

More Slovaks in the U.S. Than Czechs?

Who Says? When and Where?¹

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Born in Chicago, Illinois, I am a third-generation Czech-American married to a second-generation Slovak-American, born Anna Mozolák in New York City. Ann's grandfather, Samuel Mozolák, is the peasant in my forthcoming book, *The Emperor and the Peasant: The Start of the Great War and End of a Great Empire*.² The emperor is, of course, Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary. The peasant, Samuel Mozolák, lived in Krajné, a Slovak village in Hungary, one half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although they never met, Franz Joseph's life profoundly affected Samuel's. It is inconceivable that the peasant ever did anything to harm the emperor, but the emperor, did much to harm him. By declaring war against Serbia, Franz Joseph personally made the decision that led to Samuel's death. So began World War I, innocently known then as the Great War—the war to end all wars.

Franz Joseph resided in his Austrian palaces and visited Hungary as little as possible. Living in different places and with no common acquaintances, the two men traveled together on non-intersecting paths toward World War I. The story about Franz Joseph is based entirely on historical records. Samuel Mozolák's story is based on family documents, histories of Slovaks in Hungary, reports of Slovaks emigrating to the United States, immigrants' personal accounts, and novels of the era. His story threads together the description of Slovaks' lives as subjects in Hungary and as immigrants in America.

Chapter 1 begins the emperor's story, which continues over the odd-numbered chapters. Chapter 2 and subsequent even-numbered chapters tell about the Slovak peasant who crossed the ocean at 20 years of age to work in New York City and who returned to Slovakia in time to serve the emperor. Those chapters also tell why hundreds of thousands of Slovaks fled the empire, how they traveled to the United States, and where they settled. In writing my manuscript, I learned far more about Ann's Slovak heritage than I did about my own Czech family background.

¹ M. Mark Stolarik improved this paper with several useful suggestions.

² Forthcoming in 2017 by McFarland Books, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640, <http://www.mcfarlandbooks.com>.

My mother and father were first-generation bilingual Bohemians who impressed on me—who foolishly resisted learning Czech—that I was Bohemian too. I attended many events in Chicago's numerous Sokol halls, but I do not recall my parents ever saying that they had Slovak friends or even talking about Slovaks. When I met Ann Mozolak in graduate school at Indiana University, she was the first genuine Slovak-American that I ever recall meeting. So imagine my surprise when I learned that the 1990 Census found 1.9 million United States residents professing Slovak ancestry compared with about 1.3 claiming Czech roots, while approximately 315,000 considering themselves Czechoslovakian."³

How could that be? Did more Slovaks than Czechs really immigrate to the United States? What's the evidence? When did the immigration waves occur? Where did the Czechs and Slovaks settle in America? How could it be that I do not remember meeting any Slovaks in Chicago?

These are questions that I grappled with while writing *The Emperor and the Peasant*, and ones addressed more comprehensively in this paper. Anyone researching Czech and Slovak emigration from Austria-Hungary to the United States during the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century encounters several facts:

1. *Statistics on emigration from Austria-Hungary and immigration to the United States are seriously incomplete.*⁴
Emigration statistics from Austria-Hungary had to be compiled from fragmentary government data on exit permits and from more complete data on ships sailing from European ports.⁵ Immigration data in the United States came almost completely from passenger lists of ship companies.⁶
2. *Over the years, the United States defined "immigrant" differently.*
From 1820 to 1867, data were reported for *alien passengers*; from 1868 to 1900 for *alien immigrants*—those who intended to reside in the U.S. (including only third class passengers, not first or second class, until 1903); after 1906 for *immigrant aliens admitted*, excluding "all aliens admitted who avowed an intention not to settle in the United States, and all returning to resume domiciles formerly acquired in this country."⁷
3. *The U.S. Census Bureau did not separately classify residents from Austria-Hungary as Czechs or Slovaks until 1910, when it began asking people of "foreign stock" about their "mother tongue."*
That year, Slovak leaders persuaded President Taft and Congress to add "mother

³ Bureau of the Census, *Census '90: Detailed Ancestry Groups for States* (Washington, DC: 1990 CP-S-1-2), Table 3. Persons Who Reported at Least One Specific Ancestry Group: 1990.

⁴ See Walter F. Wilcox, (ed.), *International Migrations, Volume I: Statistics* (Washington: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1929), p. 55.

⁵ Wilcox, pp. 89-90.

⁶ Wilcox, p. 374.

⁷ *Ibid.*

tongue" to the 1910 Census a month before it took the field on April 15.⁸ The Bureau hastily trained census-takers in asking people of foreign stock for their mother tongue—"that is, the language of customary speech in the home prior to immigration." "Foreign stock" included "the foreign-born white the native white of foreign parentage (both parents foreign born) and the native white of mixed parentage (one parent native and the other foreign born)."⁹

4. *In 1924, the U.S. Congress imposed quotas on immigrants from central and southern Europe, which drastically reduced the number from the former Austria-Hungary.* Whereas from 1904 to 1911, Austria-Hungary accounted for 28 percent of millions of immigrants who poured into the United States,¹⁰ Congress set the 1925 immigration quota at only 785 for Austria and 473 for Hungary.¹¹
5. *In 1930, the U.S. Census Bureau switched from asking residents of "foreign stock" about their mother tongue to asking it only of residents who were "foreign born."* The 1930 Census reported 38,727,693 of foreign stock but only 13,366,407 foreign born—about one-third as many.

These facts complicated estimating the numbers of Czech and Slovak immigrants to the United States.

Historical Trend of Immigration from Austria-Hungary, 1869-1924

What do we know generally about immigration from Austria-Hungary? Imre Ferenczi in 1925 supervised an international effort in Europe at collecting migration data that was published in 1929 in the United States under the general editorship of Walter F. Willcox.¹² Thanks to that source, we have detailed estimates for Austro-Hungarian immigration to the United States by year from 1869 to 1924—and often by country within the empire.

These data are presented in Figure 1, which reports the place of origin for years when available. Certain years are marked by pronounced surges in immigration. The researchers contended that these surges coincided more with views of good economic reports in American than with poor conditions in Austria-Hungary.¹³ Felix Klezl wrote, "There was a striking parallelism between Austrian emigration and the economic conditions in the United State," while

⁸ Konštantín Čulen, *Dejiny Slovákov v Amerike* (Bratislava: Slovak League Publishing House, 1942) was translated by Daniel C. Nečas and published as *History of Slovaks in America* (St. Paul: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, 2007), pp. 329-333.

⁹ *Fifteenth Census of the United States – 1930 – Population, Volume II: General Report, Statistics by Subject* (Washington: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1933), Chapter 6, p. 263.

¹⁰ Willcox, Walter F. (ed.), *International Migrations, Volume II: Interpretations* (Washington: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931), p. 400.

