

The Racial World of Aleš Hrdlička

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1898, Aleš Hrdlička published a pioneering study called *Anthropological Investigations on One Thousand White and Colored Children of Both Sexes*. In his research for the book, he carefully measured, as the title explains, 1,000 white and “colored” children.<sup>1</sup> He measured and recorded such physical features as the height, weight, and the length and breadth of the head of each child. Altogether he measured 908 white and 92 “colored” boys and girls.<sup>2</sup> The “colored” children were especially important because he wanted to document physical differences between blacks and whites. He believed that the data in this book would help scientists identify racial boundaries by physical characteristics. His observations, he claimed, made it possible to “state for the first time the physical differences in all parts of the body between the white and the colored children.”<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in the book he announced, “we have obtained some remarkable differences in the measurements of the white and the negro subjects.”<sup>4</sup>

Hrdlička’s anthropometric study of orphans exposes a crucial problem that was central to his idea of race. It is also a critical tool of analysis in the following chapters. Hrdlička believed that measurable somatic features divided black from white, and that the truest way to separate humans into groups was according to their distinguishing physical marks. He built much of his professional career on the assumption that such measurements could objectively distinguish the borders between races. The key problem is that all of the racial and national “identities” that Hrdlička cared the most about were inherently ambiguous, malleable, and unmeasurable. Both race and nation are creations

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<sup>1</sup> The context suggests that Hrdlička used “colored” as a synonym for “black” and “negro.” He usually claimed to believe in three main races: “White,” “Black,” and “Yellow-Brown,” which he also called “Caucasoid,” “Negroid,” and “Mongoloid,” so the term “colored,” besides sounding offensive to the modern ear, adds one more exception to his already imprecise terminology.

<sup>2</sup> Aleš Hrdlička, *Anthropological Investigations on One Thousand White and Colored Children of Both Sexes, The Inmates of the New York Juvenile Asylum, With Additional Notes on One Hundred Colored Children of the New York Colored Orphan Asylum* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford Co., 1898), 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

of the human imagination, and their meanings depend on specific historical contexts; neither is a measurable biological category.

Despite his enthusiasm, Hrdlička's 1898 study of New York orphans did not help to delimit clear physiological categories of black and white. It is essential to notice that for the study, he went to two different institutions to get his measurements. He found his white subjects at the New York Juvenile Asylum, but for "colored" children, which he considered some of "the most important measurements," he went to the New York Colored Orphan Asylum, a separate establishment.<sup>5</sup> This means that the real decisions about which children belonged in what race were made before Hrdlička got there. Whoever decided the fate of the city's orphans already knew how to distinguish between the races, probably without the science of anthropometry. Someone had already sent the "colored" children to the "colored" orphanage. Long before Hrdlička showed up with his calipers, someone else had already decided which children were white and which were black. Hrdlička simply trusted that the children in the Colored Orphan Asylum were really "colored" and measured them as such. What Hrdlička really documented were fleeting cultural biases, not permanent biological categories. For the rest of his life, he meticulously measured cultural whims, but he authoritatively publicized them as distinct categories found in the "natural" world.

In reality, his own research often revealed that the borders between races were very blurry, the opposite of what he hoped. Of course, there were always a few individuals who fit easily into popular stereotypes of black and white, but the real problem, which Hrdlička never solved, was how to classify those whose racial profile seemed neutral or mixed. Even at the orphanages in 1898, he had to admit that according to his own measurements the black and white children were more alike than he had expected. "The differences between the white and the colored children," he conceded, were "not as well defined" as he had anticipated.<sup>6</sup> Instead of questioning his premise; however, he

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 19.

discounted this lack of confirming data in a manner that became habitual throughout his life; he simply insisted that forthcoming evidence would soon vindicate his presumptions. More data, he speculated, would show that the differences were more pronounced. The black and white children would seem more physically different, he conjectured, “if we had sufficient numbers of the colored subjects.”<sup>7</sup>

To make matters even more unclear, some children in the orphanages appeared “mixed” to Hrdlička. For example, in comparing blacks and whites he noted, “the hair of the pure negro child is quite lusterless and as a rule either curly or wavy, by far more frequently the former than the latter. The proportion of wavy hair increases largely in mixed subjects and the same is true about luster of the hair.”<sup>8</sup> By acknowledging the existence of mixture, Hrdlička recognized that many children could not be simply white or black; there was instead a scale of variation between the two. The problem that Hrdlička never solved was, what degree of “luster” or round-headedness made a “mixed” child “black” or “white”?

Despite this striking lack of conceptual clarity, race was important to Hrdlička, and he spent the rest of his life authoritatively sorting ambiguous individuals and groups into racial categories. Sometimes his task was to decide the race of specific individuals. From 1914-1920, Hrdlička worked as an expert for the U.S. government to separate “full-blood” Anishaanabe Indians from “mixed-bloods.” On several occasions, he was asked to tell whether an individual was black or white. At other times, he made more theoretical pronouncements about entire groups. In 1924, a lawyer asked him to testify as an expert about whether Armenians were really white. Several people wrote to him to ask if Finnish immigrants numbered among the white race. Sometimes he argued passionately about the classification of certain groups. For example, it was extremely important to him that Slavs belonged to the white race. At least on one occasion, he also claimed that Czechs and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 60.

Slovaks were a physically related “race.” In all these cases, he implied that measurable physical features distinguished these groups from each other, yet he never precisely described these traits or how to evaluate them.

This study focuses on Hrdlička’s racial worldview, but it is important to keep in mind that not all of his achievements were explicitly about race. Although Aleš Hrdlička is not a “household name,” specialists generally regard him as a founding father of American physical anthropology. He worked as the Curator of Physical Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution for nearly forty years, and he also founded the prestigious *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*. He is probably most recognized for his theory that Native Americans originally migrated from East Asia.<sup>9</sup> For professional anthropologists like Frank Spencer, the most important part of Hrdlička’s career was his astute critical analysis of skeletal remains.<sup>10</sup> In recent years, Hrdlička’s obsession with collecting, measuring, classifying, and storing bones, particularly crania, has become a topic of scholarly interest.<sup>11</sup> Because of his groundbreaking anthropological display at the 1915 San Diego International Expedition, Hrdlička is also an important figure in the literature about fair and museum exhibits.<sup>12</sup> At the most technical level, highly respected physical anthropologists still admire Hrdlička’s solid contributions to forensic anthropology.<sup>13</sup> This study is different because it

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<sup>9</sup> By far the most important explanation of Hrdlička’s contribution to the study of human origins in the Americas, and also an important source for biographical information, is Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist,” Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979. See also Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2011); Orin Starn, *Ishi’s Brain: In Search of America’s Last ‘Wild’ Indian* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004); David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943.”

<sup>11</sup> See Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors, Race Science, and America’s Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Stephen Loring and Miroslav Prokopec, “A Most Peculiar Man: The Life and Times of Aleš Hrdlička,” in *Reckoning with the Dead: The Larsen Bay Repatriation and the Smithsonian Institution*, ed. Tamara L. Bray and Thomas W. Killion, 26-53 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Samuel J. Redman, *Bone Rooms: From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016); Starn, *Ishi’s Brain*; Thomas, *Skull Wars*.

<sup>12</sup> See Matthew Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880 – 1940* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876 – 1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> See Douglas H. Ubelaker, “Aleš Hrdlička’s Role in the History of Forensic Anthropology,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 44:4 (July, 1999): 724-30.

concentrates specifically on what race meant to Hrdlička, why it was so important to him, how it shaped his intellectual life, and how he acted out his race beliefs to change the world.<sup>14</sup>

Most of the existing literature leaves the impression that Hrdlička was strictly devoted to recording raw empirical data and largely unburdened by theories. This reputation is understandable considering that Hrdlička spent much of his life recording dry anthropometric data and observing ancient bones. Many of his hundreds of publications are little more than collections of measurements presented in tables. While contemporaneous writers like Madison Grant and scholars like Franz Boas made their theoretical claims about race relatively obvious, Hrdlička was seemingly content to publish “the facts” and leave the hypothesizing to others. Sometimes this image has hurt his reputation, and to many academics of the succeeding generation, his apparently random data collection was out of touch with modern science. On the other hand, his dedication to data has sometimes helped his reputation because, as some have claimed, his old-fashioned descriptive approach saved him from wandering, like Madison Grant, into the worst speculative pitfalls of his era.<sup>15</sup> According to Adolph H. Schultz, “Hrdlička quickly sensed the crying need for far more facts and he seems to have acquired a healthy aversion to unsupported hypotheses and rash speculations. His publications, with few exceptions, are of a purely descriptive nature; indeed, a large share consists of little besides tabulations and catalogues of new data.”<sup>16</sup> For better or worse, Hrdlička has often been remembered as a simple recorder of data, who had little to say about bigger questions.

Nevertheless, Hrdlička zealously clung to many abstract principles for which he had no supporting data at all, and these presumptions significantly shaped his work. For one, he

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<sup>14</sup> The only attempt to elucidate Hrdlička’s racial theory in a systematic way is, Robert Oppenheim, “Revisiting Hrdlička and Boas: Asymmetries of Race and Anti-Imperialism in Interwar Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 112:1 (2010): 92 – 103.

<sup>15</sup> This is the view expressed by Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D.”; see also Donald J. Ortner, “Aleš Hrdlička and the Founding of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*: 1918,” in *History of American Physical Anthropology in the Twentieth Century*, eds., Michael A. Little and Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, 87-104 (New York: Lexington Books, 2010); Adolph H. Schultz, “Biographical Memoir of Aleš Hrdlička, 1869 – 1943,” *National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America Biographical Memoirs* Vol. XXIII (1944): 303-338.

<sup>16</sup> Schultz, “Biographical Memoir of Aleš Hrdlička,” 312.

passionately believed that modern “science,” as he understood it, must replace tradition, namely religion, as a source of moral values and a guide to life. Next, his view of science convinced him that the core of human nature was physical and measurable, and that once the corporeal essence of humankind was understood, spiritual affairs would sort themselves out accordingly. This position pushed him to embrace eugenics, despite all his reservations about it, as a promising way to translate the findings of modern science into usable moral teachings and solutions for humanity’s most pressing problems.

His faith in science also led him to the truth of race, which he defined in terms of physical traits, as the most important “natural” principle for dividing humans into groups. This meant that blacks, whites, and “yellow-browns” (his terminology) were inherently different from each other, that blacks could not blend well with white Americans, and that Czechs and Slovaks belonged “naturally” together while Czechs and Germans did not. Race, he presumed, was a scientific principle for rearranging the world. He put his ideals into practice during World War I, when he fervently advocated the creation of Czechoslovakia on racial grounds.

Along with science and race, Hrdlička believed in the Czech nation and its Slavic cousins. Until now, Anglophone scholars have entirely neglected this most passionate piece of Hrdlička’s mental world.<sup>17</sup> Hrdlička came to the United States when he was 13 years old. For the rest of his life, he idealized his childhood in Humpolec, Austria-Hungary. When he became a successful scientist and moved to Washington, he continued to stay in touch with old Czech friends, both from Europe and from his former neighborhood in New York City. Throughout his life he received fan mail from Czech Americans, and he often took the time to write back. Although it would have

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<sup>17</sup> There are a few Czech-language works on Hrdlička, but they belong to an older generation and tend toward post-war patriotic hagiography. Most important are: Vojtěch Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička světový badatel ve vědě o člověku* (Praha: Orbis, 1954); Viktor Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička* (Praha: Orbis, 1947); Miroslav Prokopec, “Osobnost a dílo dr. Aleše Hrdličky,” in *Kulturní stopou Humpolecka (Hrdličkův jubilejní sborník)*, ed. Jiří Bečvář, et. al., 7-16 (Pelhřimov: Jihočeské tiskárny, 1969). There is no fresh and original scholarship on Hrdlička in the Czech language; however, one very useful article is: Petr Kostrhun, “Američtí archeologové a antropologové na Moravě v období mezi světovými válkami,” *Archeologické rozhledy* LXVII (2015): 594-626.

simplified his life, especially since he published hundreds of articles and wrote thousands of letters, he doggedly refused to anglicize his name and always insisted on using the Czech diacritical marks in its spelling. In World War I, he ardently propagandized for the creation of Czechoslovakia, and in the interwar period, he gave away most of his personal fortune to help the cause of Czechoslovakian anthropology.

Despite his success in American public life, people at work knew that Hrdlička was deeply tied to Czech culture. T. Dale Stewart, who worked under Hrdlička for many years at the Smithsonian, later remembered, “he was Czech, of course, and he lived in the Old World outside of office hours. That is, when he went home, his home setting was that of ... the Czech people; and he spoke Czech with other members of the family, when they came in. They probably spoke Czech to a considerable extent.”<sup>18</sup> Stewart also remembered that Hrdlička, who spoke English with an accent, sometimes felt uncomfortable in social situations and lacked, “awareness of how most Americans get along.”<sup>19</sup> Although rarely mentioned by scholars, it is also hard to miss the huge amount of Czech-language manuscripts preserved in the Hrdlička Papers at the Smithsonian’s archives. It is simply impossible to fully comprehend his racial construction of the world without first grasping his semi-religious commitment to Czech national identity.<sup>20</sup>

Although Hrdlička was not a profound thinker, his beliefs had revolutionary political implications if acted out. The racial view, espoused by Hrdlička and others, undermined the stability of the traditional state by demanding that “naturally” differing groups should not live together as equal citizens within a single polity; and likewise by assuming that groups separated by political boundaries, and even by oceans, belonged together as “diasporas” related by “blood.”

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<sup>18</sup> Douglas H. Ubelaker, “T. Dale Stewart’s Perspective on His Career as a Forensic Anthropologist at the Smithsonian,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 45:2 (2000): 274.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Oppenheim, “Revisiting Hrdlička and Boas,” 94. Until now, Oppenheim is the only scholar who has made a serious connection between Hrdlička’s “Czechoslovakian nationalism” and his race beliefs. One particular sentence in this excellent article helped to inspire this dissertation: “A fuller examination of Hrdlička’s role awaits a reader of his considerable Czech correspondence” (94).

Hrdlička insisted that racial identity, not the state, was the most “scientific” and “natural” way to organize people into groups. This racial principle meant that historic states like Austria-Hungary, which supposedly stifled racial realities, were artificial and should be dismantled. To some extent, Hrdlička got what he wanted in Central Europe, or so it seemed at first.

He thought his ideas would make the world more “scientific,” but unfortunately, they really made it more subjective, lawless, and dangerous. This study suggests that race was an ambiguous and therefore chaotic foundation for practical social organization. How could it be otherwise? Even Hrdlička failed, despite a lifetime of trying, to find a clear and systematic way of determining who belongs to what race. Nonetheless, he still believed that race, whatever it was, was the most “natural,” “scientific,” and “objective” way of assigning individuals to groups. Unfortunately, identity claims based on race, which were ambiguous and chaotic to begin with, became a source of disruption and instability throughout the world. The same naturalistic racial argument that Hrdlička marshalled against Austria-Hungary could equally be used against Czechoslovakia, and within only twenty years, it was.

The logical conclusion of the racial organizing principle was that individual rights and the benefits of government depended on membership in a favored racial group, and not on legal citizenship. When rights became contingent on racial identity, always a murky matter, it also became crucial to ask who “really” belonged to which group, and there was no established way to answer this question. Courts, for example, never found a systematic method for determining an individual’s racial identity. In the absence of the rule of law, individuals were left to fight for their racial status in a wild game with constantly changing rules. Some fell safely (or lethally) into stereotypical categories, but many were “amphibians,” whose racial status was uncertain. By around mid-century, the determination of one’s racial identity even became a matter of life or death. This study strongly suggests that the viability of Hrdlička’s racial worldview began to unravel even

during his lifetime, but he died in 1943, so readers must judge for themselves whether racial identity in general, in all its varying forms, from the beliefs of the “redeemers” of Dixie to Hutu Nationalism, has proven a stable principle of polity in the modern age.

Hrdlička presented himself as an objective scientist who merely reported facts from the natural world, yet ironically much of his work rests on beliefs that mirror religion and come close to mysticism. Aside from his reputation for mechanical data reporting, Hrdlička was also remembered for stubbornness. Schultz wrote, “in regard to his own conclusions, Hrdlička seems to have been rarely plagued by doubts. As he was always loyal to his friends so was he loyal to his own ideas.”<sup>21</sup> M.F. Ashley Montagu likewise commented, “Hrdlička tended towards the delivery of *ex cathedra* judgments in a somewhat pontifical style.”<sup>22</sup> Pontifical certainty is probably not a good quality for a scientist, or any other scholar, who is committed to the never-ending process of testing and retesting hypotheses against empirical data. After all, being wrong most of the time demands humility, not certainty. Unflinching conviction is better suited to a prophet who already knows the correct conclusions from the beginning. Unlike other studies of Hrdlička, this one does not focus on his mechanical collecting and measuring; instead, it uncovers and explains the deep and unsubstantiated convictions which guided much of his science.

This study carefully examines Hrdlička’s race beliefs; it does not speculate much about their connection to his social and economic position. In contrast, much scholarship today focuses on race as a rhetorical construction contrived to support the predominance of one powerful “socio-economic” group over a weaker one. According to Ian Haney López, a legal scholar and an advocate of this hypothesis, “race and racism are centrally about seeking, or contesting, power.”<sup>23</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, another pioneering historian in the exciting study of “whiteness,” asserts, “one of the tasks of the historian is to discover which racial categories are useful to whom at a

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<sup>21</sup> Schultz, “Biographical Memoir of Aleš Hrdlička,” 312.

<sup>22</sup> M.F. Ashley Montagu, “Aleš Hrdlička,” *American Anthropologist* 46 (1944): 116.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 11.

given moment, and why.”<sup>24</sup> Those looking for confirmation of such theories are free to glean as they wish from the following chapters. It is plausible to posit that Hrdlička formulated his racial world, perhaps even unconsciously, in order to derive some “social” benefit for himself. After all, one of the main arguments here is that Hrdlička’s race beliefs were inseparable from his personal commitment to Czech nationalism. Few today would deny that Czech immigrants were better off if classed as white people in the United States, at least from an economic and social perspective. That Hrdlička wanted to be white, and that humans in general often fine-tune their ideas, even unknowingly, to suit their own interests, comes as no real surprise. Nonetheless, ideas are often important and surprising in their own right, regardless of the mundane advantages that holding them may, or may not, bring. Readers are free to hazard that Hrdlička’s race beliefs were only “rhetoric” manufactured to protect his position in a social hierarchy. Sometimes, they very likely were. However, such a conclusion, true or not, is unexciting compared to what can be learned by listening to Hrdlička explain for himself, straight from the archive, what he believed about race and why it was so important to him.

