very bleak.<sup>17</sup>

Fortunately for Slovak nationalists, there was a change in leadership among Hungarian rulers in the 1890's and, as various new political parties appeared and struggled for power, Slovak leaders took advantage of this period of greater freedom to establish more newspapers. Both Roman Catholics and Lutherans founded new periodicals such as *Literárne listy* (Literary Letters), 1890-1900, and *Stráž na Sione* (Guard on Zion), 1893-1918. Others founded self-help journals such as *Včelár a ovocinár* (Beekeeper and Orchardkeeper), 1893-1896, specialized magazines such as *Slovenský peňažník* (Slovak Financier), 1909-1914, and regional papers such as *Považské noviny* (Newspaper of the 'Považie' Region), 1902-1904. Unfortunately for Slovak nationalists, the Hungarian government tried to counter as many of these as possible with its own newspapers such as *Krestan* (Christian), 1894-1908; *Naše noviny* (Our News), 1907-1909; and *Naša zástava* (Our Flag), 1907-1918, written in an eastern Slovak dialect. Thus, the increase in the Slovak press from a mere ten publications in 1885 to 32 in 1900 and 61 in 1914 was partly a result of greater freedom and partly because of the Hungarian government's continuing battle against Slovak nationalism in the form of its own Slovak-language press. Altogether there appeared 117 newspapers in the Slovak language between 1896 and 1913. Only 100 could be classified as pro-Slovak nationalist and these had to compete with 525 Magyar and German newspapers that were pro-government and anti-"Pan-Slavism". It was a very unequal struggle.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the expansion of the Slovak press in the 1890's also reflected a splintering of the Slovak leadership at that time. Between 1875 and 1890 the acknowledged leaders of the Slovak nationalist movement had been largely a small group of middle-class Lutherans with headquarters in Martin. The Slovak gentry had by-and-large thrown its lot in with the Magyar gentry in 1867 and had abandoned its people. The nationalists in Martin nearly despaired when the Hungarian government closed

the only three Slovak 'gymnasiums' in existence in 1875 and also the Matica Slovenská, the leading Slovak cultural institution in the country. Thus, between 1875 and 1890, these leaders pursued a policy of political passivity and hoped that "Mother Russia" would eventually save the Slovak nation. That is why the Hungarian government labelled these conservative Slovaks as "Pan-Slavs". By the 1890's, however, four new forces appeared among Slovaks in Hungary that would challenge the leadership of Martin, divide the Slovaks into five camps (as reflected in their newspaper press) and cause ill-feelings for decades to come.<sup>19</sup>

Almost simultaneously, the workers', agrarian, 'Czechoslovak' and Roman Catholic Populist movements began in the late 1890's. Booming Budapest had attracted more than 50,000 Slovak laborers who began to organize into workers' movements, and after a couple of false starts, founded the *Slovenské robotnícke noviny* (Slovak Workers' News), 1904-1909. The Roman Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka broke with the newly-established Hungarian People's Party in 1897 and helped launch *Ľudové noviny* (The People's News), 1897-1903 and 1906-1910, out of Ružomberok and later Skalica. The Lutheran Milan Hodža, first with his *Slovenský denník* (Slovak Daily), 1900-1901, and later with *Slovenský týždenník* (Slovak Weekly), 1903-1919, founded the agrarian movement among Slovak peasants from his base in Budapest. Hodža would also serve as one of the few Slovak deputies to Parliament in the period after 1900. Finally, a small group of 'Czechoslovaks', first called "Hlasists" after their newspaper *Hlas* (Voice), 1898-1904, published by Vavro Šrobár and Pavol Blaho out of Skalica and Ružomberok, followed the lead of the Czech professor T.G. Masaryk and sought the union of the linguistically-related Czechs and Slovaks in a new state. Sometimes these five political groups cooperated for the greater good of their nation but most of the time they did not. This disunity plagued the Slovak nationalist movement before World War I and it was reflected among Slovak leaders in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Between 1890 and 1914 the Slovak-American press grew from three papers to 30 and by 1918 to 41. This phenomenal increase reflected not only the increasing size of the Slovak-American community but its complexity as well. In 1894, for instance, *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny*, with 3,900 subscribers, continued to dominate the field, but *Slovák v Amerike*, with 3,000 readers, was close on its heels. That year, however, also saw the

first attempt to found a Slovak Socialist newspaper in the United States. The ex-Jesuit František Pucher-Čiernovodský launched his *Fakľa* (Torch) in New York City but it folded after nine months. Nevertheless, Slovak Socialists in the United States had beaten their European counterparts by three years in such a venture. By 1918 Slovak Socialists had made four more attempts to establish their own newspaper in the United States but only one -*Rovnosť ľudu* (Equality of the People), 1906-1935, published in Chicago, lasted long enough to become a grudgingly-accepted member of the Slovak-American press.<sup>21</sup>