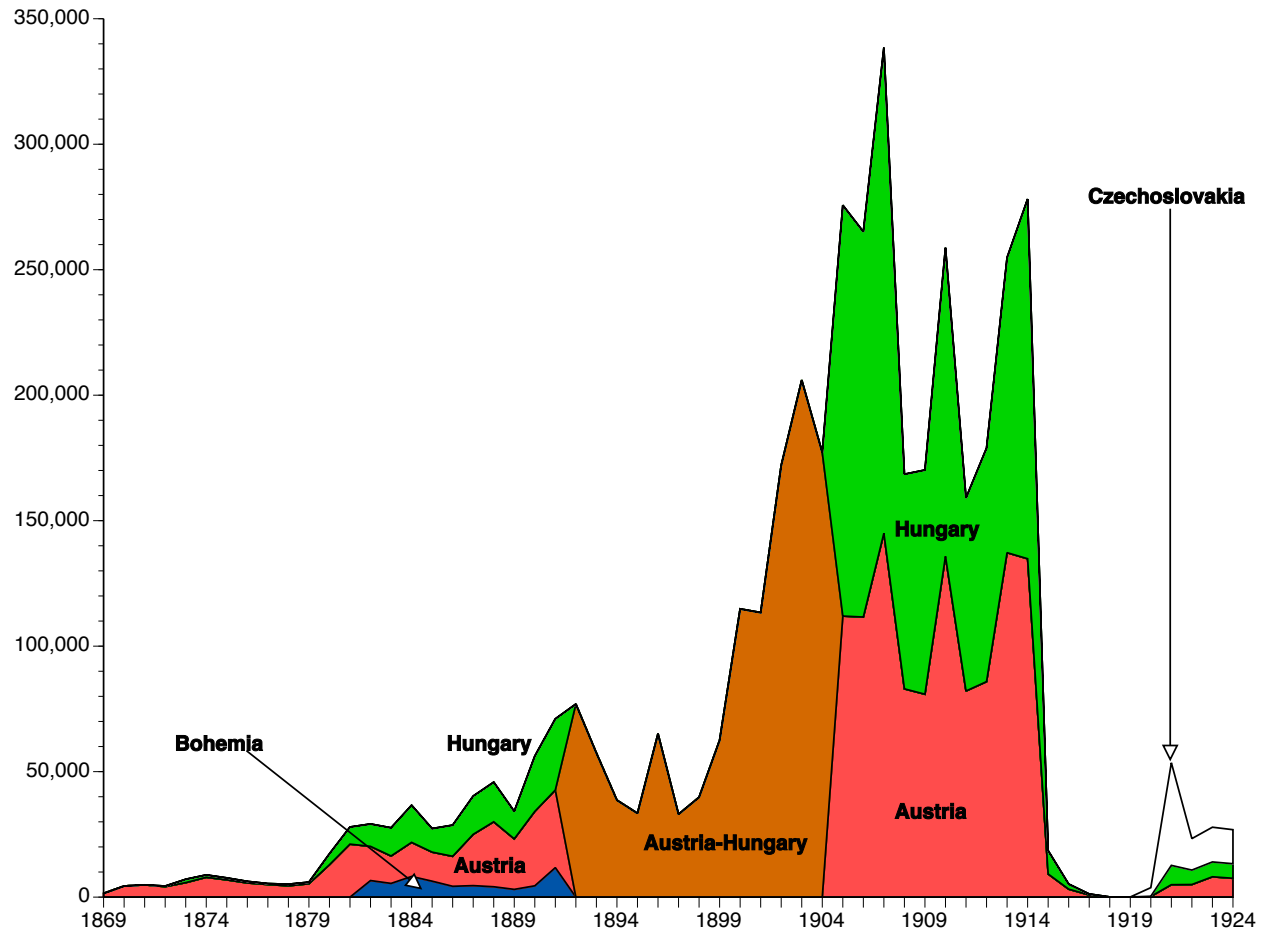
¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 410 and 433.

¹² See Walter F. Willcox, (ed.), *International Migrations, Volume I: Statistics and International Migrations* (Washington: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1929).

¹³ Felix Klezl, "Austria," in Willcox, *Volume II*, p. 403; and Gustave Thirring, "Hungarian Migration of Modern Times," in Willcox, *Volume II*, p. 411.

Gustav Thirring said, "In Hungary, American business conditions also were of decisive influence." The data extend beyond the end of the empire to 1924, after which U.S. national quotas throttled the flow of immigrants. According to the data in Figure 1, immigration from Austria and Bohemia long preceded any substantial immigration from Hungary.

Figure 1: Austro-Hungarian Immigration by Place of Origin, 1869-1924



SOURCE: Walter F. Willcox, (ed.), *International Migrations, Volume I: Statistics* (Washington: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1929), Tables II and III, pp. 384-393.

Anecdotal evidence tells of Czechs immigrating earlier. Czech historian Stephanie Saxon-Ford said, "Bohemian intellectuals who had participated in the nationalist revival of the 1840s and 1850s . . . left their homeland by the score to escape the repression of Hapsburg rule."¹⁴ By 1850 about 500 members of the Czech intelligentsia—doctors, professors, composers, and journalists—immigrated to the United States, and Czechs formed the *Česko-Slovanská Podporující Společnost*, or C.S.P.S., (the Czech-Slavic Protective Society) in St. Louis in 1854.¹⁵ Furthermore, in volume II of *International Migration*, Felix Klezl referred to substantial

¹⁴ Stephanie Saxon-Ford, *The Czech Americans* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), p. 47.

¹⁵ Gregory C. Ference, *Sixteen months of indecision: Slovak American Viewpoints toward Compatriots and the Homeland from 1914 to 1915 as Viewed by the Slovak Language Press in Pennsylvania*. (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1995), p. 36.

immigration of Bohemians to California sparked by news of the 1849 gold strike. He wrote, "The movement was confined almost entirely to Bohemia. Of the 58,000 emigrants who registered in the years 1850—68, not less than 44,000, or 76 per cent, were from Bohemia."¹⁶

The evidence is less clear about emigration from Hungary after its 1848-49 revolution. Gustav Thirring said that any Hungarian arrivals in the United States before 1861 were "not treated in American statistics as immigration," saying "the first two immigrants from Hungary being reported in 1861."¹⁷ Although Gregory Ference noted that a Slovak named Andrej Jelík arrived in the mid-18th century and that Slovaks immigrated more frequently by the 1850s, "these immigrants usually were isolated cases. . . . The beginnings of the mass migration started around 1880."¹⁸ John Kosa agreed that Hungarian emigration was small prior to 1880, but then: "In the period from 1886 to 1890 an average of 22,000 persons left the country annually for overseas, and the trend was increasing."¹⁹ Kosa continued:

The total number of emigrants who left Hungary in the period from 1850 to 1920 is variously estimated as being between 2,500,000 and 3,000,000; the overseas emigration alone can be put between 2,200,000 and 2,600,000 persons. For several reasons it seems to be almost impossible to reach an exact figure or to tie in the Hungarian data with the statistical figures supplied by the different countries of immigration.