The following map of Hrdlička’s worldview unveils an unusual side of twentieth-century race beliefs that has largely gone unnoticed. Hrdlička hated Nordic and Nazi racism, but not because he believed in racial equality. In fact, he brazenly embraced a racial hierarchy in which whites were superior to yellow-browns and blacks. However, he held a very generous view of who was white, a category that included Jews, practically all Europeans, almost everyone in the Soviet Union, and even perhaps a few Koreans. Within the world of whites, Hrdlička believed that Czechs and Slovaks were racially related and therefore deserving of their own state, at the expense of racially mixed Austria Hungary. As a young man, he worked earnestly to make this happen. As an older man, he adored the Soviet Union, not because he cared about Marxist philosophy, but because he viewed the Soviet empire as a rising power comprised of eugenically sound Slavic white people.

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9.

He also believed in eugenics. Of course, he disliked the kind of eugenics that worshipped Nordics, yet he supported Czechoslovakian eugenics. He also believed that eugenics, despite its temporary failings, would harness the truth of science in order to achieve human perfection. Indeed, his entire worldview was founded, not on a “reactionary” longing for a Christian past, but on his resolute faith that science, as he understood it, offered the best guidelines for understanding humanity and ultimately solving its problems.

## CHAPTER I: THE FAITH OF ALEŠ HRDLIČKA

“The rejection of traditional religion had itself, paradoxically, become ‘religious’.”<sup>1</sup> (Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age*)

### A. INTRODUCTION

In September, 1941, 70-year old Thomas Bates heard Aleš Hrdlička speaking on the radio, and he immediately recognized an intellectual fellow traveler. Hrdlička’s speech was called “The Material Causes Underlying the Present World Troubles.” In this short talk, Hrdlička lamented all the evil that the early days of World War II were unleashing upon the world. The only moral antidote, he asserted, was “science” coupled with good education.<sup>2</sup> Bates heard something so inspiring in this message that he wrote a letter to Hrdlička the very same day.

Bates was thrilled that Hrdlička found science, not religion, to be the ultimate answer to the world’s problems, and he wanted to tell Hrdlička about his own spiritual passage from religion to science. Bates described himself as a former Methodist preacher who had once been “extremely doctrinal and more or less fanatical” in his beliefs.<sup>3</sup> When he was forty years old, he recounted, he abandoned his faith because his “critical faculty was awakened and began to function.”<sup>4</sup> Jettisoning his faith brought emotional turmoil, and Bates recalled, “the terrific reaction which followed nearly drove me insane. For a long time I was completely suspended and was unable to contact anything, to satisfy my mental hunger for reality.”<sup>5</sup> He lost much of the community that had surrounded him for forty years of life, including some friends and family. Eventually, he came through the crisis and found peace in a new “scientific attitude,” which “reorganized” and “established” him “with a

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<sup>1</sup> Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript, “The Material Causes Underlying the Present World Troubles,” 28 September, 1941, box 55, “Radio Talks: ‘Meaning of Freedom Program,’” Correspondence, Papers of Aleš Hrdlička, Smithsonian Institute.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Thomas Bates to Hrdlička, 28 September, 1941, box 55, “Radio Broadcast: ‘Meaning of Freedom’ Program,” Correspondence.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

new outlook and a new faith in the natural laws and processes of the universe.”<sup>6</sup> Since that time, he told Hrdlička, “I have regarded the view point of religion and the churches as absolutely futile and headed for the scrap-heap.”<sup>7</sup>

At his professional peak in the 1920s, Hrdlička also described his own life as an intellectual pilgrimage from religion to science. He recounted that his Catholic education in Habsburg Europe had been intended to culminate in “a religious career.”<sup>8</sup> However, when he immigrated to America at the age of thirteen, he left behind his classically oriented central European education forever. In the tough surroundings of New York City, poverty forced him to work as a child laborer in a cigar factory, and education, religious or otherwise, had to wait. Instead of taking Latin grammar at a European gymnasium, he now studied English in night school after work. Eventually, a friend helped him enroll in medical school, and the rest of his career focused exclusively on the physical sciences. The mature Hrdlička mused that his education never led to a religious career, “except perhaps from the point of view of eventual teaching of the people,” not as a priest, but as a scientist.<sup>9</sup> While he never officially gave up Catholicism, Hrdlička had essentially found a new religion.

## B. SCIENCE AS THE NEW SAVIOR

Hrdlička’s new faith began with the assumption that “science,” as he understood it, must replace traditional religious beliefs. Modern science had made a powerful critique of traditional faith in the nineteenth century, and some concluded that this potent criticism of Christian beliefs also cast doubt on all the old moral standards that had accompanied them. For many, like ex-reverend Thomas Bates, such a comprehensive disenchantment with the old certainties was at first

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Manuscript, “Biographical Data of Aleš Hrdlička,” n.d., box 1, “Autobiographical handwritten notes,” Miscellaneous Personal Papers, 1889-1940.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

disorienting and frightening. In 1881, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, then a young professor in Vienna, published a book about this very problem. Masaryk feared that modern skepticism produced moral hollowness, which took a terrible toll on mental health. He argued that rising suicide rates in Europe were the result of the moral vacuum left in the wake of traditional religion.<sup>10</sup> Hrdlička faced this problem less philosophically than Masaryk, but he also considered it. In a 1936 essay called “Human Welfare and Science,” Hrdlička worried that the world was passing through a “critical period” because traditional beliefs were decaying, and “there is nothing provided to take their place,” leaving many people “bewildered.”<sup>11</sup>

The solution to this dangerous bewilderment, Hrdlička proposed, was to replace old-fashioned religion with science, which he considered the “safest guide and savior” in the modern age.<sup>12</sup> Many agreed that science could fill the void. Biologist Aldred Scott Warthin claimed, “old faiths, old superstitions,” and “old beliefs” must “pass away,” and “a new faith,” grounded in a “new biology” must replace them.<sup>13</sup> Eugenicist Albert Wiggam declared that god no longer revealed himself in “tables of stone, burning bushes, prophecies and dreams,” but through “the microscope, the spectroscope, the telescope, the chemist’s test tube and the statistician’s curve.”<sup>14</sup> Entomologist William Morton Wheeler wrote, “Where, indeed, with the disintegration of traditional religion and ethics, can we hope to find the means of correcting our mental, moral, and physical maladjustments, except in a biologically renovated ethics and a system of education imbued with

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<sup>10</sup> Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Der Selbstmord als sociale Massenerscheinung der modernen Civilisation* (Wien: Verlag von Carl Konegen), 1881.

<sup>11</sup> Manuscript, “Human Welfare and Science,” 1936 (?), box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence. The date of this composition is almost certainly 1936. See Hrdlička to Henry Leach, 11 September, 1936, box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>12</sup> Manuscript, “Human Welfare and Science,” 1936 (?), box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>13</sup> Aldred Scott Warthin, “A Biologic Philosophy or Religion a Necessary Foundation for Race Betterment,” in *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference*, Race Betterment Foundation (Battle Creek, Michigan, 1928), 89.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Edward Wiggam, *The New Decalogue of Science* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1922), 11. On Wiggam, see Steven Selden, “Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families: Archival Resources and the History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1908-1930,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149:2 (June 2005): 204-05; Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 163-65.

the achievements of hygiene, psychotherapy, endocrinology and genetics?”<sup>15</sup> The popular author Lothrop Stoddard insisted that humanity must make “sweeping idealistic adaptations” to fit the norms of “the new biological revolution.”<sup>16</sup> Tomáš Masaryk, who eventually placed his faith more in nationalism than in biology, agreed that whatever new beliefs took the place of old religion, they should be “in harmony with science.”<sup>17</sup> In “Human Welfare and Science,” Hrdlička also took the position that only science could “save” humanity. “The old order of things,” he insisted, would be no help, and in the face of modern scientific accomplishments, “old props, reliances [sic], ideals, have seemingly given away or threaten to do so.”<sup>18</sup> There were no other possible saviors; if science could not save humanity, he pronounced, “then nothing can.”<sup>19</sup>

Modern science, some argued, must lead the way by providing an entirely new moral system founded exclusively on recently revealed “laws of nature.” In a 1931 paper called “Hopes in the Biological Sciences,” William Morton Wheeler predicted that by the end of the twentieth century theology, “will have no more cultural value than astrology,” and “moral codes shall be based on life and not life on moral codes.”<sup>20</sup> Herbert Spencer Jennings also outlined the new moral expectations for his field of biology in 1930:

It has come to be recognized that man is a biological specimen, as much as are snakes and newts; his affairs are biological affairs, and must be carried on in accordance with sound biological principles. The uplifter [sic] hastens to secure the endorsement of the biologist for his particular remedy for human ills. The man in the street

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<sup>15</sup> William Morton Wheeler, “Hopes in the Biological Sciences,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 70:3 (1931): 237.”

<sup>16</sup> Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), 301.

<sup>17</sup> Wickham Steed, “Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. The Man and the Teacher,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 8:24 (March, 1930): 467.

<sup>18</sup> Manuscript, “Human Welfare and Science,” 1936 (?), box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Wheeler, “Hopes in the Biological Sciences,” 236.

recognizes that if his practices are not biologically sound, they are not sound at all; the biological expert must set the seal of his approval upon them. Profound changes in practice are urged upon the world as pronouncements of biological science.<sup>21</sup>

Hrdlička likewise had lofty moral expectations for the physical sciences. For him, science was about more than just making human life easier with practical “inventions.” Inventions, he thought, were only the materialistic fruits of science, and while expedient, they were not “true human progress.”<sup>22</sup> He was disappointingly vague about what exactly “true human progress” was, but it clearly meant more than time-saving gadgets. Science, he believed, was the guide to human perfection. The true value of science, he wrote, does not lie in “progress in wealth, or ease, or mechanization ...”, but in the development of “true subjective human values and potentialities.”<sup>23</sup> He prophesized that this idealistic progress, “can only mean an advance toward a higher estate” and “less of imperfection and more of perfection.”<sup>24</sup> Humans must become, by heeding the advice of science, a “higher order of beings,” meaning they must be “more perfect, mentally as well as organically.”<sup>25</sup>

The problem was that the information flowing from research in the physical sciences did not obviously yield nuanced discourse about complex moral issues. Even Hrdlička occasionally doubted that science possessed the tools and vocabulary needed for contemplating life’s highest questions. In the 1920s, at the peak of his career as America’s foremost physical anthropologist, Hrdlička reminisced in a hand-written autobiographical sketch about his youthful decision to become a medical doctor. Now that he was an accomplished scientist, he recalled that his original

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<sup>21</sup> Herbert S. Jennings, *The Biological Basis of Human Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc, 1930), 203; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 69.

<sup>22</sup> Manuscript, “Human Welfare and Science,” 1936 (?), box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

plan had been to study theology and law after finishing his medical degree. Hrdlička never got around to studying theology and law, but now he admitted that medicine “does not satisfy” because it “does not solve the highest human problems, the enigma of life, of soul, of future,” and it “entails too much empiricism.”<sup>26</sup> Even if he sometimes suspected that science might not address the “highest human problems,” these were only temporary moments of doubt. Most of the time, he glibly assumed that the secrets of existence would arise from the measurement and comparison of physical objects, like skulls. He expanded his career beyond the practice of medicine and into anthropology, but he never strayed from the physical sciences.

In general, Hrdlička’s understanding of “science” was founded on what Stephen Conn has called an “object-based epistemology.”<sup>27</sup> He focused on the observation, measurement, and comparison of physical objects and trusted that the accumulated data would eventually solve the mysteries of life. According to Frank Spencer, author of the most comprehensive study of Hrdlička’s career:

Hrdlička naively assumed, like so many others, that the reality of the human condition would be miraculously revealed after an undetermined amount of data collection. Even to the very last field trip to Alaska in the late 1930s, Hrdlička would remain convinced that from the skulls and artifacts he so carefully carried to his boat, to add to the thousands he had already amassed in Washington, such solutions would eventually emerge.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Manuscript, “Biographical Data of Aleš Hrdlička,” n.d., box 1, “Autobiographical handwritten notes,” Miscellaneous Personal Papers, 1889-1940.

<sup>27</sup> Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist,” Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979, 49.

While he was good at measuring crania, he was not as good at explaining why it was important to do so. The anthropologist Ashley Montagu also remembered that Hrdlička “was passionately interested in bones, particularly in the external details of their variation, details which he would record in paper after paper, without any real attempt to indicate the reasons for their recording or to interpret their significance.”<sup>29</sup> According to Adolf H. Schultz, Hrdlička’s work was of a “purely descriptive nature,” and “a large share consists of little besides tabulations and catalogues of data.”<sup>30</sup> Schulz described Hrdlička as a collector and measurer, who “left the secondary, though more fascinating, questions, beginning with how and why, to his successors.”<sup>31</sup> Hrdlička’s approach was advantageous in fields like forensic anthropology, where he was a significant contributor, yet it failed to yield the idealistic insights that he dreamed science would provide. It was not clear how the description and comparison of thousands of skulls could offer any practical insight about whom to marry, how to prevent crime, which form of government was best, or whether to wage war or not.

In fact, his very own philosophy of science as neutral fact collecting undermined his idealistic aims for it. Hrdlička wanted science to develop new moral standards for humanity, but he left it up to “society” to figure out just what those new values were supposed to be. In “Human Welfare and Science,” he described science as the “organized search for facts” conducted by impartial scholars who simply collect and display truth for the good of humanity.<sup>32</sup> The moral application of scientific findings was the responsibility of “society,” not the scientist. A scientist might work “his whole life without discovering a single fact that by itself could in any material way benefit or direct society,” but if this menagerie of data, laid out robotically by researchers, did not prove useful, “the society itself is far more at fault” than the scientist.<sup>33</sup> The subtitle to Hrdlička’s

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<sup>29</sup> M.F. Ashley Montagu, “Aleš Hrdlička,” *American Anthropologist* 46 (1944): 115.

<sup>30</sup> Adolph H. Schultz, “Biographical Memoir of Aleš Hrdlička, 1869 – 1943,” *National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America Biographical Memoirs* XXIII (1944): 312.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>32</sup> Manuscript, “Human Welfare and Science,” 1936 (?), box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

piece on “Human Welfare and Science” was, “Can Science save us? Can Science show the way?”

Hrdlička’s answer was yes, “if society will only make due use of what will be furnished.”<sup>34</sup>

Hrdlička preferred to think of himself as an objective collector of data, but in doing so he passed off the responsibility for its moral application to “society.”

### C. THE SCIENCE OF RACE

On closer examination, however, Hrdlička was not really content to remain a neutral chronicler of “facts,” and he permitted himself to draw shockingly drastic moral conclusions from what he considered indisputable truths of science. Science, he believed, clearly demonstrated that humans are divided into physical groups. He further contended that these groups are unequal and compete against each other in a merciless struggle to survive. Because racial groups are “natural” for humanity, no “artificial” political or cultural organization can ever really bring them together.<sup>35</sup> Quite the opposite, states must be destroyed and borders redrawn to accommodate primal racial identities. No universal rule of law could ever unite races and nations; instead, they must strive with each other according to the so-called “laws of nature.”

This set of alleged “facts,” if acted upon, had severe moral implications. Hrdlička spelled out these dark lessons from science in a lecture in Prague, when he reasoned that according to the “laws of nature,” superior races conquer or exterminate inferior ones, and “no morality, no faith, nor any laws can avert this cruel, yet fundamentally natural path.”<sup>36</sup> This style of reasoning, purportedly inferred from scientific observations of “nature,” was not unique to Hrdlička, and it

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> I usually put “nature” and “natural” in quotes because I am not sure what “nature” is, or, more importantly, whatever it is, why it should be equated with moral goodness.

<sup>36</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka i budoucnosti lidstva* [*On Human Origin and Development and the Future of Humanity*] (Praha: Nakladatel B. Kočí, 1924), 63. In a speech at the American University in 1921 he proclaimed, this time in English, that the “white man” was “far ahead of the Negro who is a long way behind,” and “the inevitable result of this will be that the white man really will have a supremacy over an inferior race; a man so much more effective will be by nature’s laws alone, as he already is today, the lord of the one below him.” See, Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944. See also chapter 4.

underpinned much racial thinking in the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> In the 1920s, the popular author Lothrop Stoddard also preached in *The Rising Tide of Color* that racial conflict between white and dark-skinned people was “natural” and inevitable because “self-preservation is the first law of nature.”<sup>38</sup>

This ostentatiously scientific view of the world amounted to a deliberate intellectual rebellion against a large portion of the western tradition, and Christianity was its first target.<sup>39</sup> Not only was Christianity supposed to be old-fashioned, but the Christian ideal of equality stood in the way of a world organized scientifically around races and nations. “Certain religious and social doctrines,” sneered Madison Grant in 1916, had lulled white, Nordic Americans into laxity about their racial purity, but with the arrival of modern science, he gloated, these silly old beliefs were “now happily becoming obsolete.”<sup>40</sup> Grant especially hated Roman Catholicism because he believed the church had always “used its influence to break down racial distinctions.”<sup>41</sup> In one of his passionate pleas for immigration restriction in the 1920s, journalist Kenneth Roberts derided his “sentimentally inclined readers” for ignoring “racial differences” because they believed “all people are equal in the eyes of St. Peter.”<sup>42</sup> In response, Roberts scolded that things were different “here on earth,” where “there are certain biological laws which govern the crossing of different breeds.”<sup>43</sup> Lothrop Stoddard proclaimed that the racist “White Australia” immigration policy “is gospel” and “counts for more than religion.”<sup>44</sup> Insisting that science was on the side of stringent miscegenation laws in the 1920s, Virginia’s Walter Plecker urged his readers to “turn a deaf ear to those who

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<sup>37</sup> Johann Chapoutot, in his excellent study of the Nazi intellectual world, suggests where such ethical insights derived from the “scientific laws of nature” could lead. Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood: Thinking and Acting as a Nazi* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 23-63. See also chapter 5.

<sup>38</sup> Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color*, 275.

<sup>39</sup> Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood*, 64-111. Chapoutot convincingly shows how the century’s most dedicated racial enthusiasts found their ideological nemesis in Christianity and the equalitarian vision of the Enlightenment.

<sup>40</sup> Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936 [1916]), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Grant, 85. See also John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 157. According to Higham, Grant “assaulted Christianity for its humanitarian bias in favor of the weak and its consequent tendency to break down racial pride.”

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth Roberts, *Why Europe Leaves Home* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1922), 113.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color*, 267.

would interpret Christian brotherhood to mean racial equality.”<sup>45</sup> Aldred Scott Warthin felt that Christian teachings like “the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins” had “done more harm, biologically, than almost any other thing in the human race.”<sup>46</sup>

Hrdlička clearly prioritized race over religion and believed that pure religiosity was predicated on racial characteristics. Although raised Roman Catholic, he viewed Christianity as no more than a tool for oppressing and suppressing Slavic racial identity.<sup>47</sup> Christianity, he thought, had been imposed by German “foreigners” on the innocent tribal Slavs, who already had their own sophisticated religion and nuanced moral code. The implication was that if modern Czechoslovaks could free themselves from the racial tyranny of Germans and their phony Christianity, the Slavic spirit, innate in the race, would produce a more “natural” religious system and moral code. The question, “Who is a true Christian?”, if it mattered at all to Hrdlička, was insignificant compared to the questions: “Who is a Slav,” “Who is a Czechoslovak,” and “Who is white”?