Slovak Lutherans, meanwhile, also started to publish their own newspapers in America. In 1894 Ján Pankuch established the weekly *Cirkevné listy* (Church Letters), 1894-1899, in Cleveland for his co-religionists. It was patterned after a newspaper of the same name in Slovakia. Pankuch was an eastern Slovak from Prešov, in Šariš county, and his father had raised him to be a nationalist. As a young man he had learned the typesetting trade and in his adult life he eventually established six newspapers in this country. He was truly a "giant" among American-Slovak leaders. He and other Lutherans published six different newspapers between 1894 and 1918, the most important of which was *Slovenský hlásnik* (Slovak Herald), 1900-1962, official organ of the Slovak Evangelical Union, the principal fraternal-benefit society of Slovak Lutherans in America. This newspaper's name was copied from the very popular weekly published in Turčiansky Svätý Martin in Slovakia.<sup>22</sup>

Neither the Hungarian government nor a small group of Magyarone priests and their followers in America would concede the field of journalism to Slovak nationalists, however, and they published no fewer than seventeen pro-Hungarian newspapers in various Slovak dialects between 1885 and 1918. The first such effort, after the failure of *Zástava* in 1889, was the *Slovenský hlas* (Slovak Voice), 1894-1898, which was written in an eastern Slovak dialect by a certain Alexander Vizslocky of Pittsburgh. He was financed by Max Schamberg, the same Austro-Hungarian consul who had first hired Ján Slovenský as information officer! The majority of other such Magyarone newspapers were published by three priests: Jozef Kossalko of Bridgeport, Connecticut; Ján Chudatsik of Chicago; and Béla Kazinczy of Braddock, PA. Kossalko had a hand in four such ventures, Chudatsik in three and Kazinczy in two. Kossalko played the leading role by

traveling back and forth to Hungary, conferring with representatives of the government, and obtaining subsidies for his publications. His most original title was *Naša zástava* (Our Flag), 1906-1908. which both the Hungarian government and Slovak nationalists in Europe copied.<sup>23</sup>

Not only did the Slovak-American press reflect the religious, social and political divisions among American Slovaks by the late 19th century, but, just as in Europe, it also dealt with literary, humorous, family and educational concerns as well. Between 1885 and 1918 Slovak-Americans published two literary periodicals. P.V. Rovnianek led the way with the monthly *Ma-ják* (Lighthouse) in 1894 but quickly discovered that there was not enough of an intelligentsia among his compatriots in the United States to sustain it and it folded after six issues. More successful was Albert Mamatey's *Škola reči Anglickej* (School of the English Language), a monthly published in Pittsburgh between 1906 and 1908. Mamatey was a nationalist from Turiec county, a self-taught mechanical engineer who briefly taught this subject at Carnegie Technological Institute in Pittsburgh in 1905-1906, and the wartime president of the Slovak League of America which played a major role in the liberation of his people's homeland. Mamatey's monthly was later bound into a single volume and sold as a practical grammar for Slovak immigrants.<sup>24</sup>

Ten humor magazines also appeared among American Slovaks before World War I. P.V. Rovnianek founded the first one *Rarášek* (Demon) 1896-1912, a monthly patterned after one that had existed in Slovakia between 1870 and 1875. Rovnianek's version may well have spurred Slovaks in the Old World to re-establish their own *Rarášek* in Martin between 1908 and 1914. Meanwhile, Ján König copied another Old World title when, in 1899, he founded the *Nový Černokňazník* (New Blackfriar) in Cleveland. It lasted less than a year. None of these humor magazines (except for *Rarášek*, which was a supplement to Rovnianek's *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny*, had a long run. The jokes were largely from the Old Country and the audience was not sophisticated enough to appreciate them.<sup>25</sup>