Thirring found that 98.5 percent of the overseas Hungarian emigrants went to the United States.²⁰ He estimated total Hungarian emigration from 1898 to 1913 at 1,391,000, of which 31 percent (432,000) were Slovaks. Thirring also stated, "[E]migration from Hungary was almost entirely Slovak during the early years,"²¹ and from 1905 to 1913, Slovaks still had the highest emigration rate of all Hungarians—98.2 per 1,000. That was more than three times the Magyar rate and amounted to almost 10 percent of the Slovak population in Hungary.²²

U.S. Census Data on Czechs and Slovaks in America

What do U.S. Census data tell about Czech and Slovak presence in America? The evidence above in Figure 1 implies three conclusions: (1) Substantial Czech immigration from Austria-Hungary began in the 1850s; (2) Substantial Slovak immigration from Austria-Hungary began later, in the 1880s; therefore (3) many thousands of Czech immigrants settled in the United States at least a full generation before comparable numbers of Slovaks. Moreover, those Czechs immigrants gave birth to many more thousands of Czech-Americans. It is not surprising that the 1910 Census reported far more residents of Czech "foreign stock" than Slovak. Those data are reported in Figure 2.

¹⁶ Felix Klezl, "Austria," in Willcox, *Volume II*, p. 399.

¹⁷ Gustave Thirring, "Hungarian Migration of Modern Times," in Willcox, *Volume II*, p. 411.

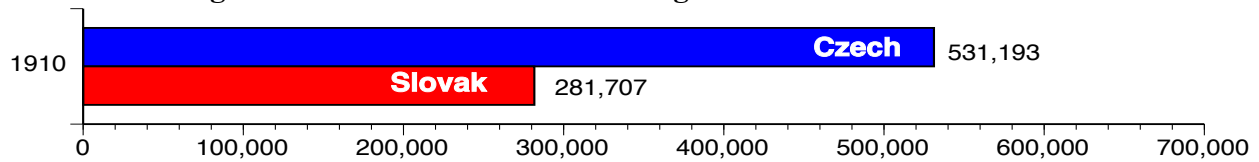
¹⁸ Gregory C. Ference, "Slovak Immigration to the United States in Light of American, Czech, and Slovak History," *Nebraska History*, 74 (Fall/Winter 1993), 130-135 at p. 131.

¹⁹ John Kosa, "A Century of Hungarian Emigration, 1850-1950," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 16 (Dec., 1957), pp. 501-514 at 504.

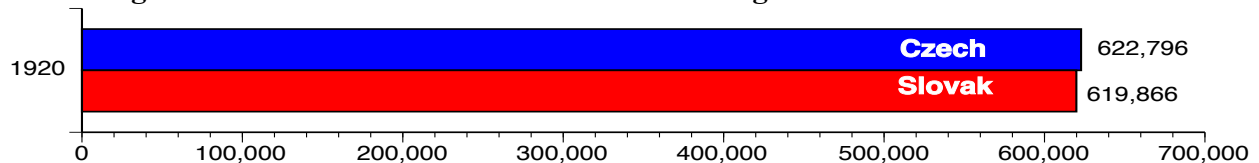
²⁰ Thirring, p. 419.

²¹ Thirring, p. 424.

²² Thirring, p. 426.

Figure 2: 1910 U.S. Census of Foreign Stock: Czechs and Slovaks

However, the very next census of foreign stock in 1920 revealed the surprising—even astounding—fact that the number of Slovaks in America was virtually tied with the number of Czechs! In just ten short years between the two Census counts, the number of Slovak residents in the United States jumped more than 338,000—an increase greater than all Slovaks counted in the 1910 Census. Moreover, this enormous increase occurred despite the nearly complete shutdown of immigration during the four-and-a-half years of World War I, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3: 1910 and 1920 U.S. Censuses of Foreign Stock: Czechs and Slovaks

What accounted for the huge increase in Slovaks between the 1910 and 1920 Censuses? Recall that Slovak leaders succeeded in adding the "mother tongue" question to the 1910 Census just one month before the count began. A U.S. Census website states: "Because the questionnaires had already been printed, enumerators were instructed to add this information to column 12 (birthplace) of the form."²³ The census-takers—many of whom were unfamiliar with Slavic groups in central Europe—had trouble recording responses to the question. That was admitted in the explanatory text of the 1920 Census, which stated that "contrary to the instructions given the enumerators" some persons who said they were 'Slavs,' 'Slavic,' 'Slavish,' or 'Slavonian,' . . . should doubtless have been reported as Slovak or Slovenian."²⁴

Apparently, the census-takers had less trouble accurately recording responses from Czechs or Bohemians, who had started settling in the United States sixty years earlier, had quickly affected American life, and were widely recognized. The Czech-Slavic Protective Society was founded in 1854; Budweiser Beer was imported in 1871 (Bohemian Crystal even earlier); and Antonin Dvořak wrote his *New World Symphony* in 1893. The Slovak newcomers were not known to Americans for their beer, their crystal, or their symphonies. Slovaks were not generally familiar to Europeans either. In 1916, according to MacMillan, Britain's Prime Minister Lloyd George (not known to be up on his geography) asked, "Who are the Slovaks? I can't seem to place them."²⁵ So the leap in Slovak speakers in 1920 appears to have come from better field procedures returning a more accurate count.

Additional evidence that the 1910 Census erred in counting Slovaks comes from the 1930

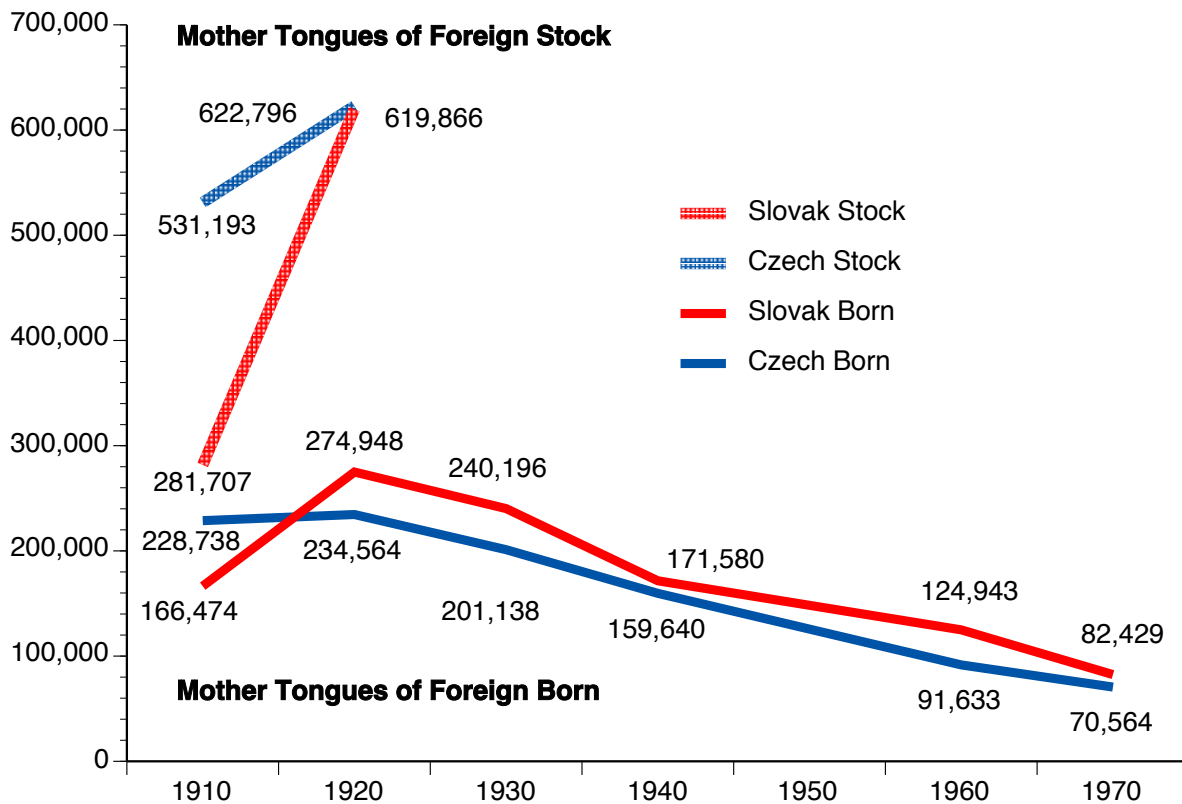
²³ U.S. Census, "History," at https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1910.html.