The liberal ideal of human equality, which scientific racists blamed on the Enlightenment and the eighteenth-century revolutions, was another favorite target.<sup>48</sup> Today, most scholars agree that in everyday life the Enlightenment vision of equality was an empty promise for many people, perhaps even most. After all, Thomas Jefferson, who proclaimed the equality of man, was a slave owner. This is a key modern criticism, but it is also essential to remember that the racial enthusiasts of the twentieth century spurned equality not only in practice, but also as an ideal. For men like Grant and Stoddard, the scientific “facts” of “nature” required a firm rejection of America’s Enlightenment heritage as an ideal, especially the statement of equality in the *Declaration of Independence*. According to Grant, “the basic truth [is] that inequality and not equality is the law of

<sup>45</sup> Walter Plecker, cited in Richard B. Sherman, “‘The Last Stand:’ The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia in the 1920s,” *The Journal of Southern History* 54:1 (Feb. 1988), 73.

<sup>46</sup> Aldred Scott Warthin, “A Biologic Philosophy or Religion,” 88.

<sup>47</sup> See chapter 8.

<sup>48</sup> Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood*, 64-111. See also Mark Brandon, “From Mum Bett to Franz Boas: Race and Human Equality in American Intellectual Culture,” in *Assimilation in American Culture - A Good or Bad Word: Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium of American Studies*, 46-56, ed. Michal Peprník (Olomouc, Czech Republic: Palacký University Press, 2016).

nature.”<sup>49</sup> Grant derided “the brotherhood of man” as a mistake that came from “the loose thinkers of the French Revolution and their American mimics.”<sup>50</sup> Stoddard took a similar view: “A little while ago we were taught that all men were equal .... Fortunately we know the truth ... we have been vouchsafed clear insight into the laws of life. We know that men are not, and never will be, equal.”<sup>51</sup> The British race pundit Houston Stewart Chamberlain likewise thought that documents like the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man* belonged in “the waste-paper basket,” and that Enlightenment-style human equality was a “foolish humanitarian day-dream.”<sup>52</sup> Hrdlička does not seem to have thought much about the Enlightenment, yet he readily agreed, “from the scientific point of view there is no such prospect as mental and physical equality among peoples;” it was simply a fact that there were “retarded races” and “advanced races.”<sup>53</sup>

For such a firm fixture of the “natural” world; however, race has always been a terribly slippery concept. Race has meant a range of things to different people in different times and places, and some version of racial thinking emerged almost everywhere at some point in the twentieth century. It is a concept that is contingent to specific historical contexts.<sup>54</sup> In the United States, the dramatic story of African Americans is the central race motif, but Native Americans, European immigrants, and Asians were also seen through the lens of race. As one historian has recounted, W.E.B. Dubois reported seeing a full “fifty races” present at the First Universal Race Congress in 1911 in London.<sup>55</sup> A famous and influential book from 1899 was entitled *The Races of Europe*, and it was not unusual to consider people from different parts of Europe, all probably light skinned, as

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<sup>49</sup> Grant, *Passing of the Great Race*, 79.

<sup>50</sup> Grant, cited in Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont Press, 2008), 155.

<sup>51</sup> Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color*, 305.

<sup>52</sup> Houston Stewart Chamberlain, cited in Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 111.

<sup>53</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>54</sup> Barbara J. Fields, “Ideology and Race in American History,” in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Van Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 144; Matthew Pratt Guterl, “The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925,” *Journal of World History* 10:2 (Fall, 1999): 351; Staffan Müller-Wille, “Race and History: Comments from an Epistemological Point of View,” *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 39:4 (July, 2014): 603.

<sup>55</sup> Guterl, “New Race Consciousness,” 308.

distinct racial groups.<sup>56</sup> At one time, people spoke about the Irish race. There was also once a Slavic race. Hrdlička talked about the Czechoslovakian race in the 1930s, and he thought it was in perpetual competition with the German race. Most notoriously, many Europeans and Americans considered Jews a race, and this conception eventually turned into one of the most horrific race stories of the twentieth century. To the surprise of many, something very much like race concepts turned up in the Soviet Union, where they were, theoretically at least, not supposed to exist.<sup>57</sup> Although invented by Europeans and Americans, race ideas appeared everywhere in the world in the twentieth century.<sup>58</sup> What race is depends on particular cultural conditions; it has never been a self-evident “fact of nature.”

Hrdlička’s own usage of the term race was equally imprecise and therefore hard to describe, but it is possible to assert with confidence that he understood it primarily as something physical. One of the key achievements of modern physical anthropology, he claimed, was the elucidation of the “physical knowledge of the races and many of their subdivisions.”<sup>59</sup> He did not believe that “cultural anthropology,” as it would be called today, offered much help. He respected Franz Boas, for example, but he regretted “that Professor Boas’ activities were never devoted fully to physical anthropology, much of his time being given to linguistics, mythology and general ethnology of the American aborigines.”<sup>60</sup> Instead, Hrdlička believed that measurable physical features contained the

<sup>56</sup> William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1899).

<sup>57</sup> Eric D. Weitz, “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges,” *Slavic Review* 61:1 (Spring, 2002). See chapter 8.

<sup>58</sup> A few works that tackle race in “non-Western” contexts are: Frank Dikötter, *Mao’s Great Famine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Dikötter, “Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics,” *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 467-78; Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Alexander Laban Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); James Leibold, “Competing Narratives of Racial Unity in Republican China: From the Yellow Emperor to Peking Man,” *Modern China* 32:2 (April, 2006): 181- 220; Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (Yale University, 1996); Gérard Prunier, “Frontline: Prunier Interview,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/rwanda/etc/interview.html>; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1995; Vladimir Tikhonov, “The Race and Racism Discourses in Modern Korea, 1890s-1910s,” *Korean Studies* 36 (2012): 31-57; My-Van Tran, “Japan through Vietnamese Eyes (1905-1945),” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30:1 (1999): 126-146.

<sup>59</sup> Aleš Hrdlička, *Physical Anthropology, Its Scope and Aims: Its History and Present Status in the United States* (Philadelphia: Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, 1919), 17.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

most important human truths, including the mysteries of race. For anyone who wanted to be a serious physical anthropologist, Hrdlička preached, the first step was a doctorate in medicine.<sup>61</sup> After this, an aspiring researcher could move on to physical anthropology, which in Hrdlička's view might just as easily be renamed, "advanced human anatomy, physiology, and biology."<sup>62</sup> For him, the main point of physical anthropology was "research into man's anatomical and physical variation."<sup>63</sup>

When examining human variation in the present, Hrdlička relied on anthropometry, the precise measurement of body parts, which was his subspecialty. Throughout his career, he carefully measured thousands of people and recorded the results. He believed that such measurements provided objective truth about the nature of humans. In his textbook on the subject, he wrote:

The object of anthropometry is to supplement visual observation, which is always more or less limited or uncertain, by accurate mechanical determinations. The ideal function of anthropometry would be the complete elimination of personal bias, and the furnishing of absolutely correct data on such dimensions of the body, organs, or skeletons, as might be of importance to those who are to use measurements. This ideal is not attainable to perfection, but it is the highest duty for every worker to strive for as close approach to it as may be in his power.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Hrdlička, *Anthropometry* (Philadelphia: The Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, 1920), 7.

He expected that his methodology of carefully measuring and comparing bodily features would create a data bank containing the specific physical characteristics differentiating whites, blacks, and other races and nations.

Other than his assertion that race was somehow physical and measurable, it is hard to find consistency in Hrdlička's usage of the term. He never formulated a fixed idea of how many races there were or a comprehensible methodology for telling them apart. He was sure they existed, and he once reassured a college student: "From the physical point of view there are certainly varieties of mankind, just as there are varieties in dogs, cats, poultry and other animals; and these varieties, so long as they do not constitute what could legitimately be termed species, are called races. There is no possibility of doing away with these facts."<sup>65</sup> However, he found these "facts" hard to describe concretely. He knew there was no scholarly consensus about racial taxonomy. When asked, he told a curious man, "there is no satisfactory recent publication which would give the classification of races according to our latest knowledge."<sup>66</sup> He had the opportunity to correct this inadequacy in a chapter he published in a textbook in 1930, but again he preferred to admit, "there arose in the course of time almost as many schemes of classifications of the races of man as there were students of the question."<sup>67</sup> For convenience, he opted for a tripartite division of white, yellow-brown, and black. This was his usual typology, but he sometimes added or subtracted from it in different ways, and this simple formula does not do justice to the messiness of his racial thinking. In 1930, he still confessed that modern science had never really improved on the eighteenth-century classification of Linnaeus.<sup>68</sup>

Technically, he considered all Europeans as part of the white race, yet he still discussed European groups in racial terms. Hrdlička's usage was inconsistent, but a few patterns emerge.

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<sup>65</sup> Letter, Mary E. Morgan to Hrdlička, 28 February, 1927, box 42, "MODELL-MORROW, 1918-43," Correspondence.

<sup>66</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Herman J. Doepner, 24 May, 1927, box 20, "DE, 1906-43," Correspondence.

<sup>67</sup> Hrdlička, "Human Races," in *Human Biology and Racial Welfare*, ed. Edmund V. Cowdry (New York: Paul Heber, 1930), 165.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Although Hrdlička hated Madison Grant's insistence on Nordic superiority, he usually adopted Grant's division of Europeans into Nordic, Mediterranean, and Alpine physical types. He did not officially consider these three groups separate "races," yet he apparently agreed with Grant that some kind of physical and biological differences distinguished them.<sup>69</sup> Sometimes, but not always, he tacked on the Slavs, whom Grant considered Alpines, as a fourth and distinct group of European whites. Adding to the confusion, he also developed an armory of euphemisms to conjure up the image of biologically and physically distinct groups of humans that were not, technically, "races." He was fond of terms like "unit," "stock," "stem," "branch," "strain," "type," "sub-race," "secondary race," "daughter race," and "nascent race." For example, he usually denied that Slavs were really a race, but he considered them a "unit" of the white race. He never explained what any of these imaginative categories were or what made them different from races.

Sometimes he complicated things further by referring to national groups as races. He usually described nations in racial terms but stopped short of the word itself. In a 1930 article, he dealt with modern nations as "nascent races."<sup>70</sup> If people lived together for a long time in a state, he theorized, they would gradually "show ever more of physical resemblances."<sup>71</sup> Examples of these "new types" were "the Spanish, Italian, French, German, English, and even the American."<sup>72</sup> Elsewhere he wrote:

... although the different European nations are all very much mixed,  
 although many of them consist of practically the same fundamental  
 elements, although they all spring from one type in the Neolithic  
 Period, nevertheless each one of them, and that within the last few

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<sup>69</sup> Hrdlička clearly believed there was such a thing as a "Nordic" physical type, which he considered a "strain" of the white race. But he did not believe the Nordics were superior to Slavs and other whites. See, "Famous Scientist Flouts 'Nordic Superiority' Boast," *New York American*, 13 August, 1928, box 72, "News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1928-37," News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953.

<sup>70</sup> Hrdlička, "Human Races," 158.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 159.

hundred years, has acquired a sort of national physiognomy by which the majority of the people of that particular group can be told, can be picked out by an intelligent observer. There is no question but that there is an English, a Scotch, a French, a Russian, a German, and an Italian as well as a Spanish physiognomy.<sup>73</sup>

Sometimes he threw caution to the wind and simply used the term race when discussing nations. In the 1930s, for example, he explicitly remarked on the “Czechoslovakian race,” even though these two linguistic groups had never lived together in their own state. Throughout his life, he referred to the Germans as a “race.”<sup>74</sup> His lifelong tendency to call the Germans a race did not prevent him; however, from writing a confusing article in 1943, which purported to show that the Germans were not really a race. However, the very same article bizarrely concluded that even Germans, although allegedly not a race, had a right to a certain amount of “racial pride,” as long as they did not overdo it.<sup>75</sup> This confusion is typical for Hrdlička’s use of the term race.

#### D. THE RE-EMERGENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Notwithstanding all the bluster, these overconfident assertions of “scientific truth” produced an edifice of superstition as egregious as the one science had supposedly toppled. This is not surprising, considering what Hrdlička and others like him expected science to yield. Hrdlička burdened science not only with testing hypotheses but also with issuing statements of incontestable truth, which would give moral guidance to humanity. This is why he insisted that science must do far more than come up with clever “inventions.” Surprisingly, given his obsession with measurability and material objects, he often criticized philosophical materialism, and he claimed

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<sup>73</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>74</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>75</sup> Hrdlička, “The German Race,” *The Scientific Monthly* 56:3 (March, 1943): 238-49. See chapter 5.

that the “highest human problems” were “the enigma of life, of soul, of future.”<sup>76</sup> Somehow, he thought that science should solve these riddles, which philosophers and theologians had struggled with for thousands of years. Hrdlička, who was busy traveling around the world measuring people and collecting skulls, did not spend much time reflecting on knotty philosophical questions; instead, he recklessly stretched what he thought were scientific “laws of nature” into behavioral principles for humanity. What he came up with, like many of his time, were ideas like race, nation, and eugenics. Ironically, all three of these “scientific” creeds required a great deal of faith and flirted with “superstition.”

Highlighting the “superstitious” aspects of Hrdlička’s race beliefs is not the same as dismissing them flippantly as “pseudoscience.” Racial science is considered untenable today, but this does not mean that it was uneducated, stupid, or disingenuous; instead, it was often erudite, complicated, and earnest. In many ways, racial science resembles supernatural beliefs in Early Modern Europe, especially the esoteric arts of astrology and alchemy.<sup>77</sup> For those who saw the world in racial terms, there was a kind of “system” with its own logic. Heaps of data seemed to support the racial system, and even if inconsistent, there were complicated “rules” to it as well. As with alchemy and astrology in the 1500s and 1600s, highly educated people did not usually reject race as silly; instead, they wrote best-selling books about it. The fact that its major presumptions eventually became unsustainable does not diminish its explanatory power for the highly literate

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<sup>76</sup> Manuscript, “Biographical Data of Aleš Hrdlička,” n.d., box 1, “Autobiographical handwritten notes,” Miscellaneous Personal Papers, 1889-1940.

<sup>77</sup> Of the many books and articles discussing the “rationality” of the Early Modern “system of the sacred,” especially stimulating is David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d’Otranto* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). The delightful story of John Dee, one of Europe’s best educated men who specialized in communicating with angels and recording his conversations, is skillfully analyzed in Deborah Harkness, *John Dee’s Conversations with Angels: Cabal, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). An important reminder that witch hunting was not “crazy,” is found in, Brian P. Levack, “The Great Witch Hunt,” in *Handbook of European History: 1400 – 1600*, 607-633, ed. Thomas Brady, et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1995). A few scholars have fleetingly compared race beliefs to astrology and alchemy. For example, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 19; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998). Although the word alchemy appears in the title of Jacobson’s book, he does not make a literal comparison with the historic practice of alchemy.

people, like Hrdlička, who believed in it.<sup>78</sup> Even Franz Boas treated race as a hypothesis worthy to be tested empirically; although, to his credit, he was unwilling to join the crowd and accept it as orthodoxy.<sup>79</sup> Boas, just like many of his contemporaries, spent plenty of his time laboriously measuring peoples' skulls to see if there was anything to popular race beliefs.<sup>80</sup> The fact that so much of his lengthy career was dedicated to challenging race ideas, which, by the way, he never claimed to refute definitively, is in itself a testament to how convincing they seemed to his equally capable colleagues.

Race theory especially resembled astrology when used to “diagnose” ambiguous looking individuals. Like an astrologist, Hrdlička possessed arcane knowledge, but instead of using it to read the stars, he deciphered intricate corporeal markings to place racially neutral persons in firm racial categories. There were even charts, like the one he published in 1930, which shows forty-nine different physical features that distinguish the three races. Only an experienced professional could decide how to balance all of these different clues to reach a verdict. If an individual's skin pigmentation was indeterminate, should skull shape, lip size, eye shape, height, or hair texture (or 40 other variables) be more important in assigning a race category? “For all its apparent objectivity,” wrote Keith Thomas in his classic study of magic practices in Early Modern England, “astrology left everything in the last resort to the judgment and common sense of the practitioner,

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn's analysis of the tendency in the history of science to ignore or deny the explanatory potential of older paradigms is appropriate: “Why dignify what science's best and most persistent efforts have made it possible to discard? The depreciation of historical fact is deeply, and probably functionally, ingrained in the ideology of the scientific profession, the same profession that places the highest of all values upon factual details of other sorts.” Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 138. Jonathan Marks comments more directly on the idea of “pseudoscience” when writing about eugenics: “It is a consequence of the movement's popularity within the scientific community that eugenics was *science*, not *pseudoscience*. If all the relevant scientists believed it, how could eugenics possibly be pseudoscience?” Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995), 86. The pseudoscience charge also resembles the common attempt to discredit “conspiracy theories” simply by labeling them as such. For those who can get beyond all this name calling, argues Brian Keeley, the real problem is how to tell which conspiracy theories are “warranted” and which are “unwarranted.” See Keeley, “Of Conspiracy Theories,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 96:3 (March, 1999): 109–126. Many people are still eager to condemn racial science as “phony” science; far fewer care to find out why it once seemed so convincing to the world's smartest people.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, “Franz Boas: The Anthropologist as Public Intellectual” *Society* 47:5 (September, 2010), 435; Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991): 68–83.

<sup>80</sup> Clarence C. Gravlee, H. Russell Bernard, and William R. Leonard, “Boas's *Changes in Bodily Form*: The Immigrant Study, Cranial Plasticity, and Boas's Physical Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 105:2 (2003): 326–332.

and the system, far from being exact, was highly flexible.”<sup>81</sup> Racial science worked on similar principles.<sup>82</sup>

A perfect storm of variables made Hrdlička’s race decrees convincing. Like an astrologist, Hrdlička was an expert, who claimed to understand the mysteries of race better than a layman. With the priestly authority of science on his side, he applied the highly subjective rules of race, like an astrologist using complicated calculations, to achieve a prognosis that was believable to most people. This does not mean that he was a fraud. Like a good astrologist who knew his formulas, Hrdlička had real skills. Having carefully examined thousands of people, he was probably pretty good at guessing ancestral backgrounds. In addition, his racial diagnoses probably “worked” most of the time because many people displayed enough stereotypical features to wear their label believably, maybe even willingly. Then there was also plenty of room for error. After all, any individual might have a latent strain of “black,” “white,” or “yellow-brown” blood that Hrdlička had failed to detect, so he was always careful to remind his clients how easy it was to misread the signals, even for an expert. Like the heavenly bodies, racial features could send mixed messages. Any “errant data” could be dismissed as an exception to the rule or reinterpreted to fit the racial paradigm.<sup>83</sup> For both astrology and racial science: “Ambiguity was an essential feature of these prognostications, which were usually contrived ‘so cunningly and equivocatingly that, be the event what it will, still the words shall be capable of intimating it.’”<sup>84</sup>

However, no matter how many credible scientists endorsed it, and no matter how much it “made sense,” racial science at some point required an outright rejection of empirical reality and extraordinary reorganization of the physical world. Instead of recognizing the presence of disturbing “anomalies” in the race paradigm, many, like Hrdlička, leaned on mysticism to keep

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<sup>81</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 283-385.

