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# SLAVS ON SOUTHERN FARMS

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AN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
BOHEMIAN, SLOVAK, AND POLISH  
AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS IN  
THE SOUTHERN STATES

BY

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**REPORTED BY MR. FLETCHER.**

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,  
*October 8 (calendar day, October 10), 1914.*

*Resolved,* That the manuscript entitled "Slays on Southern Farms," by Mr. LeRoy  
Hodges, be printed as a Senate document.

Attest:

JAMES M. BAKER, *Secretary.*

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## SLAVS ON SOUTHERN FARMS.

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### IMMIGRATION AND THE SOUTH'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Already the native skilled and unskilled labor supply of the South is practically exhausted. In all sections mill, foundry, factory, and mine owners are clamoring for labor. This widespread industrial and commercial expansion which is taking place in the South has tended to depopulate our agricultural regions, and agricultural labor has become a serious problem in many communities.

The erection of iron and steel plants, sugar refineries, tobacco factories, railroad, power, and lighting plants, chemical and woodworking establishments, and the development of coal and iron mining has attracted the native white farmers and mountaineers from the small farms and remote rural districts to the industrial centers. The resulting urban development has also lured the negroes from the country to the cities, where they are annually growing less efficient as a dependable labor supply.

These sources are now no longer adequate to meet the rapidly increasing demands for industrial labor. In addition to this, the migration of the poor whites and negroes from the farms to the industrial communities and cities has, to a large extent, prevented an agricultural development commensurate with the industrial expansion.

While the poor whites have been more or less successful in the cotton mills and other industrial establishments and every indication is that they will in time become skilled workers, the negroes have proven a failure as industrial laborers, except in the coal and iron mines and in the roughest kinds of construction work. Realizing this, a few southern manufacturers have begun to encourage and assist an immigration of skilled and unskilled alien laborers.

The effect of the poor whites and negroes moving from the farms has been partly counteracted by the influx of farmers from the Northern and Western States, and by small groups of immigrants who are leaving the industrial centers of the North and Middle West to go on the land. Neither of these movements, however, is sufficient to meet the demand for industrial labor in the South, nor to people our millions of vacant acres. The future economic development of the South is therefore dependent on immigration.

### PRESENT-DAY IMMIGRATION.

This being true it concerns us to know something of the present-day immigration.

Instead of the Dutch and Flemish, English, French, German, Irish, Scandinavian, Scotch, and Welsh home seekers of yesterday, the tide of immigration now casts upon our shores Slavs, Magyars, Greeks,

Russian Hebrews, north and south Italians, Syrians, Turks, and other people from southeast Europe who are emigrating to better their economic condition.

These people are largely unskilled laborers from the industries and small farms of Europe, where the highest wage is small compared with the lowest industrial wage paid in the United States. Nearly 75 per cent are males, while 83 per cent are between the ages of 14 and 45 years, being producers rather than dependents. They bring little money into the country, but send or take a considerable part of their earnings out. Upon entering the United States they turn to the mills, factories, and mines to take advantage of the high wages offered, although the majority of them have been reared as tillers of the soil.

The recent immigrants are primarily agriculturists. They labor and save under the most discouraging conditions and make the utmost sacrifices in order that they may some day return to the land. Among the Slavs this desire for land ownership dominates their daily life and gives them inspiration to stand the fierce competitive struggle in the industrial centers.

The Federal Bureau of Immigration reports that thousands of the recent immigrants return to Europe each year after a residence in this country of from about 5 to 20 years, with, in some cases, large savings to invest in Europe. These people are returning abroad to invest their American-made money in the agricultural lands of Europe, for which they have to pay from \$200 to \$500 per acre, without any real knowledge of the agricultural opportunities in the South. A proper effort, however, would turn many thousands of these people who are seeking agricultural homes toward the South to be used in our agricultural and industrial development.

#### SLAVS AS FARMERS.

In doing this we would not be inviting economic ruin and social degradation, as certain chronic pessimists and political demagogues would have us believe, for the success of the immigrant agricultural colonies already established in the South show that under proper conditions and encouragement the recent immigrants, especially the Slavs, make very desirable citizens. The truthfulness of this is evidenced by the Bohemian, Serb, Polish, and Slovak colonists found in Texas, by the Slovaks in Arkansas, by the Bohemian and Slovak farmers in the south-side Virginia counties, and by the Slavish farmers in Oklahoma, Missouri, Maryland, Alabama, Louisiana, and in the other Southern States.

Slavs are now engaged in agriculture in each of the 16 Southern States. Only a very few are found in some, it is true, but wherever they are found they enjoy the confidence and the good will of their neighbors. Not only is this true, but it is also shown by the recent census of the United States that there is not a State in the Union that does not include among its people some Slavish farmers.