Eleven family periodicals also made their appearance among American Slovaks at the turn of the century. Three of them, including the first in 1895 called *Rodina* (Family), in Cleveland, were established by Ján A. Ferienčík. This monthly was patterned after Old World self-help and practical advice journals. Fe-

rienčík was the nephew of Mikuláš Štefan Ferienčík, who had played a leading role in the editing of *Národný hlásnik* in Budapest. The nephew came to the United States in 1894 after having given up teaching in Slovakia. He brought with him considerable editorial experience and eventually served as editor of more than half a dozen Slovak newspapers in America. Also worth mentioning was the monthly *Ženský svet* (Women's World), 1907-1908, published out of New York City by Anton Bielek. Not only was this the first exclusively Slovak women's newspaper in the United States, but its editor was a famous Slovak patriot and editor who had been hounded out of Hungary by the government. Bielek had worked closely with Andrej Hlinka's Populists and had edited their newspapers. He died a broken man in an Austrian sanatorium, the victim of too many enemies and too many political battles. He left a son - Ivan - who later distinguished himself as the editor of the American *Národné noviny* (1911- ), and as president of the Slovak League of America in the 1920's and 1930's. Family magazines, meanwhile, like humorous ones, did not have long lives among Slovaks in the United States because their potential subscribers lacked the money and leisure time to enjoy them.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, American Slovaks also established four newspapers for their youth, as soon as they saw the need for such periodicals. The most important of these was the *Priateľ dietok* (Friend of Children), founded by the Slovak Catholic Sokol in Passaic, N.J., in 1911.<sup>27</sup> It, too, was patterned after an already-existing paper in Hungary, but its sponsor was something new in the history of the Slovak nation.

If one were to look for the key element that differentiated Slovak newspapers in the United States from those in Slovakia, it would have to be their sponsorship by fraternal-benefit societies. We have already seen that *Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny* became the official organ of the National Slovak Society; that *Jednota* became the official publication of the First Catholic Slovak Union; and that *Slovák v Amerike* served as the organ for half a dozen smaller societies. Such organizations, except for the women's *Živena*, were banned in Hungary.<sup>28</sup> And for good reason. Fraternal-benefit societies soon became the bulwark of Slovak nationalism in the New World.

The most aggressive of these fraternal societies were the Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol (Národný Sokol) and the Slovak Catholic

Sokol (Katolícky Sokol). Both were patterned after the first militant national organizations in 19th century Europe - the German Turnvereins. The Národný Sokol was established by fervent nationalists in 1896 to cater to young men who wished to train in drill and gymnastics and thereby prepare their bodies for future conflict with the Magyars. It established the newspaper *Slovenský Sokol* (Slovak Falcon) in Perth Amboy, N. J. in 1905, and its editors adopted the Hlasist program of trying to unite the Czechs and Slovaks in a new state if the chance arose. Because the Hlasists had also adopted T.G. Masaryk's anti-clerical motto "Away from Rome", a majority of the Sokol members broke away in 1905 and Passaic, N.J., founded the Slovak Catholic Sokol. This organization established its own newspaper *Katolícky Sokol* (Catholic Falcon) in the same city in 1911 and it eventually adopted Andrej Hlinka's Populist program, as did most other Catholic fraternal in America.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the fraternal mentioned above, there were also those that served regional, religious and women's interests. Among the larger regional organizations was the Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union headquartered in Wilkes-Barre, PA. It published the weekly *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood) from 1899 to the present.<sup>30</sup> There was also the Slovak Calvin Presbyterian Union, headquartered in Mount Carmel, PA, which from 1907 on published the semi-monthly *Slovenský Kalvín* (Slovak Calvinist).<sup>31</sup> Among women's fraternal was the Živena, patterned after the Old World organization, with its monthly newspaper of the same name appearing from 1907 on; and First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union with its own monthly *Ženská jednota* (Women's Union) first appearing in print in 1913 and continuing to the present.<sup>32</sup> By 1918 no less than fifteen Slovak fraternal published their own newspapers.

