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Danube Transnational Programme
Information matters: towards positive pathways of
migrants' integration

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Collective amnesia of Slovaks on their migration
and integration experiences in the past

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Slovaks as Refugees in the Past

Cyprián Majerník: Refugees (1944)

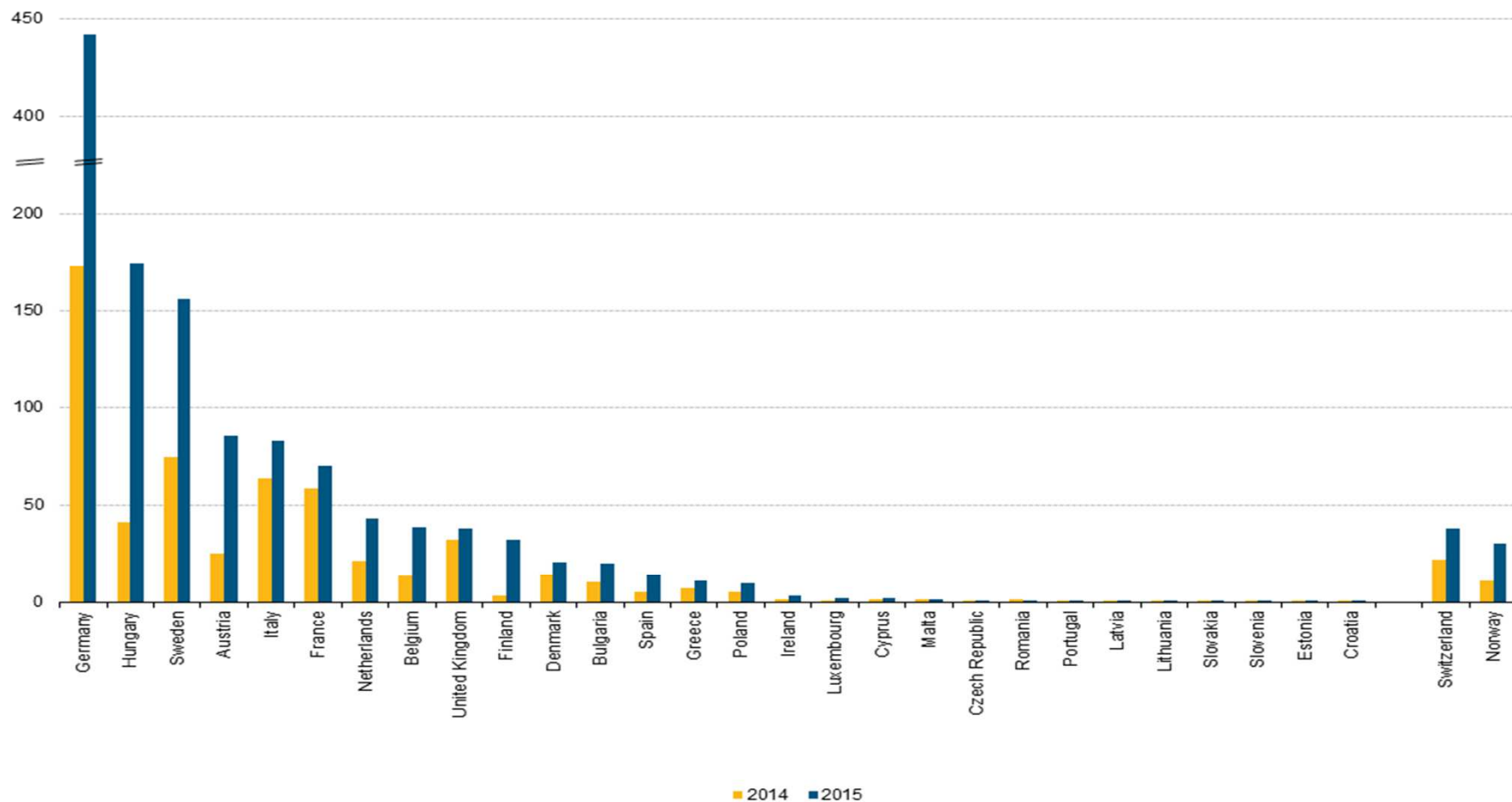


Refugee crisis and Barbarians from the East?