Considering the United States as a whole, they are found chiefly in the States of North Dakota, Wisconsin, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Washington, Colorado, Ohio, California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Illinois. In the South the largest

numbers are located in the States of Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Virginia. Possibly the total number of Slavish farm operators in the United States, composed chiefly of Poles, Bohemians, and Slovaks, will largely exceed 100,000.

#### RACE AND ORIGIN OF THE SLAVS.

Before we proceed further, who are the Slavs?

Prof. Oscar Peschel, of Leipzig, says they are out of the great Indo-European family of the Letto-Slavonic stem of the north European Aryan group. He places their origin in the "region of the Danube." Prof. Lubor Niederle, of the Bohemian University at Prague, substantiates this in his statement that the Slavs are of "central European origin." Prof. S. Zaborowski-Moindron, of the École d'Anthropologie, at Paris, cites their origin as "north of the Carpathians, where, through ancient usage, they were called Veneti, which people penetrated as far north as the Baltic littoral at a very remote period and were the propogators of the rite of cremation."

In describing the physical appearance of the Slavs, Prof. Niederle, who is the author of *Slovanský Svet*, says:

Anthropologically, the Slavs are characterized by a most rounded head, good cranial capacity, medium stature, and good physical development. In complexion they range from brunette to blonde, the former predominating among the southern Slavs, while blondes are more numerous among the northern parts of the stock.

He divides the Slavs of to-day into the seven following groups:

- (1) Russian stem.
- (2) Polish stem.
- (3) Luzice-Serbian (Serbs) stem.
- (4) Bohemian (Čechs) and Slovak stem.
- (5) Slovenian stem.
- (6) Serbo-Chorvat (Servians and Croatsians) stem.
- (7) Bulgarian (including the so-called Macedonians) stem.

Grouping all of these peoples together, Prof. Niederle estimates that in 1910 there were in the world more than 150,000,000 Slavs. Of this number he says 70 per cent are of the Russian stem, 13 per cent Poles, 7 per cent Bohemians and Slovaks, 4 per cent Bulgarians, and comparatively few Slovenians, Croatsians, Servians and other Slavish people. He estimates that in the United States we have about 1,500,000 Poles, about 500,000 Slovaks, possibly 300,000 Bohemians, about 300,000 Croatsians and Servians, 100,000 Slovenians, and only comparatively few Bulgarians. Although not so stated by Prof. Niederle, there are also at least 300,000 Slavs of the Russian stem in the United States.

Turning to closer consideration of these several races, the large number of Poles found in the United States makes it interesting to consider them rather closely, especially with regard to such tendencies as they may exhibit toward leaving the industrial centers and settling on the land. This, together with a brief account of the Slovak farmers in Arkansas, the Bohemian farmers in Texas, and the Bohemian and Slovak farmers in the southside Virginia counties will be helpful in understanding possibly a little better our Slavish farmers, and will show us one method by which the idle acres of the South can be turned into highly productive and valuable agricultural areas.

## POLES AS FARMERS.

Texas, the largest of the Southern States, has the distinction of containing the first permanent Polish settlement in the United States. This colony was established at Panna Marya, Karnes County, in the year 1855 by about 300 persons from Austrian Poland. There are records of a few Polish families, chiefly political refugees from Europe, settling in different parts of the United States prior to 1850, but no evidence of a sufficient number in any one locality to constitute a colony. Poles settled in Wisconsin shortly after 1850, and the records of several Roman Catholic Churches show that as many as 16 Polish rural colonies were established in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Texas between the years 1854 and 1870.

Previous to 1860 the immigration of Poles to the United States was irregular and was seriously affected by the American Civil War. After 1865 the movement assumed the character of a popular exodus of the peasantry of Polish Europe, as a direct result of the Austro-Prussian war and the resulting political and economic conditions in Germany.

The real immigration of Poles to the United States, however, began after the year 1870. Between 1870 and 1880 nearly 40,000 entered the country. The majority of the Poles entering the United States during this period went to the larger industrial communities and cities to engage in industrial pursuits. Some migrated to the Northwestern States, where they found employment in lumber camps and sawmills, while a comparatively large number settled on the farms of Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Texas. In 1880, 17 Polish churches were reported in Texas, 16 in Wisconsin, and 6 in Missouri. By 1887 there were more than 50 Polish agricultural settlements in the United States.

About 1885 the tide of Slavish immigration began to sweep through our ports of entry in an annually swelling stream, and Polish agricultural colonies were rapidly established in the Great Lake States, Minnesota, and in the Dakotas. A distinct change in the character of the colonists began about this time. Instead of the Polish peasants who had emigrated from Europe direct to the agricultural regions of this country seeking permanent homes, the movement became an immigration of Poles to the agricultural regions from the cities and industrial communities of the United States, where they had been engaged in the coal and ore mines, quarries, steel mills, and other industrial establishments.