Finally, American Slovaks also published 51 independent newspapers up to and including 1918. These were chiefly business ventures and they had a very high rate of failure. They included 36 weeklies, ten dailies, four monthlies and one semi-monthly. It is difficult to characterize these newspapers except to say that during some, or all, of their existence they were supported by subscriptions and advertisements and they included all shades of opinion from neutral to nationalist to Magyarone to Czechoslovak. They were published by both laymen and priests in all major concentrations of Slovak immigrants in the

United States. Among these independents were *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny* which, from 1890 to 1909 served as the official organ of the National Slovak Society, but before and after those dates lived strictly on subscriptions or advertising. The same was true of *Slovák v Amerike* which, starting in 1914, became a daily and lost its fraternal affiliations. R.V. Rovnianek, incidentally, founded the first daily in America, the *Slovenský denník* (Slovak Daily) in Pittsburgh in 1901. He copied the title from Milan Hodža's first Slovak daily that started publishing in Budapest in 1900 but failed in 1901. Rovnianek's daily lasted until 1915. Also worth mentioning among the independents were Ján Pankuch's weekly *Hlas* (Voice), 1907-1947 and *Denný Hlas* (Daily Voice), 1915-1925, published in Cleveland. Another influential independent newspaper was the *New Yorkský denník* (New York Daily), 1913-1975, published and edited by Milan Getting. He hailed from Veľka Bytča, in Trenčín county, and followed the lead of the Hlasists in calling for the union of the Czechs and Slovaks in a new state. Getting became the leading Czechoslovak in the United States and his paper became the "pariah" of the Slovak press in America because it went against Slovak nationalism by proclaiming the existence of a Czechoslovak language and nation.<sup>33</sup> While the preceding half-dozen newspapers had a long life in the United States, the independent dailies, generally speaking, did not. They lasted on average only eleven years.

Since there was such a large number and variety of Slovak newspapers in the United States between 1885 and 1918, it may be worthwhile now to present a demographic profile of this press. As mentioned before, 121 Slovak-language newspapers appeared in the United States between 1885 and 1918. Seven were between 1885 and 1889; 24 between 1890 and 1899; 31 between 1900 and 1909; and 59 between 1910 and 1918. The median year was 1908 - half the newspapers were launched between 1885 and 1908 and half between 1908 and 1918. This 50% growth of the Slovak press in one short decade testified to the growing maturity of the Slovak communities in the United States and to their eager participation in the World War I liberation movement.

On the other hand, the Slovak-American press also had a tremendous rate of failure. Between 1880 and 1889 three of their newspapers failed; between 1890 and 1899 nineteen ceased to exist; between 1900 and 1910 twenty folded; and between

1910 and 1918, 44 ceased publishing. Fully half had folded by 1914. Taking it one step further, we see that one half of all Slovak newspapers in America between 1885 and 1918 failed to last more than a year. Only three that had been founded between 1885 and 1891 survived to 1918. Thus, even though Slovak-Americans published 41 newspapers in 1918, their future was by no means assured.

If we look at the Slovak-language press in America between 1885 and 1918 by focusing on frequency of publication, by duration and by type, we will also notice that weeklies made up more than half of the total, that semi-monthlies lasted the longest and that the fraternal press had the greatest longevity. There were 63 weeklies, 42 monthlies, 11 dailies and 5 semi-monthlies published between 1885 and 1918. The semi-monthlies lasted an average of 26 years, the weeklies an average of 16 years, the monthlies an average of 13 years and the dailies an average of 11 years. Furthermore, of nine kinds of papers published by Slovak-Americans between 1885 and 1918, the fraternal organs lasted an average of 50 years, the youth papers lasted an average of 39 years; the Socialist press an average of 25 years; religious newspapers lasted an average of 15 years; independents averaged ten years; humor magazines averaged three years; small organizational journals lasted an average of three years; family magazines eight months; and literary journals half a year. This profile completely disproves Robert E. Parks's prediction that the independent, commercial press would become the mainstay of American ethnic communities.<sup>3-4</sup> Rather, it was ethnic solidarity, expressed in fraternalism, that became the backbone of the Slovak-American press.

The place of publication of the Slovak-American press between 1885 and 1918 mirrored the major areas of settlement of its readers. Of 119 newspapers on which we have information regarding place of publication, 34 (28%) appeared in the Pittsburgh region; 21 (18%) were published in the Eastern Pennsylvania coal regions; 19 (16%) came out of Ohio, principally Cleveland; 19 (16%) originated from Illinois, chiefly from Chicago; 12 (10%) were headquartered in New York City; and 6 (5%) were published in New Jersey. This roughly corresponded with the 1920 census which recorded 619,866 Slovak in the United States, with 296,219 (almost half) in Pennsylvania; 78,892 in Ohio, and the rest almost equally split between New Jersey (48,857), New