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Volume II: General Report and Analytical Tables* (Washington, DC: 1921), Chapter 12, p. 968.

²⁵ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 42.

Census, which switched to ask the "mother tongue" question of those only who were "foreign born." Retaining the original data from the two earlier Censuses, the Bureau of the Census in 1930 recalculated its 1910 and 1920 data to report as well on "foreign born." Later Censuses to 1970 continued asking those foreign born for their mother tongue. The full set of relevant data are portrayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Slovak and Czech as "Mother Tongue" in Censuses, 1910-1970^a



^aU.S. Census Bureau, "Mother Tongue of the Foreign-Born Population: 1910 to 1940, 1960, and 1970," (March 9, 1999), at <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab06.html>.

Figure 4 shows a much smaller difference between foreign born Czech or Slovak speakers and those of foreign stock. Czech immigration, which occurred earlier, certainly accounted for the preponderance of Czech foreign stock. Given the flawed nature of the 1910 count of Slovak speakers, one wonders whether the Bureau of the Census in 1930 corrected the counts of Slovak speakers when recalculating the 1910 data. In any event, Figure 4 clearly shows that in every Census from 1920 through 1970 there were more Slovak than Czech speakers among the foreign born. Because the 1920s immigration quotas virtually ended mass immigration of both Czechs and Slovaks, the downward slope of the mother tongue lines for both languages reflects the mortality rates of the foreign born.

Other Data on Czech and Slovak Immigration to America

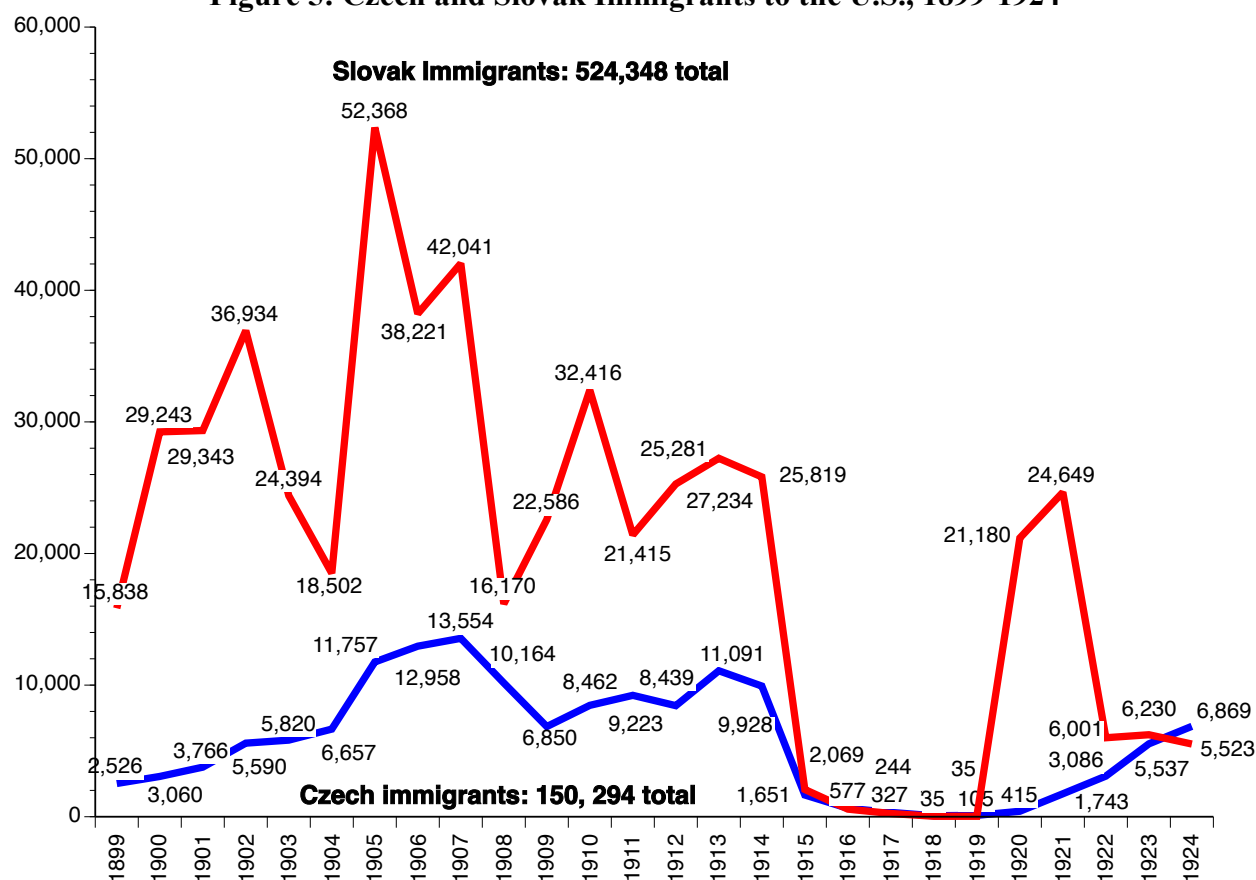
As noted, the U.S. Census has severe shortcomings concerning Czech and Slovak

ethnicity prior to World War I. Fortunately, there were other sources of information on immigration to the United States prior to the 1930s, and these were consulted in preparing the two-volumes of *International Migrations*. Imre Ferenczi, chief of the Migration Section of the International Labour Office in Geneva, wrote,

The statistics for the United States have been compiled in European libraries supplemented by all the important American publications, including Bromwell, Young, the *Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance* for the United States and the *Annual Reports of the Commissioner General of Immigration*. With the assistance of the numerous documents which have been collected, the present series of American migration statistics is probably more nearly complete than any heretofore published in the United States.²⁶

Thanks to these additional sources, Volume I of *International Migrations* printed a twelve-page table on the "Distribution of Immigrant Aliens Admitted, by Sex and Race or People, 1899-1924."²⁷ This remarkable table counted immigrants in forty different categories, including separate lines for "Bohemian and Moravian" and "Slovak." These data, rarely reported in accounts of Czech and Slovak immigration, were extracted for presentation in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Czech and Slovak Immigrants to the U.S., 1899-1924



Source: *International Migrations, Volume I: Statistics*, Table X, pp. 432-443.

