Recent Research on Slovak Americans: A Selective Bibliography

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The most recent evaluation of the state of scholarship on ethnic Slovaks in North America was published in 1988 by M. Mark Stolarik, an eminent authority on Slovak Americans and then president of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies. Stolarik noted that at the time there were few professional historians dedicated to the study of Slovak Americans, and a significant body of scholarship regarding the second-largest Slavic immigrant group in North America was lacking.

While Stolarik acknowledged the contributions of journalists, pioneer immigrants and amateur historians as “observers of the Slovak-American experience,” the focus of this bibliography will be on recent scholarly works on Slovak Americans, specifically those published since his 1988 historiographical evaluation to the present, and especially scholarly works in academic journals, monographs, and theses. This time period is important as it has witnessed events that have had a profound effect on Slovaks everywhere in the world, namely the dissolution of Warsaw Pact in 1989, the restoration of a democratic Czechoslovak republic in 1990, and the establishment of an independent Slovak state in 1993.

Nevertheless, as there are many non-scholarly works which make significant contributions to the corpus of research on Slovak Americans, there is a bias here toward inclusivity. Some works pertaining to Slovaks in general but which contain little discussion of Slovak Americans in particular are included to illuminate various related topics. For example works on national self-determination movements and groups in the Slovak homeland can help illustrate the actions and attitudes of Slovak Americans toward Slovak national autonomy.

As the purpose of this bibliography is to provide a resource to support further scholarly research, certain types of works are excluded or not emphasized. While important works appear in the publications of Slovak religious and fraternal societies which provide valuable information on the history of Slovak Americans, often these works lack the rigor of formal scholarship and therefore are not covered here. Memoirs, autobiographies and other lay works generally are not covered, though these often serve as “valuable original sources for future historians.”

Theses and dissertations subsequently republished as articles or monographs with only minor modifications are not included, unless the original thesis appeared before 1988. Works published before 1988 subsequently republished largely in their original form are excluded, unless significant additions or modifications are provided. For example, a recent reissue of Konštantín Čulen’s seminal work, History of Slovaks in America, a translation from the Slovak language original with additional photographs and index, is an exception.

4 Stolarik, “From Field to Factory,” p. 28.
This selective bibliography is accompanied by a topic key (see “Topic Key,” p. 7) which categorizes areas of current research and can be used to identify areas in need of further research. The topic categories strive to provide maximum detail while preserving ease of use. The key is not intended to be comprehensive, and does not attempt to anticipate new avenues that future scholarship may undertake. Categories can overlap as, for example, few articles on community [C] do not also touch upon the three major supportive institutions established by Slovaks in the New World, namely churches and parishes [R], fraternal benefit societies [F], and an ethnic press [Q].

Therefore, many entries in the bibliography are assigned more than one topic key.

Recent works have filled in many of the topical gaps in scholarship on Slovak Americans, but in several categories there is ample opportunity for further research. In 1988 Stolarik stated that “The very thorny story of the rise of Slovak nationalism in America merits further study.” Perhaps the greatest strength in recent scholarship has been research into Slovak Americans in politics, especially political activism in support of movements for Slovak national self-determination [P]. Exemplary works in this area include Gregory Ference’s study of the role of the domestic Slovak language press in the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic, Brian Hodson’s thesis on Slovak nationalism in the U.S. prior to the First World War, and Štefan Kucík’s examination of the role of American Slovaks in Slovakia’s autonomous movement in the interwar period.

Stolarik also identified a need for more detailed “cross-cultural comparisons of Slovaks with other ethnic groups in North America.” Such cross-cultural comparisons as well as related works on ethnicity, ethnography, and race issues [E] have been well represented. These include June Granatir Alexander’s examination of how American Slovaks maintained their identity despite intense nativist pressures during the interwar period, Eva Riecanská’s study of Slovak ethnicity in western Pennsylvania, and Robert M. Zecker’s analysis of the role of the ethnic press in forming the racial identity of American Slovaks.

Communities and demography [C] have been another area of research strength. Representative works in the area include Michael J. Kopanic’s study of Slovak neighborhoods in Cleveland, a thesis by Staci Simon on a Slovak community in Alabama, another thesis by Samuel Triebs on Pittsburgh’s Slovak community, and Robert Zecker’s examination of translocal Slovak communities in Philadelphia.