York (46209), and Illinois (44010), with smaller numbers elsewhere.<sup>35</sup>

A more significant revelation of our demographic profile of the Slovak-American press to 1918 is the small number of publishers and editors relative to the total number of newspapers. Of 111 newspapers on which we have information regarding to publishers, we notice that 86 newspapers were published by 56 individuals; and of these 56, ten published 33 newspapers (1/3 of the total). Furthermore, of these ten, only two (P.V. Rovnianek and Ján Pankuch) published 13 newspapers between them. Most of the rest of the newspapers were published by 20 fraternal organizations. Furthermore, of 102 newspapers with known editors, we find that 45 were edited by only 15 individuals. The inescapable conclusion is that a very small group of publishers, editors and fraternal organizations was responsible for the appearance of much of the American-Slovak press.

Finally, if we look at the political and religious orientation of the Slovak-American press to 1918, we will immediately notice its overwhelming nationalist bent. Of 93 newspapers on which we have information regarding political orientation, we note that 50 (54%) were nationalist; (18%) were Magyarone; 16 (17%) had no political orientation; four (4%) were Czechoslovak, four (4%) were international (Socialist); and two (2%) were neutral. In terms of the religious orientation of the same number of newspapers, 73 (79%) had no religious affiliation; 14 (15%) were Roman Catholic; five (5%) were Lutheran and one was Calvinist. Thus, the Slovak-American press was, by-and-large, secular and nationalist between 1885 and 1918.

A final comparison between the Slovak-American press and its counterpart in Europe, in terms of number and circulation, will reveal the strength of the former and the weakness of the latter. While the Slovaks in Europe had 61 newspapers before the outbreak of the war in 1914 and American Slovaks had 30, these numbers almost reversed themselves by 1918 due to Hungarian war censorship. In 1918 American Slovaks had 41 newspapers while those in Europe had only 30. To put these figures in perspective we need only remember that the population of Slovaks in Hungary in 1914 was 2,000,000 while in the United States it was approximately 500,000. All things being equal, Slovaks in Europe should have had four times as many newspapers as Slovaks in America. Instead, they had only twice as

many in 1914 and by 1918 they had fewer than their countrymen in the United States.

In terms of circulation, the Slovak-American press was a giant compared to the Slovak press in Europe. While it is impossible to arrive at exact circulation figures for this time period, some intelligent estimates can be made. In 1910 N.W. Ayer & Son's annual *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* listed only ten of the-then-existing 24 Slovak newspapers in the United States and it gave circulations for only five. However, it did record *Slovák v Amerike* as having a circulation of 36,000. *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny*, its chief rival, had to have at least as many subscribers, if not more, but Ayer's did not give its circulation until 1918, by which time it had dropped to 15,000. The drop was a result of the bankruptcy of P.V. Rovnianek's many business ventures in 1911, his subsequent flight to California to escape his creditors, and his abandonment of his newspaper. *Jednota*, according to Ayer's had a circulation of 15,000 in 1910 and Ján Pankuch's *Hlas* in Cleveland had 6,000. *Slovenský denník* had a reported circulation of 5,000 in 1910. Thus, since only five Slovak-American newspapers accounted for a circulation of almost 100,000 in 1910, I would guess that 24 such newspapers had a circulation of between 130,000 and 150,000.<sup>36</sup> Kenneth D. Miller, a keen observer of ethnic affairs at the turn of the century, recalled that P.V. Rovnianek had said to him that twelve Slovak-American newspapers had had a circulation of 112,500 in 1910. Rovnianek had contrasted this with 20 Slovak newspapers in Hungary that had a reported circulation of 48,300 in the same year.<sup>37</sup> Actually, the number of Slovak-language newspapers in Hungary had been 47 in 1910 but recent scholars have put their circulation at around 40,000 or less.<sup>38</sup> In any event, the Slovak-American press had a circulation three times that of the Slovak press in pre-World War I Hungary.

Slovak leaders in the Old World, meanwhile, had early recognized the importance of their American colleagues' press. They had rejoiced over the founding of *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny* in 1886 and especially over the news that it was promoting "Pan-Slavism". They also delighted in an 1896 report that the use of literary Slovak had triumphed over various dialects in the Slovak-American press.<sup>39</sup> As a result, they established early and close relations with their counterparts in the United States and made them a part of the Slovak national movement.