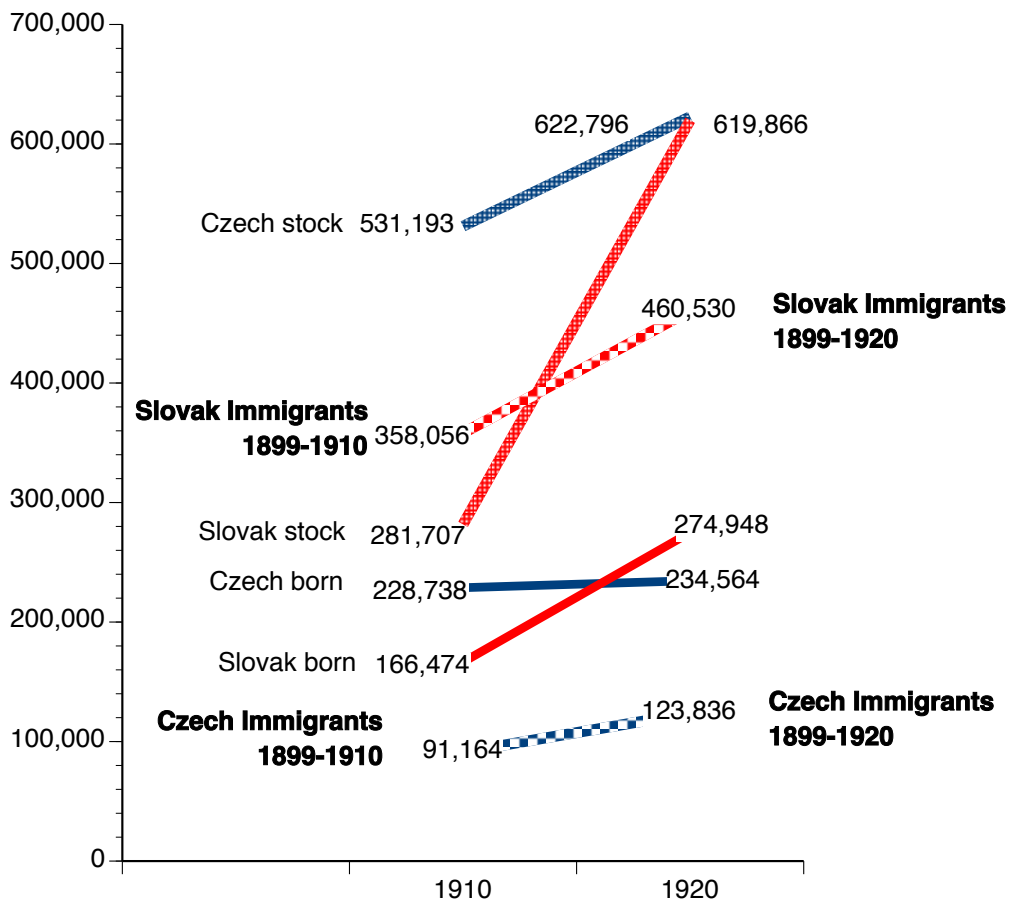
²⁶ Imre Ferenczi, "International Migration Statistics" in Willcox, *International Migrations, Volume I*, p. 59.

²⁷ *International Migrations, Volume I: Statistics*, Table X, pp. 432-443.

Summing the annual data in Figure 5 over 26 years results in 524,348 Slovak versus 150,294 Czech immigrants arriving from 1899 through 1924. These annual counts are reassuringly consistent with Figure 1's data on annual immigration from Austria-Hungary, as Figure 5's spikes in immigration for 1905-07, 1910, and 1913-14 match the spikes in Figure 1. While Czech immigrants to the United States certainly outnumbered Slovak immigrants throughout most of the 19th century, the annual immigration data in Figure 5 establish that over three times as many Slovaks as Czechs immigrated to the U.S. in the first quarter of the 20th.

However, the data in Figure 5 are not comparable to U.S. Census data in Figure 4, even for the same years, 1910 and 1920. Figure 5 counted only annual immigrant arrivals. Both Censuses counted *all* residents of foreign stock and of foreign birth, classifying them as Czech or Slovak according to their mother tongues. By simple logic, the number of Czech/Slovak of foreign stock counted in any Census year should exceed the number of Czech/Slovak who were foreign born. So too, the number of foreign born in 1910 should exceed the sum total of immigrants for the available years 1899 to 1910, and the number of foreign born in 1920 should exceed the total of immigrants from 1899 to 1920. Figure 6, which reprises the relevant foreign stock and foreign born data along with summed immigration data for 1899 to 1910 and for 1899 to 1920, shows those relationships hold for the Czech data, but not for the Slovak data.

Figure 6: Comparing 1910 and 1920 U.S. Censuses with 1899-1924 Immigration Data



When comparing 1910 and 1920 U.S. Censuses with 1899-1924 immigration data, one should understand two facts and their implications:

1. *The data come from very different sources collected by very different methods.*
Do not expect exact matches; look instead for consistencies and impossibilities.
2. *Caveat: summing annual immigrants overstates their counts in the Censuses.*
After arriving, many immigrants returned home.

Concerning fact #1: All data for Czech foreign stock, foreign born, and immigrants are indeed logically consistent for 1910 and 1920. In both years, there were more residents of Czech foreign stock than those foreign born and those who immigrated since 1899. The Slovak figures for foreign stock and foreign born are also logically consistent. However, the data for Slovak foreign born are inconsistent with the number who immigrated in years preceding both Censuses. It is not possible for 358,056 Slovaks to arrive between 1899 and 1910 and yet have only 166,474 foreign born Slovaks in the 1910 Census. It is not possible for 460,530 Slovak to immigrate between 1899 and 1920 and yet have only 274,948 Slovaks of foreign birth in 1920.

Concerning fact #2: That immigrants often returned home requires some adjustment to the data summed from 1899 to 1910 and from 1899 to 1920. One source for 1908 to 1913 estimated that, respectively, 40 percent and 38 percent of Austrian and Hungarian immigrants to the United States returned home.²⁸ Other sources give much lower repatriation percentages, almost half.²⁹ Let us assume the highest figure, that 40 percent of the Slovak immigrants who came in the 12 years prior to 1910, returned home. That would still leave almost 215,000 immigrants, far more than the 166,000 Slovaks the 1910 Census counted as foreign born. Of course, many thousands who came before 1899 were also foreign born and still alive.

Applying the same repatriation assumption to Slovak immigrants from 1899 to 1920 lowers the number to around 276,000—which is close to the 1920 Census count of about 275,000 born abroad. Although the 1899-1920 count still does not include those who immigrated earlier, the much closer fit to the 1920 Census count supports the contention that the 1910 Census woefully undercounted Slovaks.