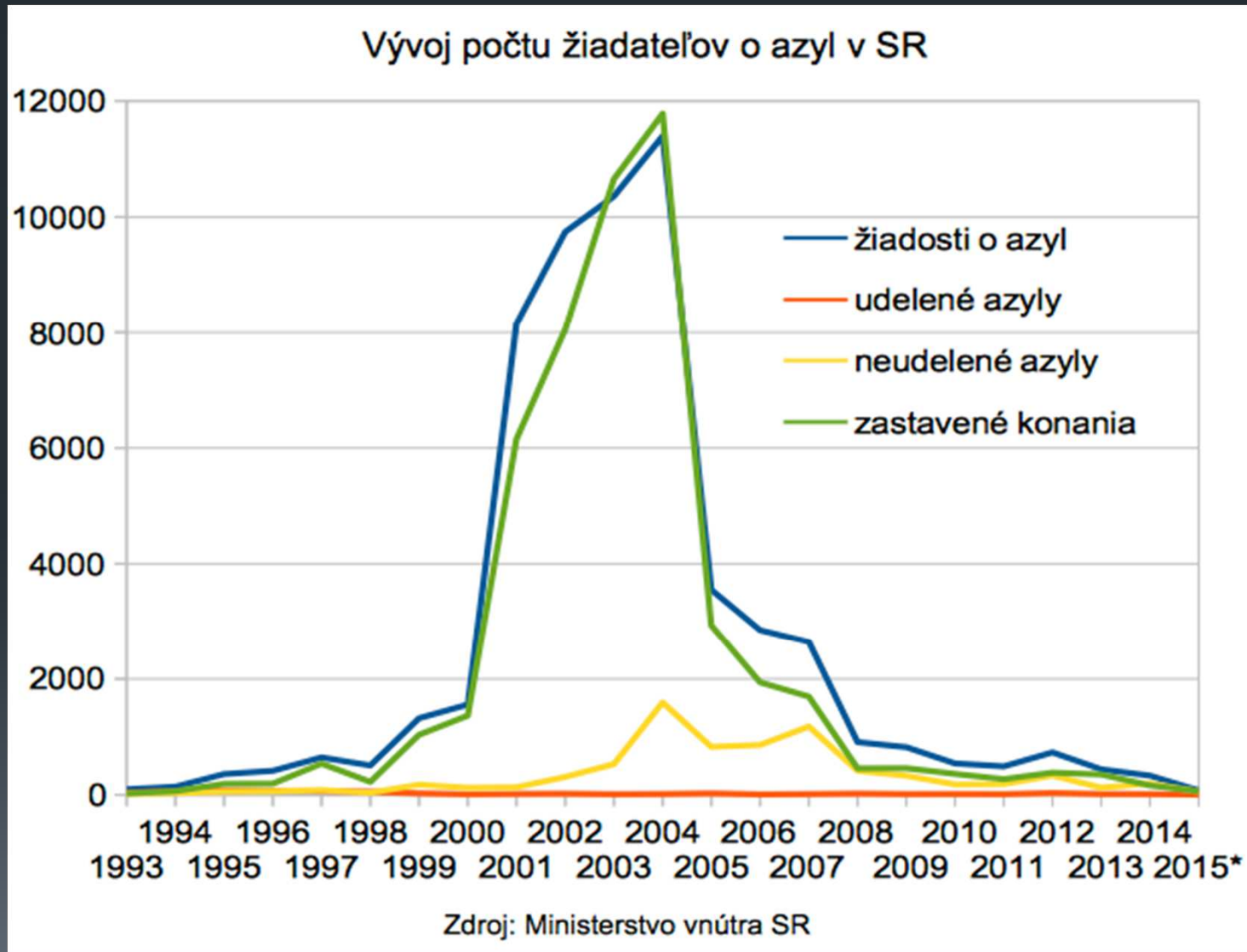
- Migration crisis has exposed crisis of liberal democracy in most of Central European countries
- In fact, what we are experiencing these days in Central Europe is the end of liberal consensus about the future of the region
- In most of Central European countries migration crisis has been utilized by enemies of open society and influenced (or might influence in the future) results of parliamentary elections
- Migration crisis revealed also unpleasant truth about inclusivity of Central European societies toward „others“

Slovakia among the most restrictive EU countries in asylum policies



Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza)