The Hungarian government, on the other hand, viewed with alarm the rise of nationalism as exemplified by the Slovak-American press. As early as 1890 it denounced "Pan-Slavism" in America and in 1894 banned the importation, through the mail of *Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny* and *Slovák v Amerike*, among others, to Hungary. Furthermore, it labelled P. V. Rovnianek a "pernicious and dangerous Pan-Slav agitator".<sup>40</sup> It also began, as we have seen, to subsidize the publication of pro-Hungarian Slovak newspapers in the United States.

Slovak-American editors, who, like their counterpart in Hungary, also served as their people's leaders, began to work hand-in-hand with their colleagues back home. They published news that was censored in Hungary; they raised money to pay the fines of editors of Slovak nationalist newspapers back home; they raised money for election expenses and strove to bring to the attention of the Western world the oppression that they felt their people were suffering under Magyar rule. They also subsidized newspapers, such as *Katolícke noviny*, which found themselves in financial difficulties.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the Slovak-American press also took an active role in directing the spread of Slovak nationalism in Europe. For instance, Slovak leaders in the United States urged their countrymen at the turn of the century to run for political office and to try to include eastern Slovaks in Hungary in the national movement.<sup>42</sup> They also subsidized literary works by leading Slovak intellectuals such as Svetozár Hurban-Vajanský and František V. Sasínek, by paying them up to \$ 300.000 a year for articles that were published in Slovak-American Almanacs.<sup>43</sup> As a result of all this activity, grateful leaders in Slovakia in 1906 divided the Slovak nationalist movement into two parts: the Lower House would consist of Slovak leaders in Hungary; while the Upper House would be made up of Slovak leaders in America. The latter took this mandate very seriously when they established the Slovak League of America in 1907 to coordinate their efforts.<sup>44</sup>

When World War I broke out and T. G. Masaryk began the Czecho-Slovak liberation movement in Europe, he quickly found that he had no choice but to deal with American Slovaks. He could claim no mandate from Slovaks in Europe but he could seek such approval from their countrymen in the United States. The latter proved to be tough bargainers. Led by Jozef Hušek, editor of the powerful weekly *Jednota*, American Slovaks in

1918 extracted from Masaryk the Pittsburgh Agreement wherein he promised autonomy for the Slovak nation in the future Czecho-Slovak Republic. Masaryk did not keep his word and the Slovak-American press never let him forget it. It thereby continued to play a role in Slovak nationalism after 1918.<sup>45</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We have seen, therefore, that the Slovak-American press, which began as a mere *Bulletin* of the Austro-Hungarian consulate in Pittsburgh in 1885, grew into a veritable giant of Slovak nationalism by 1918. In many ways it experienced the same growing pains and search for identity as did the Slovak press in Hungary: its publishers and editors had to choose between writing in various dialects or in literary Slovak; they had to decide between continued loyalty to Hungary or the new path of nationalism; they had to settle upon a secular or religious orientation; and they had to decide whether or not they should work together for a common goal.

Because the founders of the Slovak-American press represented a cross-section of the Slovak intelligentsia in Europe, their solutions to the problems they faced quite often mirrored those of the Old World. Thus, a majority of their newspapers were secular and nationalist, and the editors followed either the national Populist, Agrarian, Hlasist or Socialist party lines. Indeed, many of the names that Slovak newspapers in America used were copies of Old World publications although, in a few instances, Slovaks in Hungary copied titles that originated in America. And, on both sides of the Atlantic Slovak leaders had to contend with Hungarian government-sponsored publications that sought to neutralize Slovak nationalism. Ironically enough, Hungarian authorities fanned the flames of Slovak nationalism when they drove certain leaders out of the country to the haven of the United States where these leaders had their revenge by waging editorial war upon their former oppressors. They also helped their comrades overseas with advice, propaganda and money. In this sense Slovak-American editors were, indeed, an integral part of the world of Slovak journalism as Michal Potemra painted out more than thirty years ago.<sup>46</sup>

There were also appreciable differences between the presses in the two worlds. In the United States, where was real freedom of the press, the number, variety and circulation of Slovak newspapers was truly extraordinary. When we consider that the vast majority of Slovak immigrants in America were common laborers, and that 150.000 of them regularly read a newspaper by World War I, we cannot fail but be astonished. On the other hand, the competition between editors to reach these people was often shameful and detrimental to the national movement. In this instance Slovak leaders in Hungary set a better example of proper newspaper etiquette.