This change was largely due to the efforts of land agents and their advertisements in the Polish newspapers. Having been farmers or farmers' sons abroad, and with savings from their earnings in the industrial pursuits, these groups made good pioneers and were soon firmly established on the cut-over and prairie lands of the Northwest, the poorer farms of the Middle West, and on the fertile acres of Texas.

Poles are often spoken of as "lovers of the land," and many among even the lower classes consider it a degradation to work as industrial laborers. In the United States they have proven themselves excellent pioneers, and after acquiring property, become exclusively farmers. They are independent, self-reliant, self-supporting, though possibly inclined to be clannish, and are efficient husbandmen.



With hardly an exception, the Polish colonies in the United States exhibit indications of progress. There is a noticeable improvement in the general appearance of the farms owned by Poles of second and third generations when contrasted with those of their parents. The tillage on the former places is more careful, the dwellings are often well constructed, comfortable homes, while the barns are big, substantial structures. Fine herds of cattle are common, and evidence of thrift and prosperity are to be seen on all sides.

It is claimed by some authorities that the Polish agricultural communities in the United States are progressing as rapidly as the colonies of any of the other distinctly foreign groups and can be favorably compared with Bohemian, German, Swedish, and Swiss settlements.

#### POLES ON FARMS IN TEXAS.

Polish farmers have settled in all parts of Texas, although the principal and better-known colonies are located in Falls, Fayette, Grimes, Karnes, Robertson, Washington, and Wilson Counties. Karnes County includes Panna Marya, the oldest permanent Polish colony in the United States. Here they are chiefly cotton farmers. About one half own their farms, while the other half rent the land they till under the "cropper" system.

They usually produce a much larger yield of cotton per acre than the average native Texan. This is possible, first, because the Poles work in the fields themselves, while the native Americans generally employ negroes to do their work; and, second, because the Polish women and children work with the men in the fields, thereby more than doubling the labor force without an increased labor expense.

Homes of the Poles in Texas are neat and are often comfortably furnished. They mingle with other races very little and seldom intermarry, but maintain a rather high moral standard, and local merchants testify to their honesty. They are fairly temperate and, as a rule, adhere to the Roman Catholic Church. In nearly every town where there are sufficient number of Poles to support a church will be found a resident priest and a parochial school and a well-organized congregation. Few Polish children are found in the public schools, although the majority of them usually remain on the farm.

Wherever Poles have located on farms in Texas it is reported that they have benefited the community by their thrift and integrity and that they are desirable settlers.

#### SLOVAK FARMERS IN ARKANSAS.

Another interesting Slavish colony in the South is found at Slovaktown, Ark. This colony is the product of a land company organized in Pittsburgh about 1894, which undertook to influence the migration westward of Slovak coal miners in Pennsylvania.

Located 12 miles from the nearest railroad on the open prairies, the place has no natural advantages for settlers. On the whole, however, this colony has done remarkably well. In some instances, during the early years of the colony, the men were forced to return east and work a part of the year in the mines in order to support their families and to secure the necessary funds for the improvement of their farms.

More than 80 per cent of the members of this colony own property free of debt. The farms vary in value from \$1,000 to \$10,000, averaging about \$2,000. A large number of them bought their farms while working in the coal mines of Pennsylvania and Illinois, and after paying for them and saving a little capital moved to Arkansas.

The coming of the Slovaks greatly increased land values in the locality, and it is stated that nearly every cent of their earnings is immediately invested in improvements on the farms and in live stock. Many of these families own more than 20 cows and from 5 to 10 horses and mules, as well as large numbers of hogs.

This colony forms an independent group, and visiting among themselves is almost the only form of enjoyment indulged in on account of the isolation of the colony, although the younger people occasionally hold dances. The Slovaks associate freely with the Americans in the county and in the towns when they are abroad, and no prejudice exists against them in any part of Arkansas. As a race and as farmers they are highly respected.

There are about 75 men of voting age in the colony, over 90 per cent possessing full naturalization papers. They play only a minor part in local elections, however, and very few of them have held public office. There have been several Slovak members on the county school boards, and one or two of them have held positions as road overseers.

The Slovaks in this part of Arkansas have greatly improved conditions in agriculture. They have not introduced any new methods or crops, but they brought with them capacity for hard work and their characteristic thrift, with which they have turned the former barren prairies into a productive farming region.

#### BOHEMIANS ON TEXAS FARMS.

Turning again to Texas we find the State has an estimated Bohemian population, in addition to the Poles, of over 50,000, engaged principally in agriculture and scattered through 80 counties.

More than 60 per cent of these people own their property, and over 50 per cent of that number have their holdings free of debt. The majority of them entered Texas without sufficient money to purchase land at first, and have won their present prosperity by thrift and hard work.