<sup>82</sup> A more detailed argument follows in chapter 3, which is entitled “Race Divination.”

<sup>83</sup> On “errant data,” see Keeley, “Of Conspiracy Theories.”

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 336.

their imperiled theory intact.<sup>85</sup> The clearest example of this is the ubiquitous use of the word “blood” in connection with race.<sup>86</sup> The science of race required racial traits to be passed down from generation to generation, but no one could yet pinpoint the physical substance that transferred them. More cautious scientists hypothesized the existence of “germ plasm,” which some authors, like Aldred Scott Warthin, treated with worshipful reverence. In the absence of any real explanation; however, many simply assumed that blood was the physical substance that conferred racial traits upon the next generation. Faith in race, although wrapped in scientific jargon, required blood to perform a genetic function, even though there was absolutely no evidence that it did so.

Ironically, those writers who most shrilly demanded that their readers accept the scientific “facts” of race also used the term “blood” in the most other-worldly fashion. Taken together, Grant’s *Passing of the Great Race* and Stoddard’s *Rising Tide of Color*, both of which claimed to be on the cutting edge of scientific enlightenment, mention blood as a conveyor of racial traits approximately 250 times.<sup>87</sup> Stunningly, not once did these authors describe blood as red. Instead of the obvious empirical observation that blood looks red to most people, they asked their readers to see blood as: white, black, yellow, brown, brunet, colored, Nordic, Alpine, Mediterranean, Asian, Northern, Oriental, Slavic, Latin, Arab, Celtic, French, Dutch, British, Saxon, Anglian, Norse, Danish, Jewish, Hindu, mixed, good, bad, inferior, northern, *et cetera*.<sup>88</sup> Some of Lothrop Stoddard’s passages about blood could challenge the fervor of Jonathan Edwards, such as the following:

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<sup>85</sup> The idea of “anomaly” is from Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 52-65.

<sup>86</sup> See Mark A. Brandon, “Black, White, and Yellow Blood: Race and the Rhetoric of Scientific Authority,” in *The Foundations and Versatility of English Language Teaching*, 261-70, edited by Joel Cameron Head (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), Thomas Guglielmo, “Red Cross, Double Cross: Race and America’s World War II-Era Blood Donor Service” *The Journal of American History* 97:1 (June 2010): 63-90; Spencie Love, *One Blood: The Death and Resurrection of Charles R. Drew* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Douglas Starr, *Blood: An Epic History of Medicine and Commerce* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).

<sup>87</sup> Brandon, “Black, White, and Yellow Blood,” 264-66.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

As a matter of fact we are confusedly aware of our evil plight, and legion are the remedies today proposed. Some of these are mere quack nostrums. Others contain valuable remedial properties. To be sure, there is probably no *one* curative agent, since our troubles are complex and magic elixirs heal only in the realm of dreams. But one element should be fundamental to all the compoundings [sic] of the social pharmacopoeia. That element is *blood*. It is clear, virile, genius-bearing blood, streaming down the ages through the unerring action of heredity, which, in anything like a favorable environment, will multiply itself, solve our problems and sweep us on to higher and nobler destinies.<sup>89</sup>

Neatly summarizing this new scientific, yet astonishingly mystical, meaning of blood, a Nazi ideologue explained in 1940, “instead of celebrating the blood of their redeemer, we will celebrate the blood of our people.”<sup>90</sup> It is tempting at this point to dismiss Grant, Stoddard, and the Nazis as crazy quacks, but this misses the important reality that almost everybody, including Hrdlička, who was a world-renowned scientist, tried to salvage the science of race by trusting in “blood.” Although their beliefs about blood were as mystical as the doctrine of transubstantiation, those who wrote this way thought of themselves as smartly scientific and modern individuals, who laughed at the superstitions of the “Dark Ages.”

One might suspect that they were only referring to blood metaphorically, but plenty of evidence suggests that these luminaries truly imagined that real blood contained supernatural race-bearing qualities. In the first half of the twentieth century, mysticism about blood led to bizarre and complicated rearrangements of the everyday world. At the most literal level of all, the American

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<sup>89</sup> Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color*, 305.

<sup>90</sup> Hermann Rauschning, cited in Johann Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood: Thinking and Acting as a Nazi*, trans. Miranda Richmond Mouillot (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 188.

Red Cross really kept “black” blood and “white” blood reserves in segregated containers throughout World War II.<sup>91</sup> In Germany in the same period, it was literally illegal to mix “Aryan” and “Jewish” blood through transfusions.<sup>92</sup> In court, “blood” determined who was a pure Native American and who was not. Anti-miscegenation laws throughout the United States alerted the public to the dangers of even “one drop” of “black blood.” By the 1930s, Hrdlička well knew that no one had established a physical connection between blood and racial traits, yet he refused to give up hope, and he stubbornly predicted that future research on literal blood would soon provide an objective way to tell the races apart.<sup>93</sup> “Faith,” as the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* observed, “is the evidence of things not seen.”

Along with race, the idea of the nation formulated itself as a new type of spiritual zeal bearing the approving stamp of “science.” The spiritual journey of Tomáš Masaryk illustrates this. Early in his academic career, Masaryk was deeply troubled by “the antagonism of the Churches towards science.”<sup>94</sup> In the end, his replacement for what he considered medieval superstition turned out to be the nation’s mystical “kinship of blood and speech.”<sup>95</sup> In a fascinating essay written in 1945, Alexander Gillies compared Masaryk to Johann Gottfried Herder:

The theme of the two men was fundamentally the same – the diagnosis and cure of modern ills. Both were tirelessly engaged in a battle against skepticism, both saw that their respective ages were tormenting themselves in agonies of doubt and despair, clutching at straws, muttering shibboleths, indulging in empty dreams and restless

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<sup>91</sup> Guglielmo, “Red Cross, Double Cross.”

<sup>92</sup> Starr, *Blood*, 72-78.

<sup>93</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 176. See also chapter 3.

<sup>94</sup> Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, trans. Henry Wickham Steed, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914 – 1918* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 322.

<sup>95</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 380.

yearnings in a hopeless effort to make up for the insecurity that loss of faith had engendered.<sup>96</sup>

Describing the phases of Masaryk's spiritual efforts to rebuild his lost faith, Roman Szporluk described "national philosophy" as Masaryk's final answer to "the problem of a declining traditional authority."<sup>97</sup> Hrdlička's national mysticism differed from Masaryk's. Due to his conviction that physical traits were the most convincing identifiers of human groups, Hrdlička needed to imagine the Czechoslovakian nation as a fleshly entity like a "race," but in the end, he also could produce no better markers than ethereal "blood and speech."

Religious belief in the nation also demanded impractical and sometimes injurious restructuring of the temporal world. Most obviously, the political map in Central Europe had never harmonized with the imagination of nationalists, so Hrdlička and his Czech friends wanted nothing less than a revolutionary rearrangement of borders, even if millions had to die for it in the First World War. The linguistic map also stood in the way of nationalist virtue. In December, 1914, Herbert Adolphus Miller asked why Czechs in Bohemia would stubbornly refuse to learn and speak German in spite of all the material advantages this language brought them. His answer was that their linguistic piety flowed from self-sacrificing religious commitment to the nation:

It has unquestionably been a disadvantage for a people of seven millions to cut itself off from the opportunities of the environing German culture, science, and commerce, but even those who have seen this most clearly have deliberately made the sacrifice in their struggle for freedom of the spirit. When we remember that the prestige is on the side of the Germans, we realize in this movement

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander Gillies, "Herder and Masaryk: Some Points of Contact," *The Modern Language Review* 40:2 (April, 1945): 120.

<sup>97</sup> Roman Szporluk, "Masaryk in Search of Authority," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 7 (1965): 246.

the same indifference to personal success that characterizes the religious enthusiast.<sup>98</sup>

Miller likewise thought that the Poles had “made the preservation of language a religion, and martyrdom for it a glorification.”<sup>99</sup> The pages that follow will show that Hrdlička was also religiously committed to the righteous cause of the Czech national mission. In two world wars, he was a fervent proponent of Czechoslovakian propaganda in the United States. He also could have been a relatively wealthy man after the death of his first wife, who left him a moderate fortune, but instead of enjoying earthly comfort, he donated most of his money to support anthropology in the new Czechoslovakian republic.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, eugenics, which was often linked to race and nation, was a scientific way to explain the mysterious, provide guidelines for living, and attain perfection without resort to Christian “superstition.” Daniel Kevles, probably today’s foremost historian of eugenics, describes the religious side of the movement thusly:

Like Francis Galton, literate Americans and Englishmen, conservative as well as reformist, had undergone their religious crisis, cast off biblical religion and – some with enthusiasm, others by default or despair – had embraced a religion of science. Galton had expected eugenics to provide a secular substitute for traditional religion, and in the opening decades of the twentieth century, amid

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<sup>98</sup> Herbert Adolphus Miller, “Nationalism in Bohemia and Poland,” *The North American Review* 200:709 (December, 1914): 882. In fact, Miller believed that in general, “any particular religious form is never so strong as the spirit of Nationalism to which it may often serve merely as a symbol” (884). The work of Tara Zahra has shown that many Czechs, to the chagrin of more dedicated nationalists, wanted their children to learn German. See Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Miller, “Nationalism in Bohemia and Poland,” 883.

<sup>100</sup> See chapter 7.

the turbulence of Anglo-American urban industrial life, it was said to do just that.<sup>101</sup>

Eugenics told humans where they come from and where they are headed. Along the way, it explained the existence of all kinds of evils, from crime to debilitating illnesses. For private life, it gave middle-class young people, freshly emancipated from the chains of religious delusion, practical assistance in choosing a partner. In social and political life, it appeared to lay a scientific groundwork for major decisions about immigration, racial segregation, and war and peace. All of this wisdom presumably flowed directly from incontestable scientific principles.

Perhaps most importantly, eugenics promised the salvation of humankind, and it placed the possibility of biological and intellectual perfection in the hands of science and scientists. As Diane Paul argued, eugenics appealed to the scientifically smart set from all political viewpoints because “the geneticists of the early decades of this century [20<sup>th</sup>] agreed on nothing except the proposition that the salvation of mankind was to some extent bound up with the improvement of its genes.”<sup>102</sup> According to historian Jonathan Spiro, eugenics promised its followers, “significant steps taken toward achieving human perfection – not through the action of some unseen god but through the proper selection of (equally unseen) genes.”<sup>103</sup> Hrdlička agreed that eugenics would eventually enable humans to maximize the efficiency of their own evolutionary progress by eliminating “immense waste” and speeding up “the processes for the best possible results.”<sup>104</sup> At least for races and nations with access to eugenic science, Hrdlička believed this would lead to physical and mental perfection.

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<sup>101</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 68. On the religious qualities of eugenics see also: Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 41-69; Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 134-38, 169; Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 62-68.

<sup>102</sup> Diane B. Paul, “Eugenics and the Left,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45:4 (October-December, 1984): 588.

<sup>103</sup> Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 135.

<sup>104</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

## E. CONCLUSION

Hrdlička's race beliefs emerged from an intellectual program of rejecting traditional religion and rebuilding the moral world around the recent findings of the natural sciences. He believed that race and nation were obvious "facts" of this newly understood natural world, and that eugenics was an applied science, which could guide human behavior toward perfection. His conclusions probably seem unacceptable to most people today, and for the most part, the scientific community has moved on. Yet his ideas were not backward looking, uneducated, or fraudulent. Hrdlička intended to understand the world solely in scientific terms free from religion. However, in the end, his beliefs turned out surprisingly "religious," and it is a question whether he really succeeded in escaping the "superstitions" that he had hoped to abandon. In a way, he got what he asked for, and his scientific reconstruction of the world became a new kind of religion. The following chapters will explore Hrdlička's new faith in much more detail, starting with eugenics.

## CHAPTER II: EUGENICS

“There is now no reasonable excuse for refusing to face the fact that nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilization.”<sup>1</sup> (George Bernard Shaw)

### A. INTRODUCTION

Hrdlička left a confusing record of statements making it difficult to map his relationship to eugenics. Early in his career, he courted wealthy eugenicists in order to get financial support for launching the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* in 1918. This suggests mere opportunism to some modern observers.<sup>2</sup> Because Hrdlička also disliked the kind of eugenics that preached “Nordic” racial superiority, some writers have wrongly described him as an avowed enemy of eugenics in general.<sup>3</sup> Others have argued that Hrdlička, who viewed himself as an objective collector of “facts,” always remained wary of the most speculative eugenic claims.<sup>4</sup> It is true that as a competent scientist he found much to criticize in what he felt was the shoddy work that many eugenicists did. He also kept up to date on developments in his field, and he knew that eugenics was quickly losing scientific respectability in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

However, eugenic thinking deeply influenced Hrdlička. This truth is easy to miss because Hrdlička’s beliefs defy the prevailing stereotype of eugenics as a backward-looking “pseudo-

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<sup>1</sup> George Bernard Shaw, cited in Diane Paul, “Eugenics and the Left,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45:4 (October-December, 1984): 568.

<sup>2</sup> Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race: 1896–1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 93; Michael L. Blakey, “Skull Doctors: Intrinsic Social and Political Bias in the History of American Physical Anthropology, with Special Reference to the Work of Aleš Hrdlička,” *Critique of Anthropology* 7:2 (1987): 13; Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont Press, 2008), 313-18.

<sup>3</sup> Donald J. Ortner, “Aleš Hrdlička and the Founding of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*: 1918,” in *History of American Physical Anthropology in the Twentieth Century*, eds., Michael A. Little and Kenneth A. R. Kennedy (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 89-93; Matthew Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880–1940* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005): 103.

<sup>4</sup> Ortner, 97-101; Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869–1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979), 99.

<sup>5</sup> Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 97-100; Samuel J. Redman, *Bone Rooms: From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 122, 223.

science” that led inevitably to Nazi ideology. Hrdlička both hated Nazi-style racism and also supported eugenics. At the same time, his hatred for the Nazis did not lead him to believe in racial equality, and his own style of eugenics openly presumed white racial supremacy. In addition, Aryan-centered eugenics perturbed him, but he saw no problems with Slavic or Czechoslovakian eugenics. Most importantly; however, Hrdlička viewed eugenics as part of the progressive “struggle for the cause of science” against “the forces of obscurantism.”<sup>6</sup> He embraced eugenics as a modern moral roadmap, and this shaped how he thought about himself and his relationship to the rest of humanity. Ultimately, he clung to his faith in eugenics on an idealistic level because it provided him with the hope that someday science, freed from traditional religion, would provide humanity with a new source of moral direction.<sup>7</sup>

## B. SCIENTIFIC GUIDELINES FOR LIVING

The first premise, shared by many of Hrdlička’s contemporaries, was that religion could no longer provide reliable moral guidance, and that science must show the way instead. In 1928, Dr. Aldred Scott Warthin, a prominent pathologist, gave a talk at the Third Race Betterment Conference entitled “A Biologic Philosophy or Religion a Necessary Foundation for Race Betterment.” In his address, he claimed,

Old religions are dying. There is no doubt about that. I am in intimate contact with young men, with medical students, and I know that the great majority of these students have thrown off old beliefs and that they are looking for something to supplant them. They are looking for

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<sup>6</sup> Diane Paul, “Eugenics and the Left,” 573.

<sup>7</sup> See Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 41-69; Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 134-38, 169; Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 62-68.

something that is logical, reasonable, rational, [and] material upon which they can found their beliefs in life.<sup>8</sup>

Eugenics seemed equipped to become the new religion that Warthin's smart young medical students were searching for. "Simple biology, the simple facts of life," he promised, "can become an ... adequate religion."<sup>9</sup> In this modern religion, the knowledge of good and evil emanated from "duty to the immortal germ plasm."<sup>10</sup> The highest good, wrote fellow eugenics believer Lothrop Stoddard, was "to love one's cultural, idealistic, and racial heritage; to swear to pass that heritage unimpaired to one's children."<sup>11</sup> The lowest evil, said Warthin, was "biological sin," which meant passing on hereditary flaws to one's offspring. In this new system, forgiveness, which had previously been a Christian virtue, was now the "unpardonable sin" because it might lead a person to overlook physical or mental imperfections in a mate and thereby harm the sacred germ plasm.<sup>12</sup> Albert Wiggam, who authored a book on eugenics tellingly titled *The New Decalogue*, envisioned eugenics as a new dispensation of science, which would usher in, "a new religion, new objects of religious behavior, a new moral code, a new kind of education to our youth, a new conception of many of life's meanings, a new conception of the objectives of social and national life, a new social and political Bible, change in the very purpose of civilization and the fundamental mores of man."<sup>13</sup> This new moral order would alter human relationships and stimulate individuals to better behavior. Through eugenics, wrote Wiggam, "science" could create "a new ethics, a new way in which human beings will regard one another and their duties toward one another."<sup>14</sup> Stoddard believed

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<sup>8</sup> Aldred Scott Warthin, "A Biologic Philosophy or Religion a Necessary Foundation for Race Betterment," in *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference*, Battle Creek, Michigan, January 2-6, (Battle Creek, Michigan: Race Betterment Foundation, 1928), 89; See also Wilson, 162-63.

<sup>9</sup> Warthin, "A Biologic Philosophy," 89.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 275.

<sup>12</sup> Warthin, "A Biologic Philosophy," 89.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Edward Wiggam, *The New Decalogue of Science* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1922. Wiggam), 104. "If Jesus were alive," wrote Wiggam in 1922, "he would have been president of the First Eugenics Congress" (17).

<sup>14</sup> Wiggam, *The New Decalogue*, 95.

that when the world fully came to appreciate the latest findings of science, “we shall see much abused ‘eugenics’ actually molding social programs and political policies.”<sup>15</sup>

Individuals would find the new moral system so convincing, thought Warthin, that they would “alter their habits ... alter their lives ... plan their lives,” and “develop their ideals.”<sup>16</sup> Marriage and reproduction were the most obvious parts of human life where eugenic ethics seemed to offer such practical advice. Massive immigration, urbanization, and the decline of traditional religion were rearranging familial bonds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Science, some felt, could restore a sense of communal responsibility to marriage and family. Daniel Kevles, one of the most respected authorities on the history of eugenics, describes how eugenics hoped to provide new guidance: “Spousal choice and parental practice among the middle classes had long been shaped by family tradition in tandem with religious authority. Now the latitude, mobility, and diversity of urban life were diminishing familial constraints, and religious authority had of course long since eroded in the storms of scientific skepticism.”<sup>17</sup> As Warthin noted in 1928, “the old sex traditions” no longer influenced the marriage choices of educated young people, who now looked to science to help them find a suitable mate.<sup>18</sup>

There is evidence that at least some Americans took their moral duty to the germ plasm into consideration when choosing a partner. In 1928, there were 376 eugenics courses being taught in American universities to thousands of students.<sup>19</sup> Publications openly discussed “eugenic” and “dysgenic” marriages.<sup>20</sup> Experts like Hrdlička and Charles Davenport often received questions about the eugenic quality of prospective unions, especially in terms of race.<sup>21</sup> In 1938 a women

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<sup>15</sup> Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color*, 306.