Asylum seekers in Slovakia since 1993



Refugee crisis and Slovakia

- Slovakia as a country that became symbol of harsh approach of Central European countries toward refugees
- In consequences of a refugee crisis Slovakia opposed Brussels for the first time since 2004, country became even more polarized, and refugee crisis influenced results of the parliamentary elections of March 2016
- As unpleasant as it may be, Slovakia may have become laboratory of events that will also affect the West. The combination of frustration, hopelessness, and fear of globalization with the rapidly growing influence of social networks and conspiracy theories creates a truly toxic cocktail that is only waiting to be seized by a skillful ideologue.
- Narratives that come with explanations of „What happened“ are problematic both in the region and in the so-called „West“
- Refugees are just next in a line of those who are rejected, constructed as „ideal different“ and utilized by enemies of open society

Slovakia as a Central European Country with Ethnicised Character

- Nations defined culturally and ethnically
- Primordial and tribal self-perception of Central European nations
- „German“ legacy in integration
- Central Europe as a non-inclusive space



Perception of Slovakia in relation to differences, perception of diversity, self-perception of majority (IOM, 2009)



- People from various cultures should live in Slovakia. It would enrich also us. **51,5 %**
- Slovakia is a country of Slovaks and that is how it should stay. **44,6%**
- It does not matter from what culture people come. If they want, they can live together. **74,8 %**
- People from different cultures are so different, that they cannot co-exist together. **22,4%**
- I'm happy to be with people from different cultures. I feel well to be with them. **50.1%**
- I feel well only among Slovaks. I do not go well with other ethnic groups. **40,5%**

Perception of Slovakia in relation to differences, perception of diversity, self-perception of majority (IOM, 2009)



- In order to coexist well with other ethnic groups, we should know as much as possible about them. **80,4%**
- I can learn various things from people of other cultures that I would not be able to learn anywhere else. **65,4%**
- Knowledge about foreigners is rather limited in Slovakia. It would be good to know more about them. **48,6%**
- In order to coexist with other ethnic groups one does not need any information about them. **16,6%**
- I do not need any other knowledge other than I am getting in my own environment. **31%**
- Foreigners living in Slovakia are „visible“ enough. Information about them are all around us. **44,1%**

Perception of Slovakia in relation to differences, perception of diversity, self-perception of majority (IOM, 2009)

- It would be good to have many people from different cultures living in our city/ village. Life would be more interesting. **40,5%**
- I attend with pleasure events where I can meet people from different cultures. **38,6%**
- In case foreigners living in Slovakia would not fully adjust to Slovaks and their culture, their rights should be limited. **50,3%**
- People who are culturally different should not live in our city/ village. It would cause just lot of problems. **44,5%**
- I prefer to attend events where I can meet only people who are not culturally very different from me. **56,2%**
- Foreigners living in Slovakia come from culturally different environment. We should not prevent them to maintain their culture. **41,3%**

Perception of Slovakia in relation to differences, perception of diversity, self-perception of majority

- Part of Slovak population is not ready to accept foreigners on its territory;
- Part of Slovak population is not ready to accept difference and diversity as a natural element of life;
- Self-perception of majority does not create large space for accepting plurality of identities;
- Majority of Slovak population consider information about other cultures to be enriching.

Reactions on so called refugee crisis

- Representative survey (June 8-14, 2016), sample of 1.469 interviewed /FOCUS/
- *„Do you consider these refugees to be a security threat to Slovakia and its inhabitants?“*
 - Definitely yes 20,6 %
 - Rather yes 42,8 %
 - Rather no 20,9 %
 - Definitely no 3,5 %
 - Do not know 12,2 %

Reactions on so called refugee crisis

- Representative survey (June 8-14, 2016), sample of 1.469 interviewed /FOCUS/
 - *„Do you agree with EC proposal of so-called quotas, based on which Slovakia should accept certain number of refugees from Middle East and northern Africa?“*
- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| ■ Definitely no | 33,8 % |
| ■ Rather no | 36,3 % |
| ■ Rather yes | 19,3 % |
| ■ Definitely yes | 4,2 % |
| ■ Do not know | 6,4 % |