The first Bohemians, together with a group of Serbs of the Luzice-Serbian stem, settled in the State as early as 1835, before the days of the Texan Republic, in what is now Burleson County. The first permanent colony, still in existence, however, was not established until about 1853, in Fayette County. Their farms to-day vary in size from 40 to 1,000 acres, averaging about 100 acres. They are chiefly cotton growers; but, unlike the natives, they produce enough trucking stuff to supply the demands of the family and raise sufficient feed to provide for their live stock. They are on the richest cotton lands in the State, and their numbers are increasing annually.

In Texas the Bohemians farm intelligently and use the most improved implements and methods of cultivation. As a result, farm values in the localities where they are found are steadily going up. They form a group of citizens of which Texas is proud, and every effort is being made to induce greater numbers of them to settle in the State.

The real movement of Bohemians to Texas has been in progress since the early fifties, coming first direct from Europe, and later chiefly from the industrial centers of the East. The principal colonies are located in the counties of Fayette, Lavaca, Austin, Burlison, Williamson, and McLennan. Many of the settlements which have been established since 1890 are the result of a shift in population from the older colonies—the settlements on the "Panhandle" are a direct result of this tendency.

Bohemians throughout the Texas colonies send their children to the district schools. In some of the towns a parochial school is also maintained. Considering the settlements as a whole, however, school attendance is comparatively poor. A very small percentage of the children pursue their education beyond the grammar grades, although a few are found as teachers in the public schools.

As soon as they are old enough to work on the farms the larger portion of the children leave the schools and go to work on the home places. They generally remain at home until they marry. It is no doubt true that much of the success of the Bohemians in agriculture is due to this fact. Even the women in the middle classes regard it their duty to assist in the cultivation and harvest of the crops.

Possibly 90 per cent of the Bohemians in Texas are Roman Catholics, and in all towns where they are in sufficient numbers they have their own church and resident priest. Some of these churches, usually situated on the top of a hill in the rural regions, are built of brick; some of stone; but the majority are frame structures.

One very prominent rural church crowns a hilltop in the midst of a wilderness where the land as far as the eye can reach is only sparsely settled—not more than 20 farms are visible. As widely scattered as this congregation is, it furnished \$15,000 in cash toward building a brick church. Some of the members of this church come a distance of over 20 miles to attend mass each Sunday.

In these colonies there is also a marked inclination for social intercourse, and the monotony of farm work is frequently broken with picnics, dances, and other social diversions. These Bohemians are fond of music and dancing. Near crossroads connecting Bohemian towns is often found a dancing pavilion. In the towns such places are also found; some of them being rather large and costly. They are built usually by public subscription, or by some club, and during the summer months dances are frequently held. Throughout the region are found orchestral bands and choruses.

Local newspapers printed and published by Bohemians in a large number of towns keep well abreast of the times and have a very marked progressive effect throughout the region.

National, State, and church holidays are all celebrated by the Bohemians. The Germans join with the Bohemians in the observance of church festival days as well as the American holidays, and such gatherings are often made the occasion of great festivity. During the summer months there are numerous social diversions in the form of picnics and open-air dances, participated in by the two races, who mingle together freely. As is well known, Texas also has a very large rural population of Germans.

In all of these settlements the very best feeling exists between the Americans and Bohemians, although in many cases the Bohe-

mians have literally driven the Americans out of town. They have always offered the Americans a good price for their lands, however, and the Americans have been willing enough to move. No prejudice exists against immigration here, which is a powerful factor assisting in the rapid assimilation of the Slavs and the progress of the Texas colonies.

This success of the Bohemians on Texas farms has been the result almost exclusively of intelligent citizenship and a persistent and proper use of the soil. There has been practically no outside employment or development of supplementary industries. They exercise the right of suffrage intelligently and honestly, and have held public office in the counties and under the State. They have introduced diversified farming in the cotton belt, and have demonstrated that the farms can be made self-supporting outside of the money crop; and, as has been demonstrated time and again, they can, under the same conditions, raise a larger crop from a given area than the native farmers.

#### SLAVS IN SOUTH-SIDE VIRGINIA.

What may be termed the south-side Virginia colony of Slavs is centered around the city of Petersburg in southeast Virginia, chiefly in the county of Prince George. This county, together with the counties of Dinwiddie and Chesterfield, contains the bulk of the Slavish farmers in Virginia. The colony was begun more than 25 years ago by a few Bohemian and Slovak families from the industrial and mining communities of western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, who were seeking agricultural homes. These early settlers came to Virginia with little money, without friends, but stimulated by the desire to make homes for themselves on the fertile lands of the upper James.

Life, however, was not all roses in Virginia for these first settlers. They were not known in the region, nor were they recognized at their true worth. They did not possess the easy credit they command to-day, nor—the even more valuable asset—the confidence of the native residents. They had to struggle against heavy odds. Gradually, by sheer pluck, good behavior, unbounded energy, and by hard work, they have won the recognition of the native Virginians. To-day the colony enjoys the full confidence of the people of southeast Virginia, and in the city of Petersburg and their respective counties they are very highly regarded.