<sup>16</sup> Warthin, “A Biologic Philosophy,” 89.

<sup>17</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 68.

<sup>18</sup> Warthin, “A Biologic Philosophy,” 89.

<sup>19</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 64; Steven Selden, “Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families: Archival Resources and the History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1908-1930,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149:2 (June 2005): 204.

<sup>20</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 57-69.

<sup>21</sup> Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 56, 67. According to Kevles, Davenport received similar letters.

from New Jersey wrote to Hrdlička that she was seeing a man who had a “mixture of negro blood,” and she wanted to know if having children with him “would have any further effect on future generations.”<sup>22</sup> In the same year, a teacher at the St. Regis-Mohawk School in New York asked if an Indian woman “mating with a white man” produces “a lower grade of child.”<sup>23</sup> Hrdlička’s own niece wrote in 1942 asking for his advice because she was planning to marry a Jewish man. She viewed his Jewishness as an “obstacle,” which the couple overcame by agreeing “not to have any children.”<sup>24</sup>

Loosening the constraints of tradition presumably brought new freedoms, but the moral principles of eugenics also spawned new worries. Because propitious reproduction was the chief good and passing on biological flaws to future generations was sin, choosing a healthy partner became a societal obligation with eternal consequences. Duty to the eternal germ plasm encouraged a new kind of moral austerity reminiscent, as Jonathan Spiro put it, of “Calvinist pessimism.”<sup>25</sup> Eugenically, there could be all kinds of “sins” hidden in the ancestral past that might harm future generations. Instead of seeking religious counsel, Warthin advised young people to “study the family history” and try to marry “into a family where there is not insanity, and none of the incurable forms of disease.”<sup>26</sup> In terms of race, laws like Virginia’s 1924 Racial Purity Act, which defined “white” as the absence of any quantity of “colored” blood, highlighted the truth that few individuals were entirely certain about the purity of their ancestry.<sup>27</sup> Racial miscegenation was not the only “biological sin” that might crop up unexpectedly in the family germ plasm; eugenicists attributed a

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<sup>22</sup> Letter, Virginia Kious to Hrdlička, 15 April, 1935, box 37, “KI-KO, 1914-44,” Correspondence.

<sup>23</sup> Letter, Mary L. St. Dennis to Hrdlička, 30 August, 1938, “STA, 1928-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>24</sup> Letter, Lucy Miller to Hrdlička, 19 August, 1942, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš, 1941-1945,” Correspondence.

<sup>25</sup> Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 173. Kevles suggests that Charles Davenport swapped his austere childhood Protestantism for Eugenics: “Davenport had rejected his father’s piety, but he replaced it with Babbitt-like religiosity, a worship of great concepts: Science, Humanity, the Improvement of Mankind, Eugenics,” Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Warthin, “A Biologic Philosophy,” 89.

<sup>27</sup> See Peggy Pascoe, “Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of ‘Race’ in Twentieth-Century America,” *Journal of American History* 83:1 (June 1996): 44-69; Douglas Smith, “The Campaign for Racial Purity and the Erosion of Paternalism in Virginia, 1922-1930: ‘Nominally White, Biologically Mixed, and Legally Negro,’” *The Journal of Southern History* 68:1 (Feb. 2002): 65-106.

whole spectrum of physical characteristics and complex behavior to heredity, including criminality, poverty, and epilepsy.

Rigid personal devotion to eugenic reproduction and puritanical fear of ancestral impurities might explain why so many eugenicists remained childless.<sup>28</sup> Did true eugenics enthusiasts scour their familial records, like Puritans looking frantically for signs of election or damnation, in search of biological “sins”? Tellingly, one fan of eugenics, the Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was happy he had no children because he considered himself “so far abnormal.”<sup>29</sup> The list of heirless eugenicists is striking. It includes Madison Grant, Harry Laughlin, John Harvey Kellogg, Albert Wiggam, Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics, Walter Ashby Plecker, who was the architect of Virginia’s 1924 racial integrity law, Albert Priddy, the director of the institution that housed Carrie Buck, and the journalist Kenneth Roberts, to name a few.<sup>30</sup> Hrdlička, who was married twice, also never had children.<sup>31</sup>

There is evidence that Hrdlička internalized eugenic thought and judged his own ancestry through its unforgivingly deterministic lens. Sometime in the 1920s, he composed several handwritten pages which he labeled “Biographical Data of Aleš Hrdlička.” It is likely that he prepared this brief sketch for the Committee on Biographical Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences sometime in 1926-27.<sup>32</sup> In 1926, the committee, directed by Charles Davenport, America’s premier eugenicist, sent out a circular to all members of the academy asking them to write up a short

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<sup>28</sup> Adam Cohen, *Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 86; Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 240.

<sup>29</sup> Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., cited in Cohen, *Imbeciles*, 225.

<sup>30</sup> Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 240. Spiro’s list of childless eugenicists includes the following: Madison Grant, Harry Laughlin, Charles W. Gould, Wickliffe P. Draper, Henry H. Goddard, C.M. Goethe, A.E. Wiggam, Frederick Adams Woods, Kenneth Roberts, Seth K. Humphrey, Francis H. Kinnicutt, John Harvey Kellogg, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Charles Stewart Davison.

<sup>31</sup> There could be an explanation other than eugenic angst. Hrdlička’s niece claimed that his first wife, Marie Strickler, was twenty years older than him and beyond menopause, but there is some uncertainty about her age. However, Hrdlička remarried after Marie died in 1918. Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D.,” 56-59.

<sup>32</sup> Manuscript, “Biographical Data of Aleš Hrdlička,” n.d., box 1, “Autobiographical handwritten notes,” Miscellaneous Personal Papers, 1889-1940. There is no date on the manuscript, but it must have been written after 1920 because it mentions Gustav Habrman as the former Minister of Education of Czechoslovakia. Habrman was the Minister of Education from 1918-1920.

autobiography. The assignment clearly had a eugenic tenor; Davenport asked the members to describe relatives and ancestors who “have traits” resembling their own, including “any mental or temperamental peculiarities.”<sup>33</sup> Expecting a high level of personal integrity, the letter requested the members to report traits “fully and frankly ... as one might describe an object of natural history.”<sup>34</sup> It is not entirely certain that the “Biographical data of Aleš Hrdlička” was an answer to Davenport’s request, but given the fact that it explicitly addresses the points requested in the circular, it seems likely to be a draft of something that Hrdlička eventually sent to Davenport.

Whatever the purpose of the “Biographical Data” document, Hrdlička made an effort to describe himself as eugenically sound. He had always suspected that heredity played an important role in determining character traits. In an essay called “The Criminal,” which he based on his research on orphanage children from 1898, he hinted at a hereditary cause for criminality: “Of the children of the intemperate, criminal, insane or dissolute almost 60 percent were ‘inferior’ in their principle measurements.”<sup>35</sup> Unlike the children of the “intemperate,” Hrdlička described himself as descended from “a wholesome, healthy family, free from hereditary taints (no defectives, crime, tuberculosis, insanity, or blood infections).”<sup>36</sup> On his mother’s side of the family, he restated, “there were no defectives.”<sup>37</sup> The absence of defectives in the family tree meant that Hrdlička was “normal,” in every way. While he remembered that as a boy he liked to read fiction, his choice of material was pointedly “not sexual” in nature.<sup>38</sup> Further elaborating proof of his “normal” sexuality, Hrdlička remembered that as a young man he had displayed “no mischievous perversity .... No cruelty. No eccentricity. Nothing domineering, nothing abnormal sexually, though soon attracted to

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<sup>33</sup> Letter, Committee on Biographical Memoirs, National Academy of Sciences to Hrdlička, October, 1926, box 21, “Davenport, Charles B., 1925-1940, Correspondence.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Manuscript, “The Criminal,” [1939], box 155, “1939,” Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>36</sup> Manuscript, “Biographical Data of Aleš Hrdlička,” n.d., box 1, “Autobiographical handwritten notes.”

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

the feminine beautiful. No abuse. Never any stronger desire for alcohol, for coffee, or tobacco.”<sup>39</sup> As a child and young man he was “shy of people, though not abnormally.”<sup>40</sup>

Not only was the Hrdlička family germ plasm free from all forms of degeneracy, but it also conveyed physical prowess and sharp intelligence. On his paternal side, his grandmother was “a woman of fine physique.”<sup>41</sup> His father Max was “a strong fine-looking man” and his uncle Leopold was a high ranking soldier “on account of his fine physique.”<sup>42</sup> As the rightful heir to all this fitness, young Hrdlička was of course a “strong healthy boy” who was rarely ill and “always vigorous,” and his move to the big city of New York did not degenerate his basic physical character.<sup>43</sup> Not surprisingly, the Hrdlička bloodline also bore extraordinary intelligence. Despite little education, both his grandfather and his great uncle were “men of a rather outstanding intellectuality.”<sup>44</sup> His uncle Joseph was also “highly intelligent and judicious.”<sup>45</sup> All on his mother’s side, including his mother, were “above the average in intelligence.”<sup>46</sup> Even as a child, Hrdlička himself had a “remarkable memory” and was “first in the class.”<sup>47</sup> He had “good facility with languages,” and was a “great and omnivorous reader,” except, of course, of erotica.<sup>48</sup>

In his correspondence, Hrdlička repeatedly portrayed his ancestry in eugenic terms. Czech Americans with similar names occasionally wrote to him to ask about his background, and this gave him an opportunity to praise the Hrdlička pedigree. For example, in 1938 he told Joe Hrdlicka, the mayor of Bonham, Texas, that they both came from “one of the soundest” families, “both mentally

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

and physically,” whose “escutcheon is remarkably clean.”<sup>49</sup> The Hrdličky, he continued, had “produced good many men and women of more than average worth and prominence.”<sup>50</sup> In 1940 he wrote to A. Turtledove, whose name is an English translation of Hrdlička, and told him, “the family was one of the most wholesome both morally and physically,” and it “produced numerous outstanding workers.”<sup>51</sup> He informed Olga Vondráček, whose mother’s maiden name was Hrdlička, that the family was “a good stock, which gave a good many outstanding men and women in different fields of activity.”<sup>52</sup> When writing about his family to Charles Pichel, a representative of the American Heraldry Society, he beamed, “to this day I am glad to say there was never known to be a criminal or defective in the family. It was a sound stock, many individuals of which were marked by above average intelligence and humanity.”<sup>53</sup> He proudly informed his niece, Lucy Miller, that the family, “was one of the cleanest families both morally and physically that I know of, and there were many able individuals.”<sup>54</sup>

Not only did eugenic beliefs shape Hrdlička’s estimation of himself, but they also influenced his political and social ethics. First of all, he frequently praised the Slavic people as a great eugenic reserve of strength and fertility. Unlike the Germans, according to Hrdlička, the Slavs did not conquer their enemies; they outbred them. Their birth rates were high because their attachment to the soil had preserved most of them from the degeneration of modern civilization. In their pure and agrarian environment, they maintained a “relatively well preserved physical status,” and, furthermore, there was “something in the Slav constitution which favors a high birthrate .... It is a gift of nature which if properly safeguarded and preserved, would lead to far reaching consequences in the future.”<sup>55</sup> In correspondence from 1935, he wrote, “the Serbs are a sturdy people, and full of

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<sup>49</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Joe B. Hrdlička, 12 February, 1938, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš, miscellaneous, 1926-1939, Correspondence.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to A. Turtledove, 8 June, 1940, box 62, “TS-TY, 1899-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>52</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Olga Vondráček, 12 January, 1942, box 64, “V, 1900-1952,” Correspondence.

<sup>53</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Charles L.T. Pichel, 22 May, 1929, box 52, “PI-PO, 1924-1941,” Correspondence.

<sup>54</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Lucy Miller, 19 September, 1927, box 46, “Miller, Lucy, 1918-1932,” Correspondence.

<sup>55</sup> Manuscript, “The Slavs,” n.d., box 138, “Slavs,” European Ethnic History, 1908-1938.

potentialities for the future. They are strong physically and capable mentally.”<sup>56</sup> In response to the fear that dark-skinned people were multiplying faster than whites, Hrdlička reassured Bishop John William Hamilton in 1930 that some white groups, like Russians and Balkan Slavs, “increase at least as fast as the yellow-brown or other dark races.”<sup>57</sup>

In Hrdlička’s view, Czechoslovakians were the best breed in the Slavic world. During the world wars, Hrdlička strived to indoctrinate the American public about the desirable, innate qualities of Czechs. Although unlike other Slavs their birthrates were declining, they were still strong, intelligent, and inherently law abiding. In a radio speech in April, 1938, he extolled the fine qualities of American Czechs. They were, he claimed, “among the best citizens,” they “stand among the highest in education,” and they “have the lowest percentage of heavier criminality and pauperism.”<sup>58</sup> He had already written almost exactly the same thing in a personal letter to Franklin Roosevelt in March, 1938, when he told the president that Czech Americans were, “order lovers,” “home owners,” “among the best people of this country,” and “have the lowest percentage of heavier criminality and pauperism ....”<sup>59</sup> Hrdlička’s main aim in 1938, as the political situation in central Europe deteriorated, was to show Americans that Czechoslovakians were worth defending against German territorial expansion. In doing so, he perpetuated the stereotype, popular among many Czechs, that they were an “innately democratic and patriotic people” with “inherent liberality and sound moral qualities.”<sup>60</sup>

Eugenic thinking also influenced Hrdlička’s international politics. Beginning around the 1930s, Hrdlička repeatedly told the American public that war was eugenic. He argued for the beneficence of war in an interview in *The Milwaukee Journal* in 1935, and later in an essay he

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<sup>56</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fred Atkins Moore, 29 August, 1935, box 42, “MODELL-MORROW, 1918-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>57</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bishop John William Hamilton, 5 May, 1930, box 28, “HAA-HAR, 1897-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>58</sup> Manuscript, “Address over Columbia Broadcasting System,” 9 April, 1938, box 55, “Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>59</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 17 March, 1938, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>60</sup> Manuscript, “Address over Columbia Broadcasting System, 9 April, 1938. See also Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 219.

called “War and Civilization,” which he sent to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, and Senator William H. King.<sup>61</sup> Given his Czech nationalist beliefs, his sanguine view of war is not surprising. Victory in war was essential for the establishment of Czechoslovakia, and by the end of the 1930s, it was clear that only another war could restore it. As conflict was threatening again in Europe in the 1930s, Hrdlička wanted to counter the demands for “peace at any price,” which he felt were becoming “a widespread obsession.”<sup>62</sup>

His aim, stated clearly in “War and Civilization,” was to rebut the “dark expressions” that war is detrimental to civilization.<sup>63</sup> Although he fleetingly claimed to abhor war, he was clearly more interested in showing why it was a good thing. First, it was essential “from the standpoint of progress of mankind as a whole,” he told the *Milwaukee Journal*.<sup>64</sup> The struggle of war, he believed, keeps humans “fit and strong.”<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, “assured peace,” leads to “excesses in indulgence, and enfeeblement” of man’s “general virility and propulsive power.”<sup>66</sup> Second, humans recover quickly from wars. To illustrate this, he turned to the Slavs, his favorite example of eugenic strength. After all, “the world war, revolution, long subsequent struggles, and great famine, took millions of the Russian population and left widespread ruins – yet twenty years hence the country is more educated, virile and generally advanced than it had ever been before.”<sup>67</sup> Thirdly, war does not, as some claim, kill the finest specimens of humanity. During war the smart ones have an advantage, and although in modern conflicts, “the bullets or other missiles in the actual fights have no selectiveness,” still “the strong and intellectual will avoid them more than the weaker ones or the dull.”<sup>68</sup> In fact, “the best families socially” do more harm than war by the large number of children

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<sup>61</sup> Manuscript, “War, Is it a Curse or a Blessing? Does it Cause Human Progress?” 21 April, 1935, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>62</sup> Manuscript, “War and Civilization,” 1939-41 (?), box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Manuscript, “War, Is it a Curse or a Blessing? Does it Cause Human Progress?” 21 April, 1935.

<sup>65</sup> Manuscript, “War and Civilization,” 1939-41 (?), box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

that that they prevent “from being conceived or born” every year.<sup>69</sup> Finally, war does not really kill that many people any way. Appealing to a favorite modern comparison, Hrdlička reassuringly remarked that more people die each year of automobile accidents than all the dead and wounded from World War I.<sup>70</sup>

### C. THE FUTURE: HUMAN-GUIDED EVOLUTION

Beyond the mundane world of politics, Hrdlička envisioned eugenics harnessing the process of evolution to bring about human perfection. He admitted that the science of eugenics was still imperfect, but he predicted that it was on the verge of becoming “one of the greatest manifestations of humanity.”<sup>71</sup> In a lecture at the American University in 1921, Hrdlička claimed that in the future, “evolution will no more be left to nature;” instead, “humanity” will “assist intelligently in its own evolution.”<sup>72</sup> The new technique of scientifically directed evolution would “do away with immense waste” and therefore “speed on the processes for the best possible results.”<sup>73</sup> Managed evolution, he said, “is known today under the name of eugenics,” and “is merely applied anthropological and medical science – applied for the benefit of mankind.”<sup>74</sup> This eschatological vision matched the dreams of other prominent eugenicists. Albert Wiggam also wrote, “eugenics is simply evolution taken out of the hands of nature and managed at least as well as, and if possible better than, nature managed it.”<sup>75</sup> Madison Grant likewise felt that eugenics would allow “mankind” to “control his own destiny and attain moral heights as yet unimagined.”<sup>76</sup>

Hrdlička’s millennialism helps to explain how he could embrace eugenics as a moral ideal yet constantly criticize its practice in the temporal world. He had a long list of complaints about its

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Wiggam, *The New Decalogue*, 104.

<sup>76</sup> Madison Grant, *Passing of the Great Race*, 85-86, quoted in Spiro, 135.

shortcomings. He warned that the world was not ready for it because “social institutions” and “material conditions” were not adequate yet to use “the facts which eugenics and the anthropologist can bring to bear.”<sup>77</sup> He also believed that eugenicists had more work to do to establish their field as reputable in the scientific community. In 1930, he complained to the American Eugenics Society that the discipline still lacked “a proper treatise,” which it would need if it ever hoped to garner the support of medical professionals.<sup>78</sup> In 1936, he praised a well-known article that criticized eugenics, admitting that “matters have been much overdone” by some eugenicists.<sup>79</sup> In 1940, he wrote in a private letter that eugenics still suffered from “the fact that there have been advanced, as dogmas, various opinions and claims, before they were fully elucidated and sustained by science. The subject has become the prey of popular writers, and also of some scientific propagandists rather than researchers.”<sup>80</sup>

Not only did he mistrust the current state of eugenic knowledge, but he also thought that many contemporary eugenicists were too deterministic and too classist. It is usually very difficult to see where Hrdlička drew the line between heredity and environment.<sup>81</sup> It is fairly certain that he thought biological inheritance played a heavy role in crime, illness, and mental health, but he always insisted that social conditions and environment were somehow important as well. Instead of entertaining hereditary explanations exclusively, he felt that eugenics should take more consideration of “the environment” and the “sociological,” “medical,” and “biological” disciplines.<sup>82</sup> Hrdlička also did not like eugenics when it placed too much emphasis on class. Sometimes his criticism resembles eugenicists of the political “left,” some of whom even looked to the Soviet Union to “provide the first socially-responsible opportunity to test and apply eugenical

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<sup>77</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>78</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Stuart Mudd, 8 December, 1930, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

<sup>79</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.P. Scott, 10 September, 1936, box 57, “SC, 1924-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>80</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to R.C. Bertheau, 25 January, 1940, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

<sup>81</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to R.C. Bertheau, 31 January, 1940, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

principles” without unfair class prejudice.<sup>83</sup> Hrdlička was no Marxist, but having risen from poverty himself, he did not appreciate eugenic attempts to isolate “the poor” as inferior “because of poverty alone,” and without regard to environment.<sup>84</sup>

Still, he criticized eugenics as practiced in an imperfect present, but not its visionary role in human destiny. He admitted that data were still missing, but he was confident that scientists would one day draw clearer conclusions from eugenic research. In 1921, he predicted, “as people learn more and more of what is right and what is not ... this particular branch of applied science [eugenics] will increase, and its efforts will be better rewarded.”<sup>85</sup> Even if eugenics was not yet fully developed, by 1930 Hrdlička believed that it was already advanced enough to justify sterilization. In that year, in a letter to the American Eugenics Society, he agreed that in the case of “defectives ... beyond restoration,” “scientific sterilization of every individual will be a distinct and undeniable service to humankind.”<sup>86</sup> By 1936 eugenics was taking serious criticism, but while he was willing to admit that much about eugenics was “overdone,” he also immediately added, “there is much prospective good in eugenics.”<sup>87</sup> By 1940 eugenics was a largely discredited field of study, but the aged Hrdlička still thought that new, “young blood” might shape eugenics into “a thoroughly high-class scientific procedure.”<sup>88</sup> Although the movement was in disrepute, Hrdlička still imagined that eugenics could become “acceptable in our colleges and schools, so that it may be inculcated into the progeny, which I regard as of the foremost importance.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Diane Paul, “Eugenics and the Left,” 570.

<sup>84</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Stuart Mudd, 8 December, 1930, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

<sup>85</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>86</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Stuart Mudd, 8 December, 1930, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

<sup>87</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.P. Scott, 10 September, 1936, box 57, “SC, 1924-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>88</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to R.C. Bertheau, 25 January, 1940, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

<sup>89</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to R.C. Bertheau, 31 January, 1940, box 7, “American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940,” Correspondence.

## D. SLAVIC EUGENICS

Hrdlička is well known for his opposition to the racism of the eugenics advocate Madison Grant and, in the 1930s, of Nazi Germany. This reputation is accurate, but his rejection the Nordic variant of eugenics was not a principled stand against all eugenics, nor against all notions of racial hierarchy. Books like William Sadler's *Long Heads and Round Heads*, which attached themselves "to the wagon of Mr. Madison Grant with all his bias," were "extremely harmful," in Hrdlička's judgment, because they "create prejudice which it takes a long time to eradicate"<sup>90</sup> As an immigrant from Slavic Central Europe who identified strongly with Czech nationalism and despised Germanic culture, Hrdlička had obvious reasons for detesting eugenic explanations which, in his words, "exaggerate the 'superior' classes or races."<sup>91</sup> When using this terminology, he was neither rejecting eugenics nor questioning the superiority of the white race, which he affirmed on numerous occasions. Instead, he was contesting the specific brand of eugenic belief, espoused by Grant, that "Nordics" were racially superior to other groups like Slavs.

What bothered him was that these books stoked fears that non-Nordic immigrants were a eugenic threat to America's presumed Anglo-Saxon purity. In a short and undated essay called "Eugenics and Democracy," Hrdlička examined ways to make eugenics more popular among the general public. One element that turned people against eugenics was, "the unwarranted claims of those who work for the restriction of immigration and who have tried to turn the largely economical and racial factors of the case into biological and dysgenic ones."<sup>92</sup> Hrdlička further discussed eugenics and immigration in 1929, when he gave a speech at a dinner sponsored by the Conference on Immigration Policy. The discussion topic of the evening was, "Are we truly assimilating our

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<sup>90</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Kellogg, 13 April, 1918, box 37, "Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919," Correspondence; Letter, Hrdlička to Kellogg, 6 April, 1918, box 37, "Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919," Correspondence.

<sup>91</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Stuart Mudd, 8 December, 1930, box 7, "American Eugenics Society, 1923-1940," Correspondence.

<sup>92</sup> Manuscript, "Eugenics and Democracy," n.d., box 144, Miscellaneous Research Notes, 1887-1942, Papers of Aleš Hrdlička.

foreign born,” and Hrdlička’s theme was “the biological side” of the issue.<sup>93</sup> In his address, he repudiated the eugenic “alarmists,” such as “the Grants or Stoddards,” who think “that the American people through mixture with immigrants are in danger of degeneration, in danger of physical or mental degradation.”<sup>94</sup> Instead, Hrdlička cited a study that compared 14 national groups of “white immigrants” with America’s “old stock” whites and discovered no inferiority.<sup>95</sup> Grant and Stoddard were wrong, insisted Hrdlička, and the melting pot was eugenically sound; there simply was no “superior and inferior” racial differentiation between Nordics, Slavs, and other European immigrants.

Clearly he was only challenging the specific kind of eugenics that insisted on Nordic superiority, not the kind that saw blacks as inferior to whites. In the very same speech in which he defended the eugenic quality of European immigrants, he also explicitly announced that he was “disregarding the colored,” whom he considered “the real problem before the American people.”<sup>96</sup> In eugenic terms, Hrdlička considered blacks, not Slavic immigrants, to be America’s biggest worry, and this was because, “from the white man’s standpoint,” blacks had “a widely different and not desirable physique.”<sup>97</sup> Hrdlička believed that blacks and whites in America would eventually mix, but this was a necessary evil. In personal correspondence, he told Bishop John Hamilton that this looming “admixture” was a “danger” and would be “a drag on the progress of the whites.”<sup>98</sup> To describe the eugenic results of this interbreeding, Hrdlička turned to biblical language: “The future generations in this country will pay for the sins of their fathers who imported the negro into this country.”<sup>99</sup> In 1938, he again drew on scriptural phraseology to tell Albert Johnson that the “amalgamation” of blacks and whites was due to “the sins of the fathers,” which “will affect their

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<sup>93</sup> Manuscript, “Talk on Immigration,” 10 April, 1929, box 19, “Conference on Immigration Policy,” Correspondence.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bishop John William Hamilton, 5 May, 1930, box 28, “HAA-HAR, 1897-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

progeny to the ‘nth’ generation.”<sup>100</sup> He told Bishop Hamilton that the mix would eventually succeed, but it is difficult to see why he thought so, because the progeny were always bad. At least no one had to fear the resulting “mulatto,” according to Hrdlička, because “he has not the brain and other qualities that would be needed” to ever “dominate or control.”<sup>101</sup>

Eugenics suited Hrdlička better when it remained free from Nordic bigotry and served the interests of the new republic of Czechoslovakia, which he assumed to be primarily Czech and Slavic. In the early days of the first republic, he wrote excitedly to his friend and fellow physical anthropologist, Jindřich Matiegka, that the “establishment of eugenic propaganda” should be a top priority for the new state.<sup>102</sup> He connected this task to other essential national projects, including demographic studies of the new Czechoslovakia and expeditions to trace “the origins of the Slav people.”<sup>103</sup> In order to advance these aims, Hrdlička even used large sums of his own money to establish endowments for anthropological research and publications in Czechoslovakia, and some of this money was allotted for eugenic research. In 1923, the profits from these so-called “Hrdlička Funds” were also used to launch the journal *Anthropologie*, which listed eugenics as one of its themes.<sup>104</sup>

Hrdlička’s interest in Czech eugenics becomes more visible in his correspondence with Vladislav Růžička. Růžička was the vice-president of the Czechoslovakian Eugenic Society and the Director of the Institute of General Biology and Experimental Morphology at Charles University. In 1923, Růžička played a leading role in establishing the Czechoslovak Institute of National Eugenics, which was sponsored in part by Charles University. Růžička was also the author of the weighty, 780-page tome, *Biological Foundations of Eugenics* [*Biologické základy eugeniky*], which

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<sup>100</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Albert Johnson, 14 February, 1938, box 36, “Albert, Johnson, 1921-1922,” Correspondence.

<sup>101</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bishop John William Hamilton, 5 May, 1930, box 28, “HAA-HAR, 1897-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>102</sup> Hrdlička to Jindřich Matiegka, 13 May, 1919, box 44, “Jindřich Matiegka, 1914-1920,” Correspondence.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> See Miroslav Prokopec, “O Časopisu *Anthropologie* od začátku,” *Anthropologie* 4:1 (1966): 49-56.

became an important text for Czech eugenicists.<sup>105</sup> In the early 1920s, Hrdlička wrote to Růžička and told him that he hoped “to unite as closely as possible scientific eugenics in Czechoslovakia with anthropology,” which he viewed as “two interdependent branches” of the same discipline.<sup>106</sup> For reasons that remain unclear, this cooperation never materialized, but Hrdlička did not think Růžička’s field was unimportant. In 1924, Růžička was formulating new plans for a Slavonic Archive for Eugenics and Genetics. Having heard about the Hrdlička Funds, Růžička wrote personally to ask for direct patronage. Hrdlička did not want to fund the project, but he also did not disqualify it as irrelevant to anthropology. Instead, he instructed Růžička to apply for money from the already existing “Hrdlička Funds,” “the proceeds of which may under the stipulations be applied to eugenic work connected with anthropology.”<sup>107</sup>

Hrdlička thought it was important that Czechoslovakian scholars represent their new state in the international eugenics community. Believing that the whole world looked to Czechoslovakians as “the most advanced people of central and eastern Europe,” he thought it was their responsibility to “lead” in anthropology, including eugenics.<sup>108</sup> This is why he was very concerned that the Eugenics Society of Czechoslovakia should send delegates to the Second International Eugenics Conference in New York City in 1921. When it became clear in spring 1921 that Růžička and Ladislav Haškovec, president of the Eugenics Society of Czechoslovakia, were unable to come to the conference due to a lack of funding, Hrdlička personally wrote to the Czechoslovakian legate in Washington and urged him to pressure the Ministry of Education to support the Czech professors.<sup>109</sup> He told Růžička how important it was for Czech scholars to attend international

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<sup>105</sup> Michal Šimůnek, “Eugenics, Social Genetics and Racial Hygiene: Plans for the Scientific Regulation of Human Heredity in the Czech Lands, 1900 – 1925,” in *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900 – 1940*, ed. Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling, 134–36 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007); Vladislav Růžička, *Biologické základy eugeniky* (Praha: Nakladatel Fr. Borový, 1923).

<sup>106</sup> Hrdlička to Vladislav Růžička, 9 May, 1924, box 57, “Růžička, Vladislav, 1921–25,” Correspondence.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Hrdlička to Jindřich Matiegka, 13 May, 1919, box 44, “Jindřich Matiegka, 1914–1920,” Correspondence.

<sup>109</sup> Hrdlička to Ladislav Haškovec, 27 August, 1921, box 30, “Haškovec, Lad., 1904, 1921,” Correspondence. “I am very sorry that either you or Professor Růžička could not have found it possible to attend the Congress in New York.” The assumption, apparently mistaken, has always been that the two Czech eugenicists attended the congress. See

meetings that benefitted Czechoslovakia, “not only in science but also in politics.”<sup>110</sup> In the end, the Czech professors never came to the conference, but Hrdlička dutifully attended as the official representative of both the Eugenics Society of Czechoslovakia and of the Medical Faculty of Charles University. Looking out for his homeland, he was able to have Czechoslovakia designated as one of the countries with the privilege of nominating permanent members to the committee for eugenics conferences.<sup>111</sup> To further strengthen the role of Czechoslovakia in the international eugenics movement, he and some of his Czech colleagues were hoping to host the Third Eugenics Conference in Prague.<sup>112</sup>

Some scholars think they can discern an anti-Eugenics bias in Hrdlička’s editorial policies at the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, but this view seems unwarranted, especially in comparison with his role in Czech anthropology.<sup>113</sup> In the early days, when he was founding the *Journal* and seeking financial support, he placed famous eugenicists Madison Grant, Charles Davenport, and John Harvey Kellogg on the editorial board. Even if there was a degree of calculation in these appointments, this does not necessarily mean that Hrdlička or his journal disparaged eugenics. Although Grant was sidelined before the first volume came out in 1918, Kellogg and Davenport remained.<sup>114</sup> While the *Journal* sometimes published articles critical of eugenics, Hrdlička also personally solicited articles and other material from some of the most zealous eugenicists, including John Harvey Kellogg, Harry Laughlin and Charles Davenport.<sup>115</sup> As late as 1928 Hrdlička was enthusiastic about publishing an article by Davenport’s understudy Morris Steggerda, even though his work was already considered inept by many in the field.<sup>116</sup>

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Michal Šimůnek, “Czechoslovakia (Bohemia and Moravia),” in *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900-1945, Sources and Commentaries*, ed. Marius Turda (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 135.

<sup>110</sup> Hrdlička to Růžička, 20 August, 1921, box 57, “Růžička, Vladislav, 1921-25,” Correspondence.

<sup>111</sup> Hrdlička to Růžička, 30 September, 1921, box 57, “Růžička, Vladislav, 1921-25,” Correspondence.

<sup>112</sup> Růžička to Hrdlička, 26 May, 1923, box 57, “Růžička, Vladislav, 1921-25,” Correspondence.

<sup>113</sup> See Ortner, “Aleš Hrdlička.”

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>115</sup> Hrdlička to Harry Laughlin, 9 September, 1918, box 22, “EN-EZ,” Correspondence; Ortner, “Aleš Hrdlička,” 89.

<sup>116</sup> Hrdlička to Charles Davenport, 14 May, 1928, box 21, “Davenport, Charles B., 1925-1940,” Correspondence. On Steggerda, see Barkan, 162-68.

Hrdlička's role in the Czechoslovakian journal *Anthropologie* further supports this interpretation. This journal was published with the proceeds from his endowments, and although Czech anthropologist Jindřich Matiegka was the editor, Hrdlička played a chief role in shaping its content. The two scientists viewed *Anthropologie* as a Slavic complement to the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*. On its title page, *Anthropologie* claimed to be a journal "dedicated to physical anthropology, comparative human anatomy, the study of races, demography, eugenics, and physical education." When planning the journal with Matiegka in 1922, Hrdlička specified that it should be devoted "primarily to the Slav and secondarily to World Anthropology in the broadest sense, including Eugenics, which latter is of course one of the main practical aims of anthropology."<sup>117</sup> He and Matiegka even toyed with the idea of naming it *Slav Anthropology and Eugenics*.<sup>118</sup>

#### E. OPORTUNISM OR BELIEF?

Some scholars have suggested that Hrdlička's interest in eugenics was merely opportunistic, and it is easy to see why. Hrdlička sometimes had mercenary motives for supporting specific eugenic organizations and their leaders. Although no one has ever accused him of trying to enrich himself personally, he probably cultivated certain relationships with eugenicists in order to direct funds and attention to his pet projects. Around 1918, when he was looking for money to launch his most beloved project, the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, he was noticeably friendlier with rich eugenicists like John Harvey Kellogg and Madison Grant. These complicated relationships illustrate how careerism, personal friendships, and scientific interest could combine to sway scholarly judgment.

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<sup>117</sup> Hrdlička to Matiegka, 20 February, 1922, box 44, "Jindřich Matiegka, 1921-23," Correspondence.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

This ambiguity especially hangs over Hrdlička's relationship with John Harvey Kellogg. The most recent scholarship of Kellogg portrays him as an accomplished surgeon, who professed and propagated a philosophy of healthy living that addressed serious dietary issues.<sup>119</sup> His concern with digestive problems eventually led to the development of Kellogg's cereal products, which made John's younger brother Will a millionaire. In order to propagate his ideas of healthy living, John founded a "Santiarium" in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where famous people from all over the world came to relax, undergo surgery, recover, and eat healthily. Apparently, in 1919 Hrdlička also convalesced at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, where Kellogg's doctors inspected his colon and gave him a clean bill of health.<sup>120</sup> Kellogg eventually became a major supporter of eugenics by hosting three "Race Betterment Conferences."

Kellogg was also a wealthy patron of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, which gave him a privileged role in the convention today known as "peer review." In 1918 Kellogg urged Hrdlička to publish a critical review of William Sadler's *Long Heads and Round Heads*, a Nordic-racist eugenics treatise. Kellogg knew Sadler very well and clearly had personal reasons for insisting on a negative review of the book. Sadler had worked for many years as a doctor at the Sanitarium and was married to Kellogg's half niece.<sup>121</sup> The source of Kellogg's animosity toward Sadler is not clear, but it is well known that he could be vindictive and petty toward family members, especially his brother Will Kellogg. Whatever his reasons, Kellogg was adamant that Hrdlička should publically denounce Sadler's work. He wanted Hrdlička to write a vicious review to preempt any favorable reception of Sadler's book. Kellogg told Hrdlička that "authoritative criticism" would "prevent commendatory notices by a considerable number of journals, the editors

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<sup>119</sup> For recent and generally sympathetic appraisals of Kellogg, see Howard Markel, *The Kelloggs: The Battling Brothers of Battle Creek* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2017); Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg*. For a more critical and "tongue in cheek" evaluation see, Spiro, 250-52.

<sup>120</sup> Letter, Dr. M.A. Mortensen to Aleš Hrdlička, 13 October, 1919, box 33, "Hrdlička, Aleš, 1912-23," Correspondence.

<sup>121</sup> Markel, *Kelloggs*, 367.

of which are as ignorant as the author.”<sup>122</sup> For Kellogg, the border between scholarship and personal vendetta was fuzzy, to say the least.

Hrdlička agreed with Kellogg that Sadler’s book was “a mess of trash,” but he refused to write the review because he feared he “would only make an enemy.”<sup>123</sup> Kellogg did not give up. He wrote back to Hrdlička to reassure him that Sadler had “no influence in circles that will do you or the *Journal of American Anthropology* any harm whatever.”<sup>124</sup> While painting Sadler as an impotent foe, Kellogg promised to be a valuable friend, and to close the deal, he sent a “pledge” of \$100.00, he promised to send \$200.00 more, and he further assured Hrdlička, “do not worry about finances. I am sure I can pick up all you need.”<sup>125</sup> A few days later, Hrdlička changed his mind and told Kellogg he would ask the Library of Congress for a copy of the book for review. Kellogg did not want to wait, so he cunningly wrote to Sadler and asked him to send a copy of his own book straight to Hrdlička for a review, that is, a review which Kellogg had already secretly paid for.

This seamy affair does not mean that Hrdlička’s interest in eugenics was merely opportunistic. While it offers an interesting glimpse into how personal rivalries, patronage, and corruption can influence academic conclusions behind the scenes, this event is peripheral to Hrdlička’s conception of eugenics. In fact, it reveals important information about the kind of eugenics Hrdlička rejected. In requesting a critical review of Sadler, Kellogg was asking Hrdlička to do something that he essentially agreed with anyway. Sadler’s book, which came very close to a plagiarism of Madison Grant’s *Passing of the Great Race*, espoused the Nordic racism that Hrdlička detested.<sup>126</sup> Hrdlička believed that this type of racism damaged the reputation of eugenics. For Hrdlička, Sadler’s style of racism, not necessarily his eugenics, was the most objectionable component.

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<sup>122</sup> Letter, Kellogg to Hrdlička, 8 April, 1918, box 37, “Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919,” Correspondence.

<sup>123</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Kellogg, 6 April, 1918, box 37, “Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919,” Correspondence.

<sup>124</sup> Letter, Kellogg to Hrdlička, 8 April, 1918, box 37, “Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919,” Correspondence.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 169-79.

On a deeper level, it is important to notice that Hrdlička and Kellogg shared similarly idealistic views of eugenics. Parallel conceptions of religion and science pushed both of them toward eugenics. As medical doctors, the two men shared a professional outlook that emphasized the physical sciences. Both men also found traditional religion lacking and made an intellectual journey that arrived at eugenics as a modern code of ethics. Hrdlička had begun his education with a religious vocation in mind and ended as a high priest of science. Kellogg, after being excommunicated from the Seventh Day Adventist Church, also discovered a more scientific version of spirituality in eugenics.<sup>127</sup>

The two doctors discussed their shared interests in eugenics and cooperated even when funding was not at stake. For example, Hrdlička genuinely believed that the bodily measurements of eminent people, such as the celebrities who stayed at Kellogg's sanitarium, might reveal deeper truths about heredity and intelligence. T. D. Stewart, Hrdlička's successor at the Smithsonian, remembered many years later how "he measured all the members of the National Academy" because "these were superior people he thought he was dealing with."<sup>128</sup> Not surprisingly, Hrdlička made plans with Kellogg to measure the features of the "really highly prominent persons" relaxing at the Sanitarium.<sup>129</sup> These measurements, he told Kellogg, "would be of permanent genealogical and eugenic value," and "could be published ... in our journal."<sup>130</sup> Kellogg was elated and told Hrdlička he was, "very glad indeed to encourage any line of research work which will tend in the direction of race betterment."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Spiro, *Defending the Master*, 251; Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg*, 162-68; The appropriate Seventh-day Adventist term is apparently not excommunication" but "disfellowshipment" (Wilson, 112).

<sup>128</sup> Douglas H. Ubelaker, "T. Dale Stewart's Perspective on His Career as a Forensic Anthropologist at the Smithsonian," *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 45:2 (2000): 273-74. Hrdlička also corresponded about the project with Charles Davenport, see: Letter, Hrdlička to Davenport, 1 April, 1926, box 21, "Davenport, Charles B., 1925-1940," Correspondence.

<sup>129</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Kellogg, 18 April, 1918, box 37, "Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919," Correspondence.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Letter, Kellogg to Hrdlička, 15 April, 1918, box 37, "Kellogg, John Harvey, 1917-1919," Correspondence.

Friendly cooperation between the two continued in 1928, when Kellogg hosted his Third Race Betterment Conference in Battle Creek Michigan, which was entirely dedicated to eugenics. Hrdlička could not make the trip to the Michigan conference personally, but he still wrote a paper entitled “Race Deterioration and Destruction with Special Reference to the American People,” which Kellogg published with the other conference speeches.<sup>132</sup> By this date, it is unlikely that Hrdlička sought or needed Kellogg’s patronage. He was an internationally famous scientist, his position at the Smithsonian was secure, and the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* was a success. After inheriting money from his first wife in 1918, Hrdlička had himself become a patron, having donated over 200,000 Czech crowns, about 55 times the annual salary of a Czechoslovakian teacher, to the cause of physical anthropology in Czechoslovakia.<sup>133</sup> Hrdlička seemed delighted with the publication of the conference proceedings. He was often critical of sloppy scholarship in the field of eugenics, but he told Kellogg that the published proceedings were “a volume you may be proud of” due to the “caliber and value of the work accomplished there.”<sup>134</sup>

## F. CONCLUSION

Like Madison Grant, Albert Wiggam, John Harvey Kellogg, and many others, Hrdlička felt that scientific principles must replace traditional beliefs as a guide to living. This put a great burden on science to furnish new moral directives to replace those once derived from traditional sources, namely religion. This is what made eugenics attractive; it purported to distill useful moral precepts directly from the sciences without deferring to traditional religious belief. In terms of practical guidance, eugenics helped Hrdlička evaluate his significance as an individual. In social life, it furnished him with a moral vocabulary, which will emerge recurrently in the pages that follow, for

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<sup>132</sup> See Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration and Destruction with Special Reference to the American People,” in *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference in Battle Creek, Michigan, 2-6 January, 1928* (Battle Creek, MI: Race Betterment Foundation, 1928): 82-85.

<sup>133</sup> Petr Kostrhun, “Američtí archeologové a antropologové na Moravě v období mezi světovými válkami,” *Archeologické rozhledy* LXVII (2015): 597.

<sup>134</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Kellogg, 2 March, 1929, box 37, “Kellogg, John Harvey, 1920-33,” Correspondence.

discussing race, political organization, and war and peace. Maybe most importantly, it inspired him with a vision of human perfectibility through controlled evolution.

Eugenic ideals were inseparable from Hrdlička's racial beliefs. However, they did not lead him inevitably to Nazi-style racism in the 1930s. Why would they? Hrdlička was a Czech and a Slav; he hated the German Nazis. In his view, the Slavs, especially when backed by the immense power of the Soviet Union, were the eugenically fittest portion of the white race, not the Nordics. At the same time, Hrdlička was no equalitarian. He clearly believed in a racial hierarchy in which whites were superior to "yellow-browns" and blacks, and the next two chapters will discuss his conception of these three races in more detail.

## CHAPTER III: RACE DIVINATION

“O Indra, find out who is an Aryan and who is a Dasa and separate them.”<sup>1</sup> (*Rig Veda*)

### A. INTRODUCTION

In 1943, “Mr. Smith” of Detroit wrote to Aleš Hrdlička seeking expert race advice.<sup>2</sup> In 1941, Smith and his wife adopted a baby girl, but as she grew they noticed that her skin was “darker than usual,” and they began to discern “negroid [sic] features.”<sup>3</sup> Mr. Smith told Hrdlička that her appearance was creating, “considerable comment amongst our acquaintances and friends,” who assumed that she “must be of negroid parentage,” or that one of her natural parents “must be colored.”<sup>4</sup> Before writing to Hrdlička, the Smiths had reinvestigated the entire matter. The baby was born in New York City, and the authorities there reassured the Smiths that the biological parents were, “a young Jewish couple with good background,” who gave up their baby due to financial difficulties, and there was “no question” of any “colored strain in the family.”<sup>5</sup> For a while, the Smiths were satisfied and hoped that this authoritative report would “still the gossip.”<sup>6</sup> It did not, and apparently the child’s appearance continued to draw attention. Mr. Smith told Hrdlička that instead of quieting, “the rumors and talk” had only increased.<sup>7</sup> Eventually the family doctor recommended that the Smiths write to Hrdlička because he was an “outstanding anthropologist,” whose expertise could “dissolve all doubts” about the race of their adopted daughter.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Watson, “Indus Civilization and the Aryan Invasion,” in *Readings in World Civilizations*, vol. I., Second Edition, ed. Kevin Reilly, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 36-40.

<sup>2</sup> I have changed the name because the case involves an adopted child, who would be approximately 79 years old in 2020. The documents are found in box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Mr. Smith to Aleš Hrdlička, 21 July, 1943, Correspondence.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The Jewish Social Service Bureau of Detroit sent an accompanying letter to Hrdlička to support the Smiths. When the child was adopted, stated the bureau, “there was no question in the mind of the physicians, attorneys, or adoptive parents but that the child was Jewish and white.”<sup>9</sup> The child, according to the agency, was doing well and the Smiths were excellent parents, but “there has always been a question in the community as to the child’s racial background. The reaction of strangers to the child is obvious.”<sup>10</sup> The bureau was hoping that science could clarify the girl’s race and save it from the embarrassing work of prying into the sexual history of the natural parents.

In the exchange of correspondence that followed, Hrdlička and the Smiths made plans for an examination. Hrdlička informed the Smiths that no medical test existed that could settle the issue. The only way was for the couple to bring their baby girl to Washington. If possible, they should collect pictures of her natural parents, but otherwise, “the examination would have to be based entirely on the physical appearance of the child and a few other related matters.”<sup>11</sup> Hrdlička instructed the parents that they should “leave her hair absolutely natural and without any oils or lotions” for the appointment.<sup>12</sup> The cost of the examination was \$100. Apparently, the parents made the trip from Detroit to Washington and paid the fee because Hrdlička’s judgment, dated 25 August, 1943, is preserved in the archival record. It states that Hrdlička “examined [the girl’s name], 23 months old adopted daughter of [Mr. and Mrs. Smith], of Detroit, and found definitely that she has a negro admixture.”<sup>13</sup>

The most disturbing part of this troubling episode is that the fate of the child is unknown, at least from archival evidence gathered thus far. None of the statements from Hrdlička, the parents, or the Jewish Social Service Bureau offer certainty that the parents were committed to raising the

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<sup>9</sup> Letter, Pauline Gollub to Hrdlička, 16 July, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mr. Smith, 21 July, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mr. Smith, 2 August, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>13</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to “whom it may concern,” 25 August, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

child. According to the bureau, “if the child is white, the Smiths are eager to retain it and are excellent parents.”<sup>14</sup> However, “if the child is not white ... it is best, if possible, to find a solution in Detroit.”<sup>15</sup> Hrdlička’s correspondence was also ambiguous. In his first letter to Mr. Smith, he wrote, “I hesitate to accept the case, which involves a great deal of responsibility.”<sup>16</sup> Although he agreed to examine the girl, he wanted “to be assured that in case of untoward finding, the child’s future would not be jeopardized.”<sup>17</sup> This seems reassuring, but his next words were uncomfortably enigmatic: “should the findings prove unfavorable it would of course be best to attend to matters now, before the child becomes conscious of conditions.”<sup>18</sup> The father agreed to Hrdlička’s stipulations, but he stopped short of declaring a clear obligation to the child. “As far as the child’s welfare is concerned,” wrote Mr. Smith, “that is the thing closest to the hearts of Mrs. Smith and myself. Under any circumstances, even the most unfavorable report from you, we could do nothing but look out for the child’s welfare because we have become so attached to her.”<sup>19</sup> It is impossible to know how much gossip friends and racial fantasy affected the Smiths’ understanding of the “welfare” of the child.

## B. RACIAL DIAGNOSIS

Many Americans, like the Smiths, had questions about how to tell the races apart, and they expected science and its experts to provide definitive answers. As one of America’s premier anthropological authorities, part of Hrdlička’s job description at the Smithsonian was “the comprehensive biological study of the many and diverse racial elements of the American nation.”<sup>20</sup> By the 1920s he had earned a reputation as an expert who could place individuals in race categories simply by observing their physical traits. Not only did he help in high profile legal cases, but he

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<sup>14</sup> Letter, Gollub to Hrdlička, 16 July, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Hrdlička to Mr. Smith, 21 July, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Letter, Mr. Smith to Aleš Hrdlička, 29 July, 1943, box 23, “FO-FRE, 1913-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979), 248.

also frequently gave interviews to journalists as an expert on race. The Papers of Aleš Hrdlička are full of letters from government officials, lawyers, and interested citizens who had heard about the great anthropologist's abilities and wrote to him hoping that science could give clear answers to their vexing race questions.<sup>21</sup> Hrdlička warned them that telling the races apart was difficult, yet he always issued a verdict, sometimes based on no more than a photograph or a description. Whether or not he really used a scientific methodology, his pronouncements gave scientific authority to the idea of distinct and identifiable races. It is therefore important to examine the theoretical foundations that supported his race judgments.

Hrdlička was not naïve; he knew it was difficult to place human individuals within idealistic race classifications, yet he claimed to accept traditional race categories for the sake of convenience and as a matter of common sense. By the 1920s, many scientists began to notice the “endless irresolvable inconsistencies and contradictions” inherent in the premise that all human individuals must fit into a few idealized racial categories.<sup>22</sup> Yet even as empirical data undermined the race divisions, race remained influential as a legal and social concept, and many scientists continued to support it, without evidence.<sup>23</sup>

For a scientist with a reputation for empiricism, it is astonishing how casually Hrdlička accepted the idealistic tri-partite racial division of humanity. When asked about racial classification, he openly admitted that the issue was not settled, there was no definitive conclusion on how many races there were, and there was no completely reliable way to tell them apart, especially in difficult cases. In a typical response to an inquiry, he wrote, “there is no satisfactory recent publication which would give the classification of races according to our latest knowledge.”<sup>24</sup> He frequently

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<sup>21</sup> On racial ambiguity in American history, see Gary Nash, *Forbidden Love: The Secret History of Mixed-Race America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Marks, *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995), 55, 102-108.

<sup>24</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Herman J. Doepner, 24 May, 1927, box 20, “DE, 1906-43,” Correspondence.

encouraged inquisitive correspondents to study the complexity of the problem for themselves by reading the works of R. B. Bean, J. Deniker, A. H. Keane, and A. C. Haddon. After 1930, he recommended his own article called “Human Races,” which he published in Edmund V. Cowdry’s *Human Biology and Racial Welfare*, as a quick and succinct guide to race classification. However, he nonchalantly reassured inquisitive Americans, like Herman Doepner from Minnesota, that even without a scientific consensus, “such a classification is rather simple, until we come to details.”<sup>25</sup> Without many “details” or much academic fuss, he divided humanity into three great races, which he labeled “White,” “Yellow-Brown,” and “Black.”

Despite his intentions, Hrdlička’s chapter on “Human Races” obfuscates rather than clarifies the lines between race categories and betrays his own uncertainties about racial classification. As Jonathan Marks comments, “the challenge to the scientist” at that time “was racial ‘diagnosis’ – to discern from the complexities of a person’s appearance their race. And it was tricky, because one could look white and really be black.”<sup>26</sup> Hrdlička knew very well that an individual might have features from any race, and “all the racial characters, of whatever order, appear in more or less wide ranges of individual and of group variation, and the extremes of the group variation as a rule largely overlap or interdigitate with those of other racial units.”<sup>27</sup> When determining race, he told his readers to be careful, for “nothing” is “wholly apart from the rest.”<sup>28</sup> This was a wise observation, but it also undermined the usefulness of the very traits that he proposed as the indicators of race. In close cases, which trait was more important; eye color, stature, nose shape, hair texture, or the cephalic index? Was there a mathematical formula for assessing the relative significance of each characteristic?

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Marks, *Human Biodiversity*, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” in *Human Biology and Racial Welfare*, ed. Edmund V. Cowdry (New York: Paul Heber, 1930), 160.

<sup>28</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 162.

Hrdlička claimed there were five broad categories of racial indicators: “Physical,” “functional,” “chemical,” “mental,” and “pathological.” He specified these in a table of 49 characteristics distinguishing the “White” (Caucasoid), “Yellow-Brown” (Mongoloid), and “Black” (Negroid) races. However, because he correctly understood that many individuals have a variety of traits pointing to different categories, his racial markers had to remain flexible. This undermined their helpfulness in diagnosing race. Admittedly, some individuals fit easily into one of the idealized categories, but the job of the scientist was supposedly to make objective decisions about the difficult cases, of which there were many. In close decisions, there was plenty of room for subjectivity. For example, a white man’s beard was: “moderate to rich and long, slightly wavy to loosely curly.”<sup>29</sup> A Mongoloid beard was “scanty to moderate, straight to slightly wavy.”<sup>30</sup> Some of the indicative characteristics were so vague and ambiguous that it is hard to imagine any objective standard of measurement. For example, the “body” of a white person was “shapely,” that of a yellow-brown individual was “less shapely,” and black bodies had “excellent proportions.”<sup>31</sup>

Hrdlička had obviously committed himself ideologically to the existence of three physical race categories, even when the evidence was lacking or pointing in other directions. One peculiarity of the article “Human Races” is how frequently Hrdlička admitted that there was no scientific evidence for the racial differences he assumed to exist. One of his favorite rhetorical tactics was to insist on the existence of racial differences in a particular trait, admit that there was no scientific evidence for his assertion, and then predict that research was on the verge of validating it.

Science, he was certain, was soon going to corroborate the racial divisions that everyone already believed in. He imagined, for example, that there were “important differences” in the brains of the different races. Yet he did not know what they were because they “await further

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<sup>29</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 167.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 168.

investigation.”<sup>32</sup> Hrdlička guessed that there were “functional” differences between the races in pulse, temperature, and “the eruption of teeth,’ but he presented no evidence to support his assertion.<sup>33</sup> He assumed there were “doubtless many others [differences],” which scientists were just about to discover, but, he had to admit, “a great deal remains to be learned through further research.”<sup>34</sup> He speculated that there were “chemical” differences between the races in blood, sweat, and probably “various internal secretions.”<sup>35</sup> He never even tried to explain the latest scholarship on sweat. The mysterious “internal secretions” supposedly differed between the races, but how exactly Hrdlička knew this is a mystery because, in his own words, “almost nothing is known” about them.<sup>36</sup> Later in the chapter, he confessed that science had failed to find any racial differences in blood. He expressed “hope” that “agglutinin tests of the blood might be helpful, if not decisive, in racial classification, but that hope has in a large measure failed.”<sup>37</sup> Never fear, Hrdlička reassured his readers, there were now new and better tests which, “may effect more in this direction.”<sup>38</sup>

This exercise in imagining ways in which science might soon confirm physical racial categories continues throughout “Human Races.” According to Hrdlička, there were mental differences between the races, and they were “numerous” and “important.”<sup>39</sup> The only problem was that nobody knew what they were because they “elude thus far direct and precise specification.”<sup>40</sup> There were “sensory differences” between races, “but their exact nature and degrees remain to be established.”<sup>41</sup> There were “substantial differences” in “higher psychical processes,” but

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<sup>32</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 159.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 176.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 159.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 160.

predictably, “they have not yet been precised [sic]”.<sup>42</sup> How could Hrdlička know about so many racial differences for which there was no scientific evidence?

Hrdlička’s list of eleven “mental characteristics” differentiating the races was, by Hrdlička’s own admission, little more than racial gossip. He even added a warning tag for his readers: “To be taken with reservation, until more scientifically determined.”<sup>43</sup> Not surprisingly, the “mental characteristics” were nothing more than racist stereotypes and folklore. Whites, for example had “strong ambitions and passions” and a “highly developed” sense of “idealism.”<sup>44</sup> In comparison to whites, yellow-browns were less developed in “egoism” and “individuality.” Blacks were “active and jolly,” “not very ambitious,” good at music, and “rather careless and free from lasting worries, but ridden by superstitious fears.”<sup>45</sup> Lack of scientific validation did not persuade Hrdlička to omit these “mental characteristics” from his scientific classification of the races.

It seems clear from “Human Races,” as well as from other sources, that Hrdlička’s beliefs about race arose not from empirical research but from popular beliefs, experience, and “intuition.” Although this chapter is not about racial hierarchy, Hrdlička’s treatment of the subject illustrates this point. He admitted that the idea of racial superiority might be an illusion arising from subjective cultural bias, but he argued instead that the very fact that some people have an “intuition” about racial hierarchy made the idea credible. Especially when “based on a prolonged direct experience of one group with another,” the “intuition” of superiority and inferiority, “deserves careful attention,” he conjectured.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes even common knowledge was good enough. For example, Hrdlička thought, “it is an old truism that a malarial region,” as in equatorial Africa, “breeds few talents.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 169.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 179.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

For the reader seeking to understand racial classification on the basis of the latest scientific research, the conclusion of “Human Races” is likely to disappoint. In truth, Hrdlička admitted, the science of racial classification had not really changed much in the past 150 years. From the perspective of a critical reader, this is especially ironic because Hrdlička so frequently grounded his arguments on what scientific research was allegedly on the verge of proving, presumably because it was making daily breakthroughs in the study of race. Yet in the end, Hrdlička simply adopted racial street wisdom that was well over 100 years old. Once again, Hrdlička was no fool, and he knew the intricate history of race categories; he acknowledged that over time there were “as many schemes of classifications of the races of man as there were students of the question.”<sup>48</sup> He even summarized them. According to Virey, there were two races, Morton thought there were 22, Huxley and Topinard opted for 19; Deniker found 29, and Burke preferred 63. After all of this, Hrdlička casually adopted the system of Linnaeus, who died in 1778. Linnaeus in fact thought there were six races, although two of them were his obscure *Homo ferus* and *Homo monstruosus*. The other four were the European, Black, Asian, and American. Hrdlička reduced these to three by combining Asian and American as “yellow-brown.” Twenty-seven pages of explaining the differences in races brought Hrdlička to the summation that “the substance” of Linnaeus’ 150-year-old classification “holds true to this day.”<sup>49</sup> He was satisfied that his article gave “the gist of human classification.”<sup>50</sup> In fact, further elucidation would just make matters worse: “To go into further details would in this place be unprofitable, and also more or less uncertain.”<sup>51</sup> It is easy to agree with him on this point.

Before condemning Hrdlička too harshly, it is necessary to recognize that he also made some keen insights, even if he failed to recognize their significance. In some ways, Hrdlička’s observations pointed toward the study of population groups distinguished by inductive evidence, and away from the deductive assumption that human individuals must be classed into idealistic race

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<sup>48</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 169.

<sup>49</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 165.

<sup>50</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 175.

<sup>51</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 176.

groups. For example, Hrdlička thought that pathologies, like certain blood disorders, could differentiate the races. In fact, his explanation of diseases undermined his belief in the three race categories. Hrdlička almost realized the meaning of this, and he astutely noted that pathological differences “are mostly environmental, and local rather than racial,” and “correlate but little with other racial features.”<sup>52</sup> Modern research strongly suggests that certain diseases, for example sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis, are significantly higher in population groups with ancestries from specific regions, but, just as Hrdlička noticed, they do not correlate to the traditional race categories.<sup>53</sup> Amazingly, he still drew the wrong conclusions and used pathology as a distinctive physiological marker of race, even though he knew, and even stated plainly, that it did not correlate with race.

It is also appropriate to remember that Hrdlička’s skill set allowed him to make real contributions to areas of physical anthropology that are not the topic of this study, for example in forensic anthropology. Since this is a highly specialized field, it is best to defer to the words of an expert. Jonathan Marks, a prominent anthropologist with a grounding in biology, explains forensic anthropology and its connection to race this way:

Contemporary forensic anthropologists are often asked to identify skeletal remains as to race. Here, knowing the ways in which people vary around the world can assist us in establishing the ‘race’ of an unknown skeleton. Obviously we use the word ‘race’ guardedly: we are simply saying that if we divide the ancestors of living Americans into three categories, we can make a better-than-random guess about which of them an unknown skeleton falls into.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 160.

<sup>53</sup> Marks, *Human Biodiversity*, 211-13.

<sup>54</sup> Marks, *Human Biodiversity*, 158.

The specific skills of forensic anthropology are useful because they “assist law enforcement officials by providing them with additional information about a murder victim.”<sup>55</sup> Smithsonian Forensic Anthropologist Douglas Ubelaker has shown, based on archival research, that Hrdlička helped American law enforcement identify human remains in several cases. According to Ubelaker, “the work of Aleš Hrdlička occupies a significant niche in the history of forensic anthropology.”<sup>56</sup>

Hrdlička glimpsed the difficulties with the race paradigm, and some of his own insights even undermined it, yet he still held to it as useful common knowledge needing little scientific justification. When many scientists were critiquing race in the 1920s, Hrdlička stood behind the concept. In 1927 Mary Morgan, a student at the San Jose Teachers’ College, wrote to Hrdlička because one of her professors made the assertion, “that scientists now hold that there are no races of man. The Hebrew, the Negro, the Caucasian, and other races are [non existent?] there are, however, cultural differences.”<sup>57</sup> According to Morgan, the professor’s “assertions” evoked “a mania of opposition” from the students.<sup>58</sup> The professor, Dr. De Voss, was apparently aware that the scientific community was questioning the validity of race categories. According to Morgan, he challenged the students, “to submit authority controverting his statements.”<sup>59</sup> Seeking such an authority, Morgan wrote to Hrdlička at the Smithsonian in Washington in order to “to prove” her professor’s argument “unsound.”<sup>60</sup> Hrdlička told Morgan, “from the physical point of view there are certainly varieties of mankind, just as there are varieties in dogs, cats, poultry and other animals; and these varieties, so long as they do not constitute what could legitimately be termed species, are called races.”<sup>61</sup> He reassured her that this obvious truth was beyond question, and “there is no

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Douglas H Ubelaker, “Aleš Hrdlička’s Role in the History of Forensic Anthropology,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 44:4 (July, 1999): 729.

<sup>57</sup> Letter, Mary E. Morgan to Hrdlička, 28 February, 1927, box 42, “MODELL-MORROW, 1918-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Morgan, 8 March, 1927, box 42, “MODELL-MORROW, 1918-43,” Correspondence.

possibility of doing away with these facts.”<sup>62</sup> Still, he could not stop himself from also noting, “the human races are not as clearly defined from each other as are those of most of the animals.”<sup>63</sup>

Not only did Hrdlička defend traditional racial classification, but he also granted authoritative sanction to racial myths even when he was aware that they had no scientific support. In 1927, J.M.J. Hodges, who claimed to be writing an article on race, asked Hrdlička a series of race trivia questions in an exchange of several letters. Hodges wanted to know such things as “the smallest race in the world,” “the longest lived race in the world,” and “the most unintelligent race in the world.”<sup>64</sup> Hrdlička pronounced, “the most unintelligent contingents ... are found among the various Blacks.”<sup>65</sup> As usual, he was not bothered that “much remains to be learned” about this question.<sup>66</sup> In response to a follow-up letter asking him to be more specific, Hrdlička did not shy from declaring, “the least intelligent blacks are probably those along parts of the Congo and along the Gold Coast with neighboring tropical regions of western Africa.”<sup>67</sup> Once again, he knew this in spite of science, for “precise scientific observations on the subject are wanting.”<sup>68</sup>

The remainder of this chapter describes how Hrdlička applied his beliefs in assigning individuals and groups to one of the three great races. It focuses on how he sorted out whites, blacks, and yellow-browns (in this case Native Americans) from a horizontal perspective. Although it is hard to avoid noticing his assumptions about the vertical hierarchy of races, they will be discussed more directly in the next chapter. It will be clear that many Americans were worried about telling the races apart, that they hoped science could settle their questions, and that Hrdlička did his best to live up to the task.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Letter, J.M.J. Hodges to Hrdlička, 10 February, 1927, box 28, “HOA-HOP, 1912-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>65</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.M.J. Hodges, 14 February, 1927, box 28, “HOA-HOP, 1912-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.M.J. Hodges, 18 February, 1927, box 28, “HOA-HOP, 1912-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

### C. THE “YELLOW-BROWN” INDIANS: MIXED BLOODS AND FULL BLOODS

Hrdlička put his race categories to work and won renown as a race diviner in the so-called “White Earth Litigation” in Minnesota from 1914-1920. This complicated series of lawsuits had its origins in the General Allotment Act of 1887, which was intended to parcel out tribal land to individual Indian owners. The story is intricate, but so much fraud accompanied the assignment of land that by 1916 there were around 1,500 suits in which Anishaanabe Indians claimed to have been cheated out of their allotments.<sup>69</sup> In response, the courts decided that the government had a special obligation to protect the land of “full-blood” Indians from alienation. The key question now became the definition of a “full-blood.” After some juristic deliberation in lower courts, the Supreme Court concluded that any mix of “white” blood meant that an individual was not a full blood and therefore not entitled to special federal protection.<sup>70</sup> Now that the concept of full blood was legally defined, it was crucial for the courts to find a methodology for sorting out who was a full blood and who was not. There was a lot at stake. As Robert C. Bell of the Justice Department noted, the approximately 800 Indians designated as full bloods stood to recover around 725,000 acres of land.<sup>71</sup>

There were two competing understandings of the “blood” status of Indians. For the Anishaanabe, ancestry played some role in their distinction between “mixed” and “full” bloods, but cultural indicators and life-style choices were even more important. These features might include language, style of clothing, housing, education, or level of participation in the capitalist economy.<sup>72</sup> Physical traits were of less importance. In *The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer describes how an Indian grew frustrated over the court’s obsession with somatic traits and complained, “it

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<sup>69</sup> Letter, Robert C. Bell to the Secretary of the Smithsonian, 15 November, 1920, box 22, “Department of Justice, 1916-21, 1920-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>70</sup> David Beaulieu, “Curly Hair and Big Feet: Physical Anthropology and Land Allotment on the White Earth Chippewa Reservation,” *American Indian Quarterly* 8 (1984): 287; Melissa Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 167.

<sup>71</sup> Letter, Bell to the Smithsonian, 15 November, 1920, box 22, “Department of Justice, 1916-21, 1920-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>72</sup> Beaulieu, “Curly Hair and Big Feet,” 287-291; Meyer, *White Earth Tragedy*, 118-28, 165-72.

wouldn't make any difference if [someone] was curly headed. My hair is curly."<sup>73</sup> This person also realistically noted, with no apparent concern, "some Indians are blacker than others, and some are lighter."<sup>74</sup> In fact, in the early days of the litigation, there were attempts to compose lists of "full bloods" based on consultation with Indian leaders.<sup>75</sup> The courts; however, viewed Indian accounts of their own ancestry as untrustworthy.

Instead, the courts deliberately rejected the Indians' approach in favor of the second understanding of blood status, which purported to be clear-cut physical science. What they wanted was to decide blood status simply by an examination of physical characteristics; this way no complicated testimonial was needed. The government hired Hrdlička and another anthropologist, Dr. Albert Jenks of the University of Minnesota, to do the job. In a deposition given in 1914, Hrdlička was asked whether he could, "without any knowledge of his genealogical history," evaluate an Indian's "physical characteristics" precisely enough to determine "what he was."<sup>76</sup> Hrdlička won the confidence of the lawyers, and he traveled to Minnesota to examine hundreds of Indians and to determine which were legitimate full bloods and therefore eligible for the final "Blood Role," completed in 1920.

At the end of the process, Ransom J. Powell, a local attorney appointed by Congress to compose the Blood Role, wrote to Hrdlička to tell him how completely the scientific approach had triumphed in the courthouse.<sup>77</sup> According to Powell, the other side's attorney [Mr. Schroeder] "offered genealogical testimony" to prove that some Indians were unfairly classified as mixed bloods, but the judge "did not pay the slightest attention."<sup>78</sup> The judge was exasperated by an Indian woman who "undertook to testify in regard to her genealogy and blood status," and instead of

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<sup>73</sup> Meyer, *White Earth Tragedy*, 169.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Meyer, *White Earth Tragedy*, 162.

<sup>76</sup> Deposition, n.d. (November, 1914)? box 53, "Powell, Ransom J., 1914-1920, Correspondence. Beaulieu dates the deposition November, 1914. See Beaulieu, "Curly Hair and Big Feet," 294.

<sup>77</sup> On Powell, see Meyer, *White Earth Tragedy*, 163-64.

<sup>78</sup> Letter, Ransom J. Powell to Hrdlička, 4 December, 1920, box 53, "Powell, Ransom J., 1914-1920, Correspondence.

listening to her, he decided “to abandon that class of testimony and resort to the scientific method of determining the blood status of these Indians.”<sup>79</sup> Robert C. Bell of the Justice Department was equally thrilled that science triumphed over the accounts of Indians, for “testimony as to genealogy on this issue was found unreliable and always unsatisfactory.”<sup>80</sup>

It is not entirely clear that the scientific method was more accurate than simply asking the Indians about their own ancestry. First, some of the Indians claimed that in some cases the scientists put children with the same parents in different categories.<sup>81</sup> Second, in practice, the court sometimes resorted to “common sense” and ignored, and even belittled, anthropological science. While boasting in a letter to Hrdlička in 1920 about the victory of the scientific method, Ransom Powell failed to see this flagrant contradiction in his own narrative of events. According to Powell, Judge Page Morris of the U.S. District Court was incredulous about the full-blood status of “that big Indian George Walters,” based on “the evidence of his own appearance, regardless of any testimony that might be presented.”<sup>82</sup> Why even bother with scientific experts? According to the judge, “it does not need an expert to tell that that man has some white blood.”<sup>83</sup> Third, even when respecting Hrdlička’s and Jenks’ scientific method, some of the court’s conclusions were founded on ambiguous assessments. Based on Hrdlička’s insistence that pure-blood Indian men had straight whiskers, the full-blood status of one man was questioned because his whiskers were “pretty curly.”<sup>84</sup>

At the time, these details did little to upset the popular conclusion that the White Earth Litigation showed how science could definitively clarify murky racial borders, even in a high-stakes legal setting, where wealth, property, and personal wellbeing were at stake. At the end of the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Letter, Bell to the Smithsonian, 15 November, 1920, box 22, “Department of Justice, 1916-21, 1920-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>81</sup> Meyer, *White Earth Tragedy*, 171.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, Powell to Hrdlička, 4 December, 1920, box 53, “Powell, Ransom J., 1914-1920, Correspondence.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Beaulieu, “Curly Hair and Big Feet,” 294; Powell to Dr. Albert E. Jenks, 16 November, 1914, box 53, “Powell, Ransom J., 1914-1920,” Correspondence.

process, Robert C. Bell wrote a glowing letter of commendation to the Smithsonian on Hrdlička's behalf. He told Hrdlička's employer in 1920, "the doctor is truly a great scientist and his expert opinion has been accepted as conclusive by opposing litigants and lawyers, and by the commissioners and the court. His assistance greatly facilitated tasks that seemed next to impossible."<sup>85</sup> Hrdlička's legendary role in the litigation was even recognized internationally. In 1929, Czech anthropologist Jindřich Matiegka published a special birthday edition of the Czechoslovakian journal *Anthropologie* in honor of Hrdlička. Matiegka praised his Czech-American friend for his role in the White Earth Litigation, which proved, "that a detailed anthropological examination in many cases could be of considerable assistance to the law."<sup>86</sup> In private, Matiegka wrote to Hrdlička in 1920 stating, "I am always happy when anthropology can be applied to practical life because this strengthens its position more than long theoretical studies."<sup>87</sup> Not wanting to be outdone, Matiegka continued to describe how he had also used anthropology to solve a legal dispute. He told Hrdlička that his role in separating full bloods and half-bloods, "reminds me of an incident in Slaný [north of Prague] when I was summoned by the court as an expert in the case of a twenty-year-old woman demanding financial support from some rich Jew, who she claimed was her father, and I was supposed to decide if he really was."<sup>88</sup>

As an expert on Indian full-bloods and half-bloods, Hrdlička received many requests from Americans who hoped that science could find the difference. For example, in 1935, W. B. Jolls, a doctor from New York, had a patient who claimed to be 1/8 Indian and 7/8 white. The patient had died, but for reasons unknown, Dr. Jolls still wrote to Hrdlička to ask how to "diagnose" an "Indian mixture." He had been to the local library, which had "plenty on negro mixtures" but little "on

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<sup>85</sup> Letter, Bell to the Smithsonian, 15 November, 1920, box 22, "Department of Justice, 1916-21, 1920-41," Correspondence.

<sup>86</sup> Jindřich Matiegka, "Dr. Aleš Hrdlička: Biography," Reprint from *Anthropologie*, "Dr. Aleš Hrdlička Anniversary Volume" (VIII, 1929) (Prague: V. and A. Janata, 1929), 11.

<sup>87</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 19 December, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20," Correspondence.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Indian mixtures.”<sup>89</sup> The patient, claimed Jolls, had “sloping forehead, dark eyes, black hair, cheek bones somewhat prominent.”<sup>90</sup> Hrdlička wrote back that the only way to know for sure, “is for the subject to be examined by an expert.”<sup>91</sup> Since she was dead, this was impossible, so Hrdlička decided to risk a judgement anyway. Without any personal examination, he told Jolls he was “inclined to believe that there was some Indian blood” in the woman, “judging from your description.”<sup>92</sup>

In another case an attorney from Tulsa, Henry Duncan, had two clients who were hoping to inherit property, and blood status was important for determining the success of their claims. In 1938 Duncan wrote to Hrdlička to ask for advice. He had heard that Hrdlička was “an authority on Indian characteristics,” and that he could “by seeing a person tell whether he has Indian blood in his veins.”<sup>93</sup> Hrdlička insisted that a personal examination was the only way to be certain, but he was too busy to make the long trip to Tulsa. In response, Duncan decided to bring his clients to Washington, but he apparently never made the journey. About two years