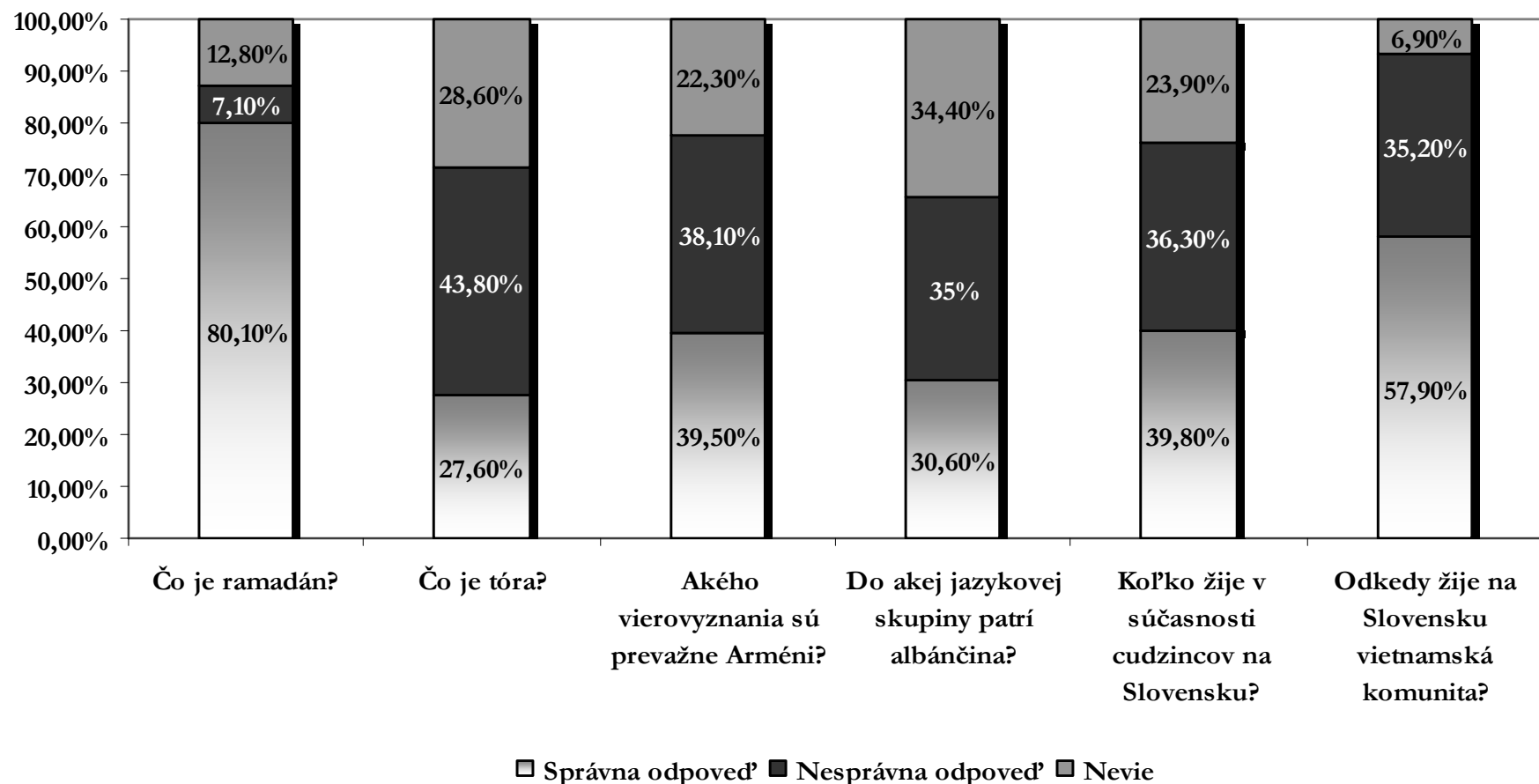
Migrants in Slovakia



- Insignificant migration into the country until 2004, since then systematic increase.
- Typical migrant living in Slovakia after 2004:
 - Man (over 80 %)
 - 24 - 29 years old
 - Good education (32 % with University education)
- Foreigners from EU15, USA and South Korea operate as highly skilled experts, consultants, managers and entrepreneurs; foreigners from countries of former Soviet Union as low skilled workers, and foreigners from Asian countries mostly as small entrepreneurs in services.

Knowledge about foreigners/ minorities in Slovakia (IOM, 2009)

Vedomosti o menšinách žijúcich na Slovensku



Perception of migrants in Slovakia



- I. Migrants living in Slovakia are perceived in stereotypical way, attitudes are based on prejudices. At the same time - very few opportunities to change prejudices - both in primary and secondary socialization.
- II. Inhabitants of Slovakia have relatively few experiences with migrants and their knowledge about migrants living in Slovakia is limited.
- III. Inhabitants of Slovakia do not view migration as a chance for Slovakia as far as demographic crisis is concerned.
- IV. Inhabitants of Slovakia do not reflect differences between particular groups of migrants living in a country.