More Slovaks than Czechs in America, Then and Now?

To recap, the 1920 Census of foreign stock counted almost identical numbers of Czechs and Slovaks in the United States: 622,796 and 619,866 respectively. Without doubt, the Bureau of the Census had improved its counting of Slovaks substantially since the 1910 Census, but annual counts of Czech and Slovak immigration from 1899 to 1920 suggest that even the 1920 Census underestimated the number of Slovaks, given that large scale Slovak immigration

²⁸ Willcox, Volume I, pp. 90 and 92.

²⁹ Čulen estimated that about 25 percent of all Slovaks who left eventually returned (p. 42); Seton-Watson reported that Slovaks who returned in 1905 were 10 percent of those who left, and that returnees were 20 percent of emigrants in 1906, in R. W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972 edition, originally published 1908) Appendix XIII, p. 470.

occurred two decades earlier."³⁰ By the 1930 Census, which asked mother tongue only for the foreign born, there were more Slovak than Czech speakers, 240,196 to 201,138. As census-takers recorded more familiar with Slovaks as an ethnic group, perhaps they found more Slovaks to count. In any event, it is reasonable to assume that by 1930 there were actually more United States residents of Slovak than Czech ancestry.

Despite the fact that Slovak speakers equaled or exceeded Czech speakers by 1920, Slovaks remained largely invisible to the American public. In Francis Clark's 1913 book, *Old Homes of New Americans*, he reported on a conversation with "an intelligent American lady, who had traveled widely and was not unacquainted with the history and nationality of Austria-Hungary." He asked her to guess how many Slovaks were in the United States; she guessed twenty thousand. He wrote, "She was only five hundred and eighty thousand out of the way, but I have no doubt her guess was quite as near the truth as would be that of most of her countrywomen, or countrymen either, for that matter."³¹

Although the U.S. Census Bureau apparently stopped asking for the mother tongue of foreign born in 1970, the 1980 and 1990 Censuses did attempt to measure ancestry.³² In 1990, the census-taker filled in a box for Question 13: "What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?"³³ Appendix B explained:

The question was based on self-identification; the data on ancestry represent self-classification by people according to the ancestry group(s) with which they most closely identify. Ancestry refers to a person's ethnic origin or descent, "roots," or heritage or the place of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. . . . The ancestry question allowed respondents to report one or more ancestry groups. While a large number of respondents listed a single ancestry, the majority of answers included more than one ethnic entry. Generally, only the first two responses reported were coded in 1990.

Based on both responses to the ancestry question, the 1990 Census produced these estimates:³⁴

Slovak	1,882,897
Czech	1,296,411
Czechoslovakian	315,285

Of course, feelings of ancestry fade across generations as marriages occur across ethnic groups. Given that Czechs immigrated a generation earlier than Slovaks, their self-identification in 1990 as Czech-American or Bohemian-American should have faded somewhat more than Slovak-American. The exact numbers for ancestry in 1990 are less significant than their relative magnitudes. These data, even with their imperfections, support the case that Slovak immigrants outnumbered Czechs in the first quarter of the 20th century, even including Moravians.

³⁰ Ference, p. 131.

³¹ Francis E. Clark, *Old Homes of New Americans: The Country and the People of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Their Contribution to the New World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), pp. 212-213.

³² Bureau of the Census, *Census '90: The Foreign-Born Population in the United States* (Washington, DC: 1990 CP-3-1), p. B-4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. E-14.

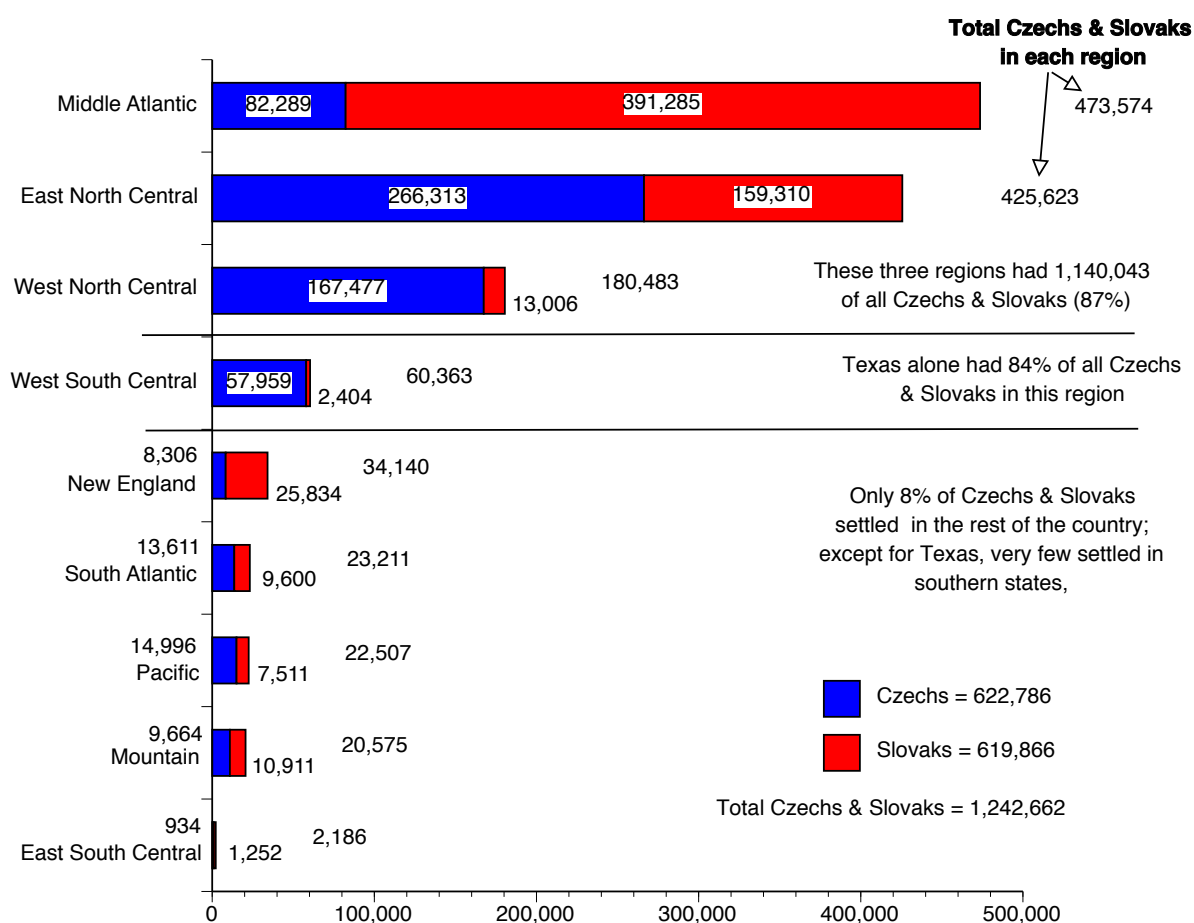
³⁴ Based on only people's first response for ancestry, the counts were lower: 1,210,652 Slovaks, 772,087 Czechs, and 240,489 Czechoslovakians. Only 3,781 people cited Moravian ancestry. See Bureau of the Census, *Census '90: Ancestry of the Population in the United States* (Washington, DC: 1990 CP-3-2), Table 1: "General Characteristics of Selected Ancestry Groups by Nativity, Citizenship, and Year of Entry."