Slavs they are, every one of them; Slavs, however, who are proud of their origin, and who are zealous in their efforts to command the respect of their fellow citizens—Slavs who are loyal, patriotic Americans. They are respectful of the traditions of the old South, and are eager, active builders of the new South. On all sides they enjoy the confidence of and command the respect of the Virginians—they are foster children of the Republic who are growing into the fullness of true citizenship under the care of the old mother State.

In the whole colony, which is represented to a certain extent in all of the so-called nine south-side counties, including Amelia, Brunswick, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Nottoway, Prince George, Surry, and Sussex, there are possibly as many as 3,000 Slavs. Slovaks predominate, and, it is interesting to note, they hold a place equally as high as the Bohemians. There are a few Russian Poles



here and there, particularly in Surry and Sussex Counties, and a few scattering families of Lithuanians and Slovenians. All of these people are engaged in agriculture.

The Slavs in this colony have taken up land in many instances long neglected and regarded as "worn-out land" and have turned the places into valuable producing farms. They follow practically the same crop scheme as practiced by the native farmers, their principal crops being peanuts, corn, and tobacco. Over 90 per cent are proprietors and operate their own farms. Although they compose less than 3 per cent of the total rural population of the south-side counties, and not more than 15 per cent of that of Prince George County, their presence is easily noticed.

#### SLAVS IN PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY.

In Prince George County, which alone has about 1,200 Slavs, of which possibly 40 per cent are Bohemians and the rest Slovaks, the largest foreign population of any of the counties in the group, is found the highest percentage of improved land. This is true in face of the fact that no more than 69 per cent of the total land area of the county is in farm lands. For instance, the improved farm lands compose just a little over 48 per cent of the county's total farm area, while in none of the other south-side counties does the proportion exceed 38 per cent. It is also interesting to note in this connection that the population per square mile is only 27, the total population in 1910 being less than 8,000, of which 58 per cent were negroes.

In this same county more than half of the Slavish males of voting age are fully naturalized, while a large percentage of the other half hold first papers. No record of a criminal prosecution having been brought against a Slav exists in Prince George County, and only one or two minor judgments have been docketed against members of the colony.

Illiteracy among males of voting age in the county was reported by the Thirteenth Census of the United States to be higher among the native-born whites than among the Slavish foreign born, the percentage being 7.1 for the former and only 5 for the foreign-born Slavs. This is significant in view of the predominancy of Slovaks in the county. Illiteracy among the negroes was reported at higher than 46 per cent.

This same report shows that of the total number of children in the county 6 to 14 years old, inclusive, only about 65 per cent attend school. Of the Slavish children, however, 74 per cent attend the public schools as compared with 73 per cent of the native white children of native parentage. Only 60 per cent of the negro children are in school. In addition to this, the public-school teachers in the county report that the Slavish children exhibit a more marked tendency to advance than any other group of children in the schools.

Another unusual feature found among the Slavs in Prince George County is the predominancy of protestantism. Considering the large number of Slovaks this is extremely interesting. There are three Protestant congregations in the county and only one Roman Catholic. The latter has possibly no more than 250 adherents, while the combined Protestant congregations include about 800 persons. Among

the Protestants, the Congregational Church has a following of about 500 and is the largest Congregational pastorate in the State of Virginia. There is also a large Presbyterian congregation of about 200, and a Lutheran Church with about half this number. Here and there are also found a few families of Slavs who are Methodists.

#### PRIDE OF RACE AMONG SLAVS IN VIRGINIA.

Recently the people of Petersburg and vicinity were suddenly made aware of the maturity of the south-side Virginia colony by a prompt and publicly expressed resentment of a possibly unintentional slur cast at the Slavs by a visiting speaker who was understood to class the Slavs as undesirable immigrants for the South. This incident, with almost lightning rapidity, solidified the several Slavish elements in the colony, and their leaders immediately demanded recognition of their fitness as agricultural settlers. The response to this demand was highly flattering to the Slavs and remarkable for the promptness and forcefulness with which it was made.

In a public statement issued by one of the prominent members of the Bohemian colony in Prince George County, a member of the county school board, it was asserted that—

This slur at the Slavs is certainly undeserved as is evidenced by their character, industry, and their acceptableness which are demonstrated beyond contradiction by the local immigrant colony, which is composed, be it known, almost entirely of Bohemians and Slovaks (both Slavish people).

Continuing, the statement argued:

These people have been coming to the local counties for the past 25 years; they have taken up farms abandoned by native Virginians and have brought them to a very high degree of cultivation and productiveness; they hold an envied reputation for honesty and good citizenship—there is not a merchant in Petersburg who will not attest to their strict integrity in all business and financial transactions.