Perception of migrants in Slovakia



- **V.** Migrants are perceived as a burden and a cost for a state budget.
- **VI.** Rejection of migrants is often caused also by self-perception of inhabitants of Slovakia - conviction about widespread poverty of Slovaks and consequently inability to take care of others.
- **VII.** In spite of rather positive experiences with migrants inhabitants of Slovakia display fear and even anxiety from further migration.
- **VIII.** Attitudes toward migrants is structurally influenced by ethnicization of public sphere and by protection of ethnicized „core group“.

Migration in Political Discourse



- Programs and communication of political parties in Slovakia suggest that migration is perceived as an interesting topic for political communication.
- Political parties view migration through lens of securitization.
- In a political discourse migration is discussed as a reason behind various negative trends such as terrorism, extremism, and abusing an institution of asylum.

Migration in Political Discourse

- Take a wild guess - who is who?
- *„Lower migration of certain people there is from certain cultures to Slovakia, lower chance of having terrorism in a country there is.“ /Minister of interior Robert Kaliňák, 2014/*
- *„Migrants are like guests. And there is a condition how to be a good guest - unconditional acceptance of culture and traditions of Slovakia.“ /Minister of Interior Daniel Lipšic, 2011/*

Slovaks as Refugees and Economic Migrants in the Past



Slovaks as Migrants in the Past

Martic Pollack: American Ceasar

- Four Slovaks from Brutovce captured close to the German border near Oswiecim in 1888 on their way to USA.
- Slovaks depicted as a subject of scam and as the most backward of all migrants from the „East“.

Martin Pollack

Americký cisár / Masový útek z Haliče

absynt



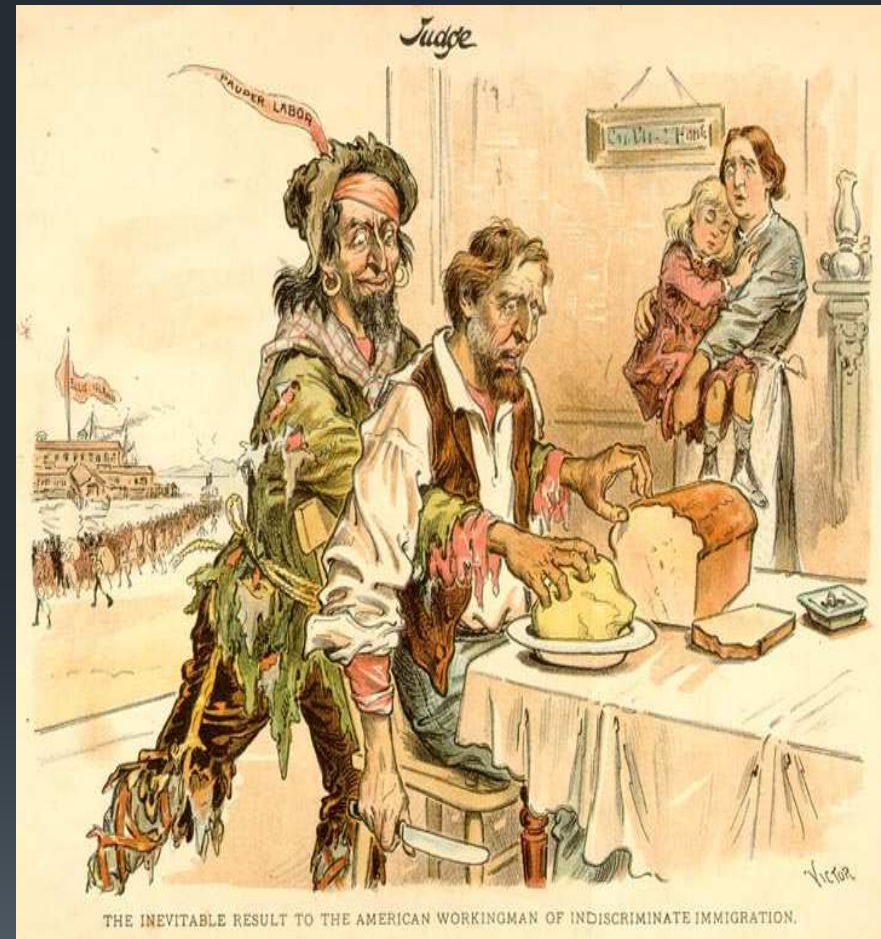
Slovaks as Migrants to the USA

- One of the highest waves of emigration from European countries at the end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century (after Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Scotland, Lithuania, and Slovenia).
- Census in the USA /1990/ - 2 million people claimed Slovak origin
- USA - the most important destination for Slovaks since 1880