That seems to be true as well today. In 2013, the Department of Homeland Security reported the persons obtaining lawful permanent resident status by region and country of birth from fiscal years 2004 to 2013. The trend continued: 7,165 people from Slovakia sought resident status in the U.S. versus 3,783 from the Czech Republic.³⁵

Where Did Czechs and Slovak Settle in the United States?

We do not inquire why immigrants chose where they settled in the United States. We look only at where they settled in the first decades of the 20th century. To determine that, we rely on the 1920 Census, which asked for mother tongue of foreign white stock—accepting its likely undercount of Slovaks. Recall that the 1920 Census counted 622,796 Czechs and 619,866 Slovaks for a combined total of 1,242,662. Given that the amounts are essentially the same, readers can compare the counts directly, without converting them to percentages. Figure 7 displays where they chose to settle in nine Census regions of the United States, ranked by total number of Czechs and Slovaks.

Figure 7: Distribution of Czech and Slovak Speakers in Census Regions, 1920^a

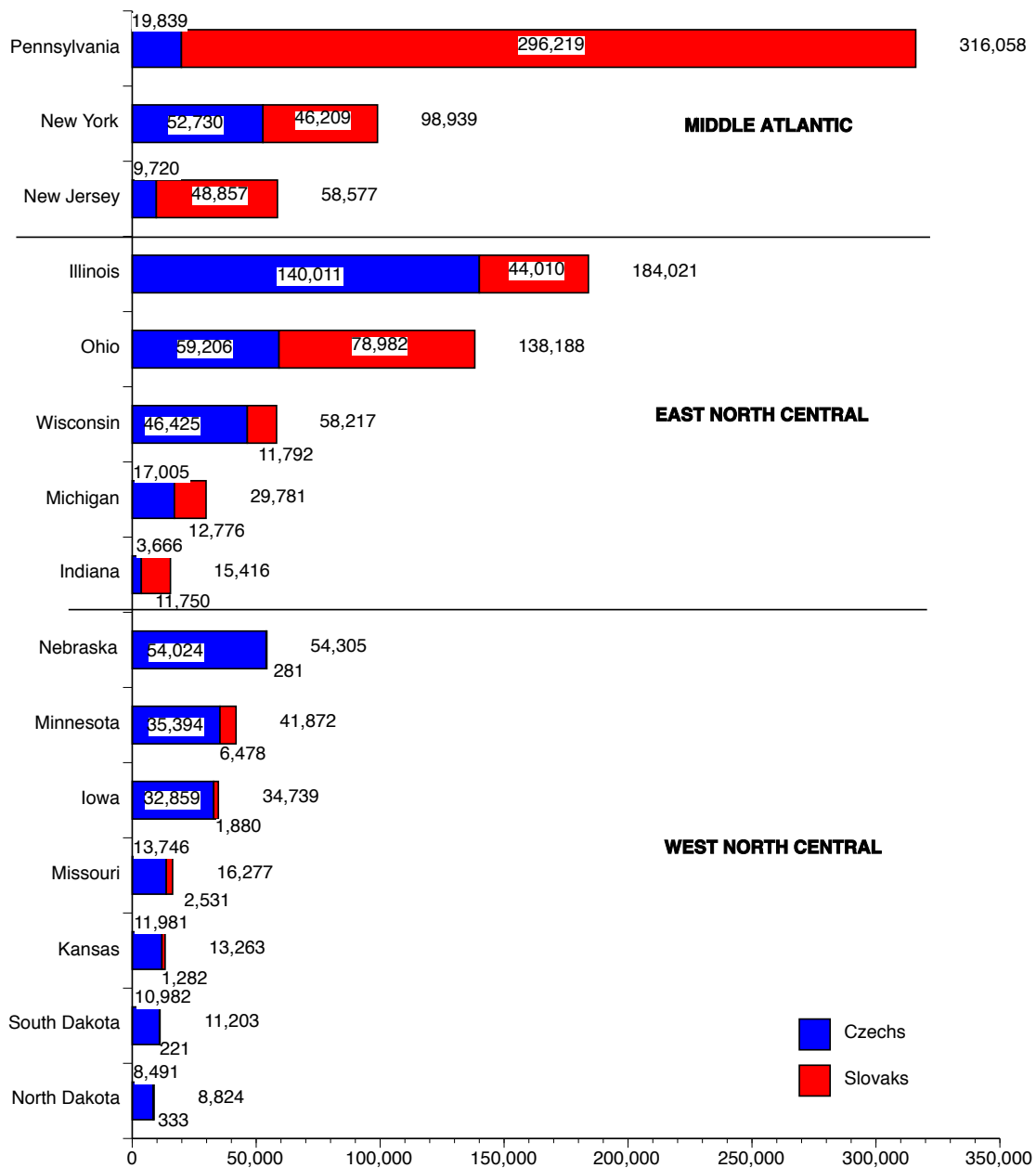


^aFourteenth Census of the United State, 1920: Volume II, General Report and Analytical Tables, Table 7.

³⁵ Department of Homeland Security, "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2013 Lawful Permanent Residents," <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-lawful-permanent-residents>.

The comments to the right of Figure 7 draw attention to three major conclusions: (1) almost 90% of all Czechs and Slovaks lived in relatively few states running westward from the Atlantic seaboard into the North Central region; (2) nearly all those in the West South Central region lived in Texas; and (3) relatively few Czechs and Slovaks ventured north to New England, west toward the Mountain and Pacific regions, or south—except for Texas, entering at Galveston. (One source estimated that some 200,000 immigrants entered there between 1865 and 1924.)³⁶ One last comment on Texas: according to the 1920 Census, Czechs outnumbered Slovaks 49,929 to 833! Figure 8 provides information on the states within three regions in which they settled.

Figure 8: Distribution of Czech and Slovak Speakers by States within Regions



³⁶ See <http://www.chron.com/life/article/Waves-of-migrants-made-Galveston-into-Texas-1732835.php>.

Figure 8 lists all fifteen states in 1920 having the most Czechs and Slovaks within the three regions. Only four of the fifteen—Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, and Indiana—had more Slovaks than Czechs. Pennsylvania stands out as the most extraordinary: Slovaks outnumbered Czechs 296,219 to 19,839, and Pennsylvania—by itself—had 48 percent of all Slovaks counted in the 1920 Census! Pennsylvania drew so many Slovaks that some explanation is needed. In his *History of Slovaks in America*, Čulen wrote:

Most of the early Slovak immigrants settled in the industrial and mining areas of Pennsylvania. Here, two main centers developed. One was in the hard coal (anthracite) mining region (or in the Slovak slang "*v tvardouhoľtnej okolicy*"—"the hardie coal circle"), the other in the soft coal mining region. The first settlements formed around the mines. Later, they formed around large industrial complexes, particularly around iron and steel mills.³⁷

M. Mark Stolarik's more recent research found that Slovaks accounted for 13.1 percent of all steel workers in America and 12.8 percent of bituminous coal miners.³⁸ New Jersey also had a preponderance of Slovaks over Czechs, as did Ohio, but neither rivaled Pennsylvania. Indiana also had more Slovaks than Czechs, but few of each.