More than this, they have been recognized by the native Virginians. In Prince George County, for example, a Bohemian born in Europe was recently elected a member of the board of county commissioners, while other members of the colony hold important public offices.

Leading southern economists, among others, are now contending that the problems of immigration, as far as the South is concerned at the present time, are those of an internal redistribution rather than an assisted foreign immigration. The speaker, judging from his statements, apparently does not hold this view; and he utterly fails to take into consideration the primary cause underlying the movement of immigrants to this country, the labor element in the industrial organization of the North and the Middle West, and the life ambition of the Slavish people in America—a people who are lovers of the land, and whose life object is to be landowners.

What the South needs more than an increased railroad traffic is the redevelopment in the breasts of her people of loyalty to the high ideals of right, individual liberty, and the honorableness of unselfish, constructive public service. The new citizens who come to live in the South must respond to these ideals. They must come to be southerners, and in being southerners, to be truly Americans; they must come, accepting established institutions; and must join in the national life of the South as home makers and as guardians of the integrity of the white race.

By actual demonstration the Bohemians and their Slavish brothers have proved that with proper treatment, and when accepted as men at a man's worth, they can measure up to these requirements.

The *Index-Appeal*, the leading daily newspaper at Petersburg, promptly replied editorially to this strongly worded and highly idealistic statement under date of January 25, 1914, in part as follows:

What a pity it is that the speaker at the meeting held here yesterday had not talked with one or two of the business men of Petersburg regarding the Slavs. He would

not have expressed the views to which he gave utterance regarding the character of these people had he obtained first the opinions of our business men regarding their character and general desirability as citizens.

It would be impossible to find a better class of people to bring into America from Europe than the Bohemians. Almost without exception they are hardworking, honest, thrifty, and fine farmers. They have made sections of Prince George to blossom like the rose. The farm of the average Bohemian in Prince George, where the majority of them are located, is a model of neatness, productiveness, and thrift.

One of the best-known business men of Petersburg told this writer recently that he had sold many thousands of dollars' worth of goods to Bohemians in Prince George, Dinwiddie, and Chesterfield and never had lost a dollar on a single purchase. A year or two ago a Bohemian sold his Prince George farm and went to Chicago to live. When the news came to the merchant mentioned he made up his mind to charge to the profit and loss account the \$60 which this debtor owed him. But inside of three months he sent him \$30 and inside of six months remitted the remaining \$30 of the debt.

Business men of Petersburg will not resent, in the sense of becoming angry, the slurs cast upon our "Bohemians" by this speaker, but will regret that he failed to inform himself more accurately before expressing his opinion.

Action was also immediately taken in the matter by the Chamber of Commerce of Petersburg which has resulted in a satisfactory explanation from the incautious visiting speaker. A most hearty public indorsement of the Slavs has been expressed, and all classes of citizens have united in voicing their approval of them as agricultural settlers for the south-side Virginia counties.

#### SLAVS AS WE KNOW THEM.

This high recognition which the Slavs have won for themselves as desirable agricultural settlers in the South, awakens an interest in them as a people.

Americans are more or less informed about Russia, the great "Slav Empire," and readily understand, in a general way, something of the Russians. Many do not know, however, that there are almost as many different kinds of Russians as there are Slavs, if we attempt to disregard the national unit and divide the Russian people according to their respective races. For instance, within the term "Russians," as commonly used in the United States, are included several Slavish races. They are the Lithuanians out of the great race of the Letts; the Poles living in the territory annexed by Russia upon the partition of the ancient Polish Empire by Austria, Germany, and Russia in the past century; and the Russians proper, who include the Great Russians, the White Russians, and the Ruthenians or "Little" Russians.

All American students of European history also know the story of the ancient glory and the final fall of the Polish Empire. They know too of the exploits of Count Casimir Pulaski, the exiled Polish soldier and famous general of the American Revolution; and many Americans are sufficiently informed to look back with pride to the services rendered America in the Revolution by Thaddeus Kosciusko, the great Polish patriot. Thus, as a people, the Poles are not unknown to us in America.

The recent Balkan wars have also stimulated American interest in the Bulgarians and the Servians, and have resulted in a wider and deeper understanding of these two branches of the great Slavish race. Not so much is known, however, of the Croatians and the Slovenians,



but as neither of these two races are represented in agriculture in the South to any appreciable extent they do not command the same interest as is now manifested in the Bohemians and the Slovaks. Because, too, of the subordinate position of the Crown lands of Croatia and Slavonia within the Hungarian Kingdom, there is not the same interest centering around the Croatians, or the Slovaks for that matter, as around a people possessing a more pronounced national integrity.

It is therefore possibly the Bohemians, with the possible exception of the Slovaks, more than any of the other Slavish races, about whose national, racial, and literary history so little is known and who at the same time command such an interest among the people of the South. This interest in the Bohemians on the part of the southern people is intensified by their coming among us in such large numbers as agricultural settlers.