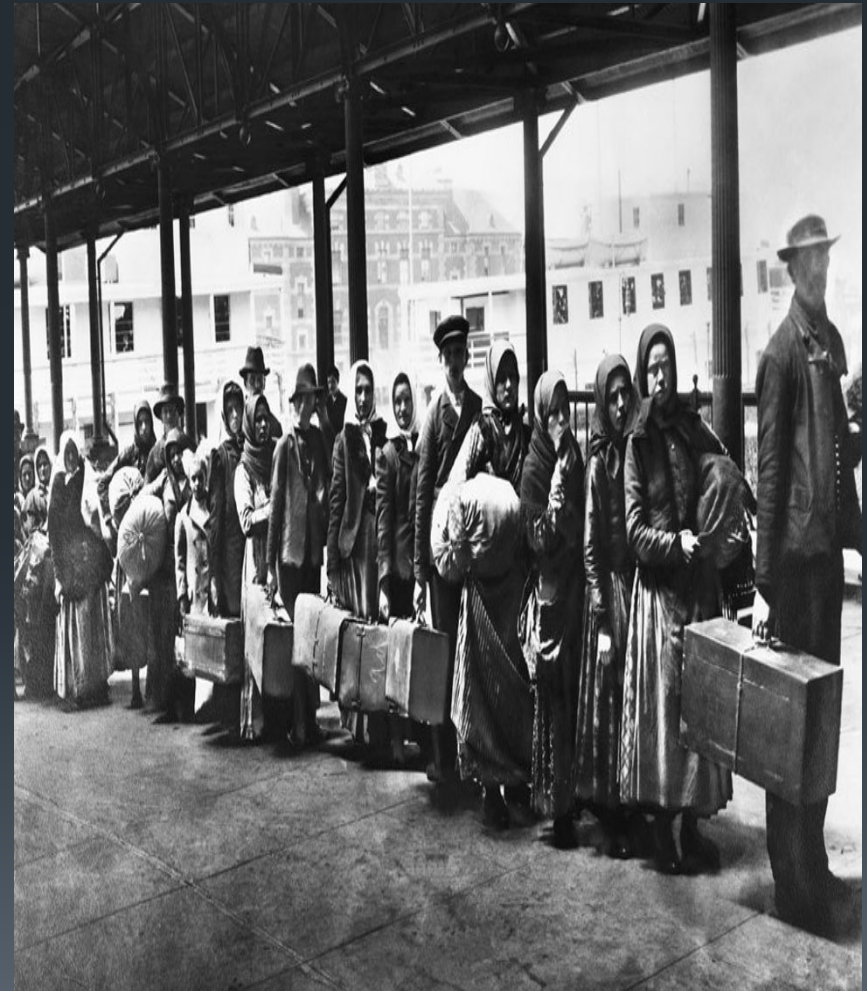
Slovaks as Migrants to the USA

- Dillingham Commission - in 1899-1910 as many as 377527 people claimed Slovak ethnicity. That constituted 4 % of all immigrants into the USA in that period.
- Vast majority of Slovak emigrants were poorly educated and with bad reputation, often called „hunkies“.