The other eleven states had Czech majorities—often overwhelming majorities. Nebraska was home to 54,024 Czechs but only 281 Slovaks! That ratio even exceeded Texas' Czech majority. My home state of Illinois had—after Pennsylvania—the second largest number of Czech and Slovak immigrants. Where in Illinois did those Czechs and Slovaks live? Did they live in urban or rural areas?

The 1920 Census did not classify the foreign stock by urban rural residence, but the 1930 Census did report urban-rural location for the foreign born, which means the more recent immigrants. At that time, "urban" meant incorporated areas of 2,500 or more inhabitants—places that we would not call urban today. Nevertheless, only 56 percent of the U.S. population lived in urban areas in 1930.³⁹ Although they had emigrated from rural lands, both Czechs (66 percent) and Slovaks (72 percent) gravitated to urban areas.⁴⁰

Only in certain states did Czechs and Slovaks congregate in large cities. The United States had only 73 cities with 100,000 or more population in 1920. Ten were in the three states with the largest number of Czechs and Slovaks combined—Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio. Because most mines and mills were located outside of Pennsylvania's large cities—Philadelphia, Scranton, and Pittsburgh—merely 8 percent of its Czechs and Slovaks lived in its big cities. Ohio, which six cities over 100,000, presented a different case. Only Cleveland—a major steel and manufacturing center—attracted Czechs and Slovaks in droves, accounting for 52 percent of them, more Czechs than Slovaks.

³⁷ Konštantín Čulen, *History of Slovaks in America* [Translated from the 1942 Slovak edition by Daniel C. Nečas] (St. Paul, MN: Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, 2007), p. 67.

³⁸ Marian Mark Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization: The Slovak Experience, 1870-1918* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), pp. 111-112.

³⁹ *Fifteenth Census of the United State, 1920: Volume II, General Report, Statistics by Subject*, Chapter 1, Table 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, Table 1.

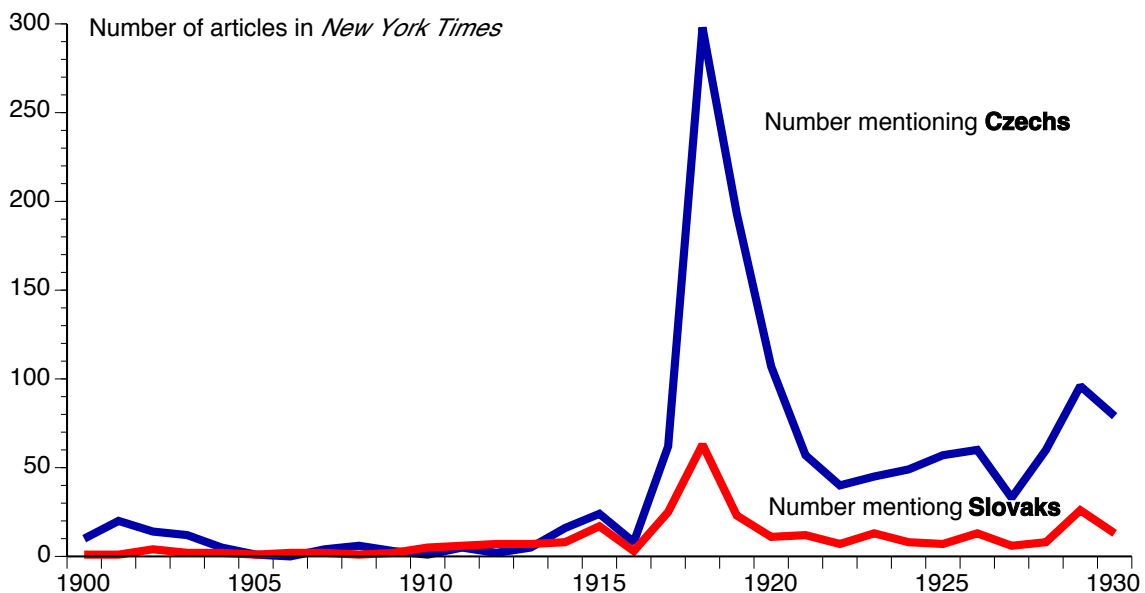
My home state of Illinois had only one city over 100,000 population—Chicago—and 72 percent of all Czechs and Slovaks in Illinois in 1920 lived in Chicago. The breakdown was 106,428 Czechs and 25,720 Slovaks. Given that Czechs outnumbered Slovaks by nearly 4 to 1 in Chicago, perhaps that explains why I never met any.

Conclusion: Slovaks as the Silent Majority

Certainly the preponderance of Czechs in Chicago partly explains why I was unaware of them. Probably more important was that Slovaks were more silent than Czechs so got little press compared to Czechs who—like the Irish in Boston and Italians in New York—soon became a force in city politics. Anton Cermak (originally Čermák) became a Chicago alderman, then president of the county board (1922), head of the county Democratic Party (1928), and mayor of the city (1931). His prominence allowed him to stand next to president-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt in Miami, where Cermak was killed by a bullet presumably aimed at the president.

Slovaks also made less news than Czechs nationwide. Figure 9 shows how often articles in the *Times*, the leading newspaper in the nation's biggest city, mentioned either "Czechs" or "Slovaks."⁴¹ From 1901 to 1910, the *New York Times* paid little attention to either group. Of only 88 articles during that decade that mentioned either, 75 percent were about Czechs. In the next decade, encompassing World War I and the creation of Czechoslovakia, the number of stories in the *Times* increased tenfold to 890, and the percentage mentioning Czechs increased to 81. By 1920, when Slovak equaled Czech as a mother tongue in census statistics, the Czech advantage in 689 *Times*' stories climbed to 84 percent. The Czech penumbra extended far over the Slovaks especially in the metropolitan media.

Figure 9: "Czechs" and "Slovaks" in the News, 1900-1930



⁴¹ "CHRONICLE, Visualizing language usage in New York Times news coverage throughout its history," at <http://chronicle.nytlabs.com/>.

Cermak's visible political career in Chicago, Tomáš Masaryk's tireless campaigning across the country for the existence of Czechoslovakia's as an independent nation, the nation's creation after World War I, and Edvard Beneš' presidency --all no doubt contributed to the many articles mentioning Czechs in the *New York Times* during this period. Slovaks lacked comparable political celebrities or events to garner publicity. Finally, the fact that almost one-half of all Slovak immigrants to the United States settled in one state, Pennsylvania and outside its large cities no doubt contributed to Slovaks' neglect by the national press and to their invisibility to people living in other states. Despite the fact that Slovaks were often unrecognized and undercounted by census-takers, the 1990 Census confirmed that more Americans claimed Slovak than Czech ancestry. Even today, that fact surprises many people.