A final difference between the Slovak press in Europe and its counterpart in America would be its ultimate base of support. In spite of the large number of independent, commercial newspapers that American Slovaks founded, most of them failed after a few years. Only one segment of their press grew and flourished - the official organs of the fraternal-benefit societies. As long as Slovaks would group themselves into various organizations based on religion, national feeling, or simply the desire for fellowship, they would have a press that reflected these groupings. In Europe political parties would become the equivalent of American fraternal and the former would become the sponsors of newspapers. Here the paths of the two presses would part as Slovaks in Europe and in America would seek different solutions to different social, political and economic conditions after World War I.

#### NOTES

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- 4 Ibid., 91-96 and J.A.Ferienčík, Slovenské prisťahovalectvo a slovenská spisba v Amerike, Sborník Národného Slovenského Spolku, I (1915), 22, and Ladislav Tajták, K začiatkam Amerikánsko-Slovenských novín, in Josef Polišínsky ed., Začiatky českej a slovenskej emigrácie do USA (Bratislava, 1970), 186-96.
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- 8 Čulen, J. Slovenský, 123-126; N.W. Ayer & Son's, Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States (Philadelphia, 1889).
- 9 Čulen, Časopisy, 176-179.
- 10 Ibid., 120-125 and Ferienčík, Slovenské prisťahovalectvo, 26.
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- 12 Rovnianek, Zápisky, 126-136.
- 13 Ibid., and Ján Pankuch, Dejiny Clevelandských a Lakewoodských Slovákov (Cleveland, 1930), 32.
- 14 Čulen, Časopisy, 51-53 and Jozef Paučo, Slovenskí priekopníci v Amerike (Cleveland, 1972), 72-78.
- 15 Čulen, časopisy, 19, 51, 120. All statistical information on the Slovak-American press is based on Konštantín Čulen's Slovenské Časopisy v Amerike. After thirty years of collecting information on the Slovak-American press, Čulen completed the manuscript of this annotated bibliography in 1962. Unfortunately, he died shortly thereafter. Jozef Paučo published the book with the support of the First catholic Slovak Union in 1970. Paučo, however, published the manuscript exactly as he found it - the newspapers were described in alphabetical order. He did not prepare an index for the book, nor did he bother to group the newspapers by subject. Therefore, in preparation for this paper (and another that I am writing that will take the story to the present), I literally took Čulen's book apart and put it back together again. I grouped all newspapers under one of the following headings: independent, religious, fraternal, organizational, family, youth, humor, literary, and socialist. Under each heading I listed every appropriate paper alphabetically, by place of origin, by date of founding, by frequency of publication, by publisher and editor and by orientation. I then turned this information over to a Temple University graduate student (Dale Drews) and, with the help of an SPSS program, he cross-tabulated the information for me on a computer. Thus, I now have a statistical profile of the Slovak-American press from 1885 to 1962 and in this paper I discuss 121 of these newspapers which appeared through 1918. The total for 1885-1962 was 202. I left out some titles which Čulen could not verify.
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- 18 Július Mésároš, et. al., Dejiny Slovenska, II: od roku 1848 do roku

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- 30 Amerikánsko-Slovenské noviny, July 4, 1896, p. 1; Čulen, Časopisy, 27-28.
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- 32 Národný Kalendár (Pittsburgh, 1899), 158-61; P. Novomeská to František Sasinek, July 5, 1895, Literárny archív Matice slovenskej (hereafter LAMS), 37-048; Jednota (Cleveland), December 9, 908, p. 4; and Čulen, Časopisy, 183-185.
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- 35 See footnote 2.
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### POVZETEK

## **SLOVAŠKI TISK V POZNEM 19. IN ZGODNJEM 20. STOLETJU S POSEBNIM POUČENJEM NA SLOVAŠKO-AMERIŠKEM TISKU**

*M. Mark Stolarik*

*Večina Slovákov, ki so se izselili v ZDA, se za ta korak ni odločila iz nacionalističnih pobud. Ker jim je primanjkovalo zemlje in delovnih mest v industriji, so se izselili, da bi si zagotovili preživetje. Slovaki so najprej v manjšem, nato v začetku 20. stoletja v velikem številu zapustili svojo domovino in si našli zaslužek v premogovnikih, železarnah, rafinerijah in tekstilnih tovarnah na severovzhodu ZDA. Do leta 1914 se je že petina vseh Slovákov (500.000) stalno naselila v ZDA. Te kmete in nezaposlene delavce je spremljalo le nekaj intelektualcev. Med njimi so bili duhovniki,*



bivši bogoslovci, učitelji, propadli študentje, časnikarji in pustolovci. Večina jih je imela svoj sen ali politični program in vsak od njih je skušal najti pristaše med stotisoči njihovih rojakov v Ameriki.