#### BOHEMIANS AS A PEOPLE.

As a people, none possess a more fascinating history than the Bohemians, for the story of the ups and the downs of the Bohemian nation has the grip and thrill of a fairy legend. One can not read, for instance, the legendary tale of the founding of the now beautiful city of Prague by the mythical Princess Libusa without catching the charm of Bohemia. The history of Prague is largely the history of Bohemia. Visit Bohemia and one can feel that the indomitable spirit of Prince Rupert of the Rhine, that dashing cavalry leader of ancient days, still lingers here and there among the Bohemians. There, too, one finds—a most hopeful sign, thanks to Palacky, the great Bohemian historian—that the pride of nation has again been firmly planted in the hearts of his people. Nor did that martyred Bohemian patriot and reformer John Hus fight and die in vain. John Hus's death at the stake in Constance 500 years ago made him the "Immortal Bohemian." He it was who implanted the spirit of emulation in the Bohemians of to-day. The labors of the astute Rieger, champion of the old Bohemian constitution, and the teachings of the brilliant Bráf also add their force to the story of the Bohemians—a truly great story of a really great people.

Only a great people could build and maintain a city like the modern Prague—that splendid modern-ancient municipality of more than 600,000 inhabitants. There we find, in spite of the germanizing policies of the overlords of the Bohemians, a genuine Bohemian city. Possibly no more than 7 per cent of its population now are Germans. Prague is truly a "golden city of a hundred towers," where the mystery and charm of its illustrious past have not been sacrificed in the building of the industrial and commercial city of to-day.

William Ritter once said of Prague that "if Ruskin had not been so much occupied with Florence, Venice, and Amiens, he might have written three volumes with the title 'The Stones of Prague,' and there would not have been on the surface of the earth a more beautiful work of history and architecture."

Writing of the Bohemians as a people, Prof. Niederle says:

The Bohemians and Slovaks are derived from the western body of Slavs. The Slovaks can in general be regarded as a part of the same ethenic group, although considerably separated by various conditions. Both arose from a common center near that

of the Poles to the north of the Sudet Mountains, reaching, perhaps, into Moravia. Both races had settled their respective territories before the latter half of the first millennium B. C., and can well be regarded as autochthonous in their countries.

Historical data concerning the Bohemians begins in the seventh century. At that time their territory included what is now Bavaria. The Slovaks at this time occupied a very large portion of what is to-day Hungary.

The naturally favorable and protected situation of the Bohemians resulted in a rapid and auspicious development of the people, and had it not been for some of its rulers with their foreign sympathies, the nation would have played a greater part among the Slavs and be a different political unit to-day.

Colonization with Germans of parts of Bohemia and Moravia by these rulers was detrimental. This Germanization continued until the fourteenth century, when checked by the revulsion of the people under the leadership of John Hus in the Husite wars. As a result of these wars, the Bohemian language again became the official language in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, a general national rejuvenation following.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries German aggression was again felt, and after the disastrous battle of Bila Hora near Prague in 1620, Bohemian nationality crumbled and was ruined by the repeated destructive invasions of the Thirty Years War. Then came further German colonization and more Germanization.

A century ago it seemed as if the nation was doomed to follow the fate of the Elbe Slavs and become completely germanized. Instead of this, however, a marked and gradually reawakening of the national spirit became manifest and to-day it stands a most cultured and united and productive country.

In matters of education and general culture there is a marked difference in Europe between the Bohemians and the Slovaks. The percentage of the Bohemians, so Prof. Niederle claims, who can read and write exceed that of even the Germans, and is the highest for any large group of people in Europe. Among the Slovaks, due to adverse local conditions and governmental restrictions placed upon them by both the Austrians and the Magyars, the number who can read and write is possibly as low as 40 per cent.

As a people, however, the Slovaks have never had a real chance to properly develop themselves or to make any noticeable progress, for what the various European governments have not denied them their religion has. It is a well-known fact, for instance, that among the Protestant Slovaks in Europe the percentage of illiteracy is as low as among the Bohemians. The total number of Slovak Protestants, however, is comparatively very small. This deprivation of equal opportunities in Europe, as has been demonstrated by the Slovaks in Arkansas and in the south-side Virginia counties, does not disbar them in the South as undesirable agricultural settlers, for under proper conditions they make very rapid progress.

In Europe, it is interesting to know, the Bohemians are engaged, according to occupations, about 43 per cent in agriculture, 37 per cent in industry, 11 per cent in the civil service, and 9 per cent in transportation.