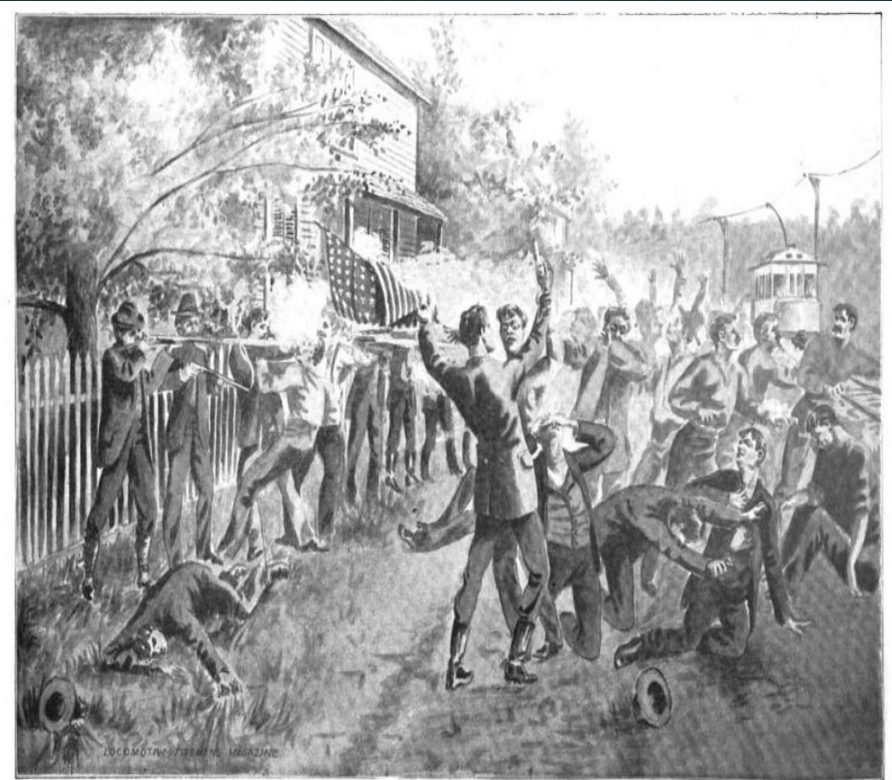
Slovaks as Victims of Smuglers

- Hiring policies of transport companies, their agents, and subagents were far from being fair.
- Contracts with employees and pre-paid ticket to the USA
- Made-up stories from the USA constructing reality in a false way
- „*In Hungary we deal with human trash*“ (director of the transport company from Hamburg; 1890)
- Transportation companies advertised in Slovak language and were sending tickets and maps directly to people.



Slovaks as Victims of Discrimination in the USA - Lattimer massacre

- Slovaks were subject of both institutional discrimination on a labor market and hatred from American workers.
- Lattimer massacre - September 10, 1897
- 400 miners went on strike, 19 were killed and 38 wounded by sheriff's people.



MASSACRE OF MARCHING MINERS BY SHERIFF MARTIN AND DEPUTIES AT LATTIMER, PA., ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1897

Slovaks as Victims of Discrimination in the USA - Lattimer massacre

- Nobody was punished, court decided that sheriff and his people were innocent. Miners from Eastern Europe were named „*barbarians from Asian prairies whose countries are full of destruction...*“
- Sheriff's people were not sorry about the massacre – „*I wish I could kill hundreds of these stinky foreigners, country would be better off without them.*“





Collective Amnesia and Forgetting of Slovaks

Why Slovaks tend to forget about the migration experience from the Past?

- Ethnicization of a public sphere
- Perception of poverty
- Cynicism of a society in late modernity
- Xenophobia and Racism
- Forgetting and amnesia about inglorious past

Structural Amnesia

Structural Amnesia is based on application of social filters, or in other words simple assumptions that we tend to remember only those predecessors that are important to us.



Repressive Erasure

Repressive Erasure is typical mostly for totalitarian regimes and it serves a function to deny historical rupture. Very often it becomes a part of historical textbooks or museum exhibitions.



Prescriptive Forgetting

Prescriptive Forgetting is typical for processes of coming to terms with a past that might endanger social cohesion of a society and often is organized on public.



Forgetting that is Constitutive in the Formation of a New Identity

Forgetting that is Constitutive in the Formation of a New Identity

is important in the process of new identity forming. Usually it is a process of replacement of old memories by new ones that do fit into new circumstances better than old ones.



Forgetting as Annulment

Forgetting as Annulment, unlike the previous form of forgetting, derives not from lack of information, but actually from too many of them. Bearing in mind state of archives and education institutions in Central European countries this type of forgetting, though not the most visible one, cannot surprise us.



Forgetting as Humiliated Silence

Forgetting as Humiliated Silence is the least visible type of forgetting and it derives from reactions of social groups on previous traumatic events in their history. Silence becomes one of forms how to come to terms with them, but in consequences it might lead to partial or complete amnesia.



Collective forgetting about migration experience



- Structural Amnesia
- Repressive Erasure
- Prescriptive Forgetting
- Forgetting that is Constitutive in the Formation of a New Identity
- Forgetting as Annulment
- Forgetting as Humiliated Silence