Stolarik stated that “While much progress has been made in reconstructing the story of Slovak emigration from the Old World to the new … much still remains to be done.” In the interim much been accomplished by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic regarding immigration [I], a multifaceted category that encompasses Slovak immigration to the New World, emigration and re-emigration between North

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7 Ibid., p. 38.
9 Stolarik, “From Field to Factory,” p. 38.
12 Stolarik, “From, Field to Factory,” p. 38.
America and Slovakia, and the economic, cultural, and political causes of the “Slovak diaspora.” Works in this area include studies by Elena Jakešová and Ewa Morawska of the effects of re-emigration from North America on Slovak society. Anna Zajacová’s analysis of how new immigrants use social networks to adapt to a new environment, and M. Mark Stolarik’s autobiographical account on his family’s migration to North America.13

However research into migration from Slovakia to North America have tended to neglect ethnic and religious minorities such as Jewish and Rusyn immigrants. Miloslav Rechčígl, Jr. and Nancy M. Wingfield have published studies of Czechoslovak Jewish migration to North America,14 but there is a great need for scholarship regarding ethnic minorities across all of the topical categories covered in this bibliography.

Assimilation [A], a category that encompasses acculturation, education, social mobility, retention or dissipation of Old World culture, and contributions to New World culture, is another area that Stolarik identified as requiring further study.15 Scholarship has flourished in this area as well, represented by Pavol Eliaš’ thesis on the social adaptation of first-generation Slovak immigrants, Janice Tehie’s examination of the experiences of ethnic Slovak women in a coal-mining community over several generations, and Bruce A. Vlk’s study of the assimilation of Czech and Slovak immigrants in a rural Virginia community.16

Labor and economic issues [L] is a category that includes labor movements, solidarity, exploitation, participation in professions, and economic mobility. Stolarik observed that Slovak participation in labor movements in North America remains “terra incognita.”17 While much work has been done in this area, narratives on the exploitation of Slovak immigration labor predominate, leaving ample room for new scholarship regarding labor organization efforts. Works in this area include Mildred Biek’s superlative account of the long term unionization efforts of immigrant miners in an oppressive company town environment, M. Mark Stolarik’s observations on violence perpetrated against Slovak immigrant labor in the Lattimer coal strike and the Homestead steel strike, and Robert M. Zecker’s study of Slovak drotari in Europe and the North America.18

16 Stolarik, “From Field to Factory,” p. 38.
Fraternal-benefit societies [F], the Slovak language press [Q], and church parishes [R] are the three primary institutions immigrant Slovaks established to serve as a network of support in the New World.\(^\text{19}\) The fraternal benefit societies, both secular and religious, enabled Slovaks to purchase injury and other types insurance at a time when there were no government social support mechanisms. This topic has received considerable attention by researchers, though there is a need for scholarly histories of individual fraternal organizations, an area traditionally dominated by lay writers. Recent works in this area include June Alexander’s study of fraternalism and labor activism in the interwar period, M. Mark Stolarik’s survey of fraternals in North America through the late 20th century, and Daniel F. Tanzone’s centennial history of the Slovak Catholic Sokol.\(^\text{20}\)

Slovak immigrants created a prolific ethnic language press in North America, establishing over 200 publications since the late nineteenth century.\(^\text{21}\) The ethnic Slovak press has received considerable attention from European scholars, including a thesis by Michaela Bakay-Záhorská and Zdena Kráľová on the press’ role in preserving Slovak cultural heritage, a linguistic study of Eastern Slovak language publications by Konstantin V. Lifanov, and a review of the Slovak diaspora press by Peter Olekšák and Albert Kulla.\(^\text{22}\)

Religion played a large role in Slovak immigrant society, and this topic category encompasses religious affiliations, issues and practices, and histories of individual churches and parishes. The Slovaks share a rich and varied religious experience, embracing Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and other denominations.\(^\text{23}\) Works in this area include an examination of Slovak Catholics and Protestants in Pittsburgh by June Granatir Alexander, a history of Slovak Catholics in Yonkers, New York by Thomas J. Shelley, and a study of Slovak immigrants and religious diversity by M. Mark Stolarik.\(^\text{24}\) While there is much scholarship discussing the Christian affiliations of Slovaks, there are few studies to date regarding Slovak Jews.\(^\text{25}\)