Glancing now just briefly at the cultural side of Bohemian nationality, we find that two of their national songs reflect somewhat their character. Austro-German dominance over the Bohemians prohibited for many years the singing of *Hej Slované*, their stirring battle song, and a song which reveals the Bohemian's passionate love of liberty. To-day the inspiring, ringing words of this song may be heard again in Bohemia. The deep sentiment and patriotic response which the singing of this song produces on a Bohemian gathering is impossible to understand until one has heard it sung under the shadows of the ancient Bohemian hills. Its high-flung defiance and militant spirit is lost in a mere reading of a translation, but the fullness of its patriot-

ism can, in a measure, be gathered. An English translation by Dr. Vincent Pisek is as follows:

Ho, Slavonians! Our beloved language still surviveth,  
 While the faithful heart within us for our nation striveth;  
 Yea, the Slavic spirit liveth; it will live forever.  
 Hell and thunder, 'gainst us raging, vain is your endeavor;  
 Hell and thunder, 'gainst us raging, vain is your endeavor.

God to us our tongue entrusted, God who sways the thunder;  
 Who on earth then shall presume this gift from us to sunder?  
 Tho' the earth were filled with demons, our rights assailing,  
 We defy them! God is with us, His strong arm prevailing;  
 We defy them! God is with us, His strong arm prevailing.

Though about us storms are raging, bringing devastation,  
 Rocks disrupting, oaks uprooting, shaking earth's foundations,  
 Yet we stand like castle walls, our vested rights asserting;  
 May the earth engulf the traitor from our ranks deserting;  
 May the earth engulf the traitor from our ranks deserting.

In contrast to the harshness of *Sej Slované*, with its clanging battle challenge, another popular Bohemian national song, "My Homeland," breaths a peacefulness and love of race, of home, and of land that is truly beautiful. This song shows us the other side of the Bohemian character. An English translation, also by Dr. Pisek, is as follows:

O, homeland mine, O, homeland mine!  
 Streams are rushing through thy meadows;  
 'Mid thy rocks sigh fragrant pine groves.  
 Orchards decked in spring's array,  
 Scenes of Paradise portray,  
 And this land of wondrous beauty,  
 Is the Czech land, homeland mine,  
 Is the Czech land, homeland mine.

O, homeland mine, O, homeland mine!  
 In thy realms dwell, dear to God's heart,  
 Gentle souls in bodies stalwart.  
 Clear of mind, they win success;  
 Courage show when foes oppress.  
 Such the Czech in whom I glory,  
 Where the Czech live is my home,  
 Where the Czech live is my home.

#### THE SOUTH'S DUTY.

As we study these people, their political, social, and literary history, and begin more fully to appreciate their character and their dominating ambitions—really begin to know them—we cease to marvel at the rapidity of the progress they are capable of when given a real chance. More than this, we suddenly begin to realize that they too possess some of the higher traits of civilized humanity. It becomes harder to carelessly class them as "undesirable immigrants," for even the most prejudiced of us in the South are forced to recognize in them some merit, as they have proved that they can do on southern farms what we ourselves are apparently unable to do.

A deeper feeling of sympathy also awakens in us as we realize in our more sober moments that with the coming of the Slavs to the South we are recruiting in part the army upon which we must depend to build the greater nation through the building of a greater South. With the awakening of that greater sympathy, even though

it be born of self-interest, we also feel the added responsibility which the coming of these people places upon us. We begin to see that we of the South owe these people a certain duty. The best interests of the Nation, as well as those of the South, demand that as they come to make their homes among us, we meet them with kindness, with fairness, and with an appreciative understanding of their needs.

We must make Americans of our immigrants in the South and not allow them to be the assimilating forces. We must meet them with an unprejudiced mind, an honest purpose, and a welcoming hand in order to lead them into the close union of our national life. This is a duty which the future places upon us and from which the patriotic manhood of the South can not shrink.

As the Slavs have already demonstrated their ability on southern farms, and have won recognition as desirable agricultural settlers, why then should we not encourage as well as welcome their coming? Can anyone deny that the vacant acres of the South do not need these people? If not, then why should our encouragement of their coming among us remain passive, almost childish in its impotency?

Whether the South will put forth an effort to properly people her vacant, man-hungry acres or not, sooner or later she must face the consequences of an alien immigration if she would fully attain that industrial and commercial supremacy for which our leaders are clamoring and which destiny seems to have ordained. A greater industrial development of the South is coming as surely as the day follows the night. Effects of its coming are already being felt in our social life, and the time for useless protestations against the changing order of things has passed. Intelligent action is now needed.

Let us assure ourselves, then, that there will be no "immigration problem" in the South, for it is within our power to avoid these so-called dangers if we will only face the situation squarely and properly. We know the kind of people who have demonstrated their acceptableness in the South, and, with an intelligent understanding of their needs, we can easily fit them into our economic and social organization. It thus becomes the duty of the South to bend our new citizens to American civilization in the mold of southern ideals and to wisely utilize their brawn and their intelligence in the building of our future economic and political estate.











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