Ustanovitelja prvega slovaškega časopisa v ZDA sta bila učitelja, ki sta se spremenila v pustolovca: Jan Slovenský in Julius Wolf, bratranca nemško-slovaških staršev. Po prihodu v Ameriko se je Slovenský zaposlil kot informacijski uradnik na avstro-ogrskem konzulatu v Pittsburgu. Zaradi velikega zanimanja slovaških izseljencev za novice od doma je začel leta 1885 širiti ciklostirani bilten na štirih straneh in v svojem domačem vzhodnoslovaškem narečju, ker knjižne slovaščine ni obvladal. Listič je šel tako dobro v promet, da je skupaj z Wolfom začel 21. oktobra 1886 izdajati prvi tednik z naslovom Amerikanszko-Szlovenszke Noviny (Ameriškoslovaške novice). Po počasnem začetku je kmalu dobil naročnike po vseh ZDA in celo v Fort Williamu v Kanadi. Leta 1888 je imel že naklado 1600 izvodov. Slovenský je opravljal vse uredniško delo, Časopis je izhajal v vzhodnoslovaškem dialektu, v madžarski pisavi in v progrski politični filozofiji.

Pomemben korak naprej v pogledu knjižne slovaščine in slovaškega narodnega gibanja pomeni sicer kratka epizoda časopisa Nova vlast (Novi dom), ki ga je maja 1888 začel v Streatorju, Illinois, izdajati Edward Schwartz-Markovič, rojen v Tepli v liptovski pokrajini, središču slovaškega nacionalizma. Streator je imel takrat že močno slovaško izseljensko skupnost. Časopis je pritegnil pozornost mladega slovaškega bogoslovca v Clevelandu Petra V. Rovnianeka, ki je postal sodelavec časopisa. Slovenský in Wolf, ki sta se bala konkurence novega lista, sta Schwartz-Markoviča z objavljanjem klevet pregnala iz ZDA. Ko je redakcija njunega časopisa maja 1889 pogorela, je njegovo uredništvo prevzel zdaj že duhovnik Roviánek, ki je Amerikansko-Slovenske Noviny hitro preobikoval v vodilni slovaški nacionalistični časopis v Ameriki. List je zdaj izhajal v knjižni slovaščini in je z 2700 naročniki postal največji slovaški časopis na svetu. Slovaški nacionalistični duh časopisa ni bil vseh "madžaronom" med slovaškimi izseljenci, katerih voditelj je bil duhovnik Jozef Kossalko, ki je začel izdajati svoj časopis Zastava. Po propadu tega časopisa je postal glavni ekonomski nasprotnik lista Amerikansko-Slovenske Noviny tednik Slovák v Amerike (Slovak v Ameriki), ki se je iz madžaronskega pod novim lastnikom ter novim urednikom Gustávom Maršall-Petrovskym spremenil v slovaški delavski protimadžarski časopis.

*Sledila je prava eksplozija slovaško-ameriških časopisov: sedem med leti 1885 in 1889, 24 med leti 1890 in 1899, 31 med 1900 in 1909 in 59 med 1910 in 1918, skupaj v obdobju med 1885 in 1918 kar 121. Po drugi plati pa je imel slovaško-ameriški tisk veli odstotek propadov. Med 1880 in 1889 so propadli trije, med 1900 in 1910 19, med 1910 in 1918 pa kar 24 časopisov, pol od teh samo v letu 1914. Če naredimo korak dalje, vidimo, da je več kot polovica vseh slovaških časopisov v ZDA med 1885 in 1918 izhajala manj kot leto dni. Samo trije, ustanovljeni med 1885 in 1891, so preživeli do leta 1918. Čeprav so slovaški izseljenci v ZDA leta 1918 izdajali kar 41 časopisov, pa njihova prihodnost nikakor ni bila zagotovljena.*