The history category [H] encompasses general histories, historical surveys, biographies, memoirs, and oral histories, but excludes works on genealogy. While Stolarik has analyzed the shortcomings of


\(^{25}\) The lack of research in this area may be a function of the tendency of scholarship on ethnic Slovaks to exclude Magyars in Slovak lands. Alexander Maxwell has stated that “Jews in Slovakia … were not generally attracted to Slovak culture before the twentieth century. Jewish assimilation in the Kingdom of Hungary tended to produce Magyars,” Alexander Maxwell. \textit{Choosing Slovakia (1795-1914): Slavic Hungary, the Czech Language, and Slovak Nationalism}. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2003. UMI, 2003, p. 36.
scholarship on Slovak Americans conducted in Cold War Czechoslovakia, there has been an efflorescence of research by Slovak scholars since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. In general, there remains a need for historical surveys of North American Slovaks from the end of the First World War to the present, especially surveys of Slovaks in urban centers such as Chicago, Detroit and New York as well as regional studies on the coal fields and steel production complexes of the Midwest which benefitted from (and exploited) the toil of large numbers of Slovak Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Works appearing in this category range from personal family accounts by Michael S. Hormuth and Susan Kalčík to M. Mark Stolarik’s study of exiled Slovak historians expelled from Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

The Bibliography [B] category embraces bibliography, historiography and works summarizing primary sources such as archivialia. Miloslav Rechcíg, Jr. has been by far the most prolific compiler of bibliographies and derivative publications related to Czech and Slovak immigrants, publishing over a half dozen works in the period under review. His most recent work in this area includes a two-volume work on Czechoslovak American archivialia. Gregory C. Ference has studied libraries documenting the Slavic diaspora, and European scholars have contributed works on émigré archivialia and an analysis of North American scholarship regarding Slovakia. While much has been accomplished in this area, there remains a dearth of scholarly works of bibliography and historiography specific to Slovak Americans.

Topic areas largely neglected by scholars include Slovak American culture, customs, arts and literature [D], language and speech [M], and the contributions of women to Slovak American culture and society [G]. In the area of literature, Diana Židová recently has published an examination of Slovak ethnic literature and an analysis of the writings of a Slovak American author, but, as Stolarik has observed, “a thorough analysis of the literary output of Slovak-Americans … remains to be done.”

In the field of language and speech, Louise B. Hammerová and Ivor Ripka published a linguistic study of American Slovak speech in 1994, which remains the primary work in this field. Other recent works in the field include Paul Robert Magocsi’s analysis of culture and language among Slavic diasporan groups in North America and Charles Sabatos’ analysis of Slovak vernacular in Thomas Bell’s Out of this Furnace.

27 Ibid., p. 38.
32 Stolarik, “From Field to Factory,” p. 34.
Representative contributions to gender issues and the influence of women on ethnic Slovak culture and society include Sonya Jason’s personal account of life in a Pennsylvania “coal patch” in the 1930s, and Janice Beveridge Tehie’s illuminating oral history study of ethnic Slovak women in an isolated coal mining community over several generations, including their views on education, employment, and social status.\footnote{Sonya Jason. \textit{Icon of Spring}. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993; Janice Tehie. \textit{A Trans-Generational Study of Education and Employment among Slovak Women on The ‘Mountain Top’, 1900-1995}. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1996. UMI, 1996.}

**TOPIC KEY**

[A] Assimilation, acculturation, education  
[B] Bibliography, historiography, archvalia  
[C] Communities, demography  
[D] Culture and customs, arts and literature  
[E] Ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnography, racism and race issues  
[F] Fraternal societies and cultural institutions  
[G] Gender issues, women’s’ contributions to ethnic Slovak culture and society  
[H] General histories, historical surveys, biographies, memoirs, oral histories  
[I] Immigration, emigration, re-emigration, Slovak diaspora  
[J] Labor and economic issues, participation in professions  
[M] Language, linguistics, literature  
[P] Politics, political activism and participation, national self-determination  
[Q] Ethnic press  
[R] Religious affiliations, issues, and practices; churches and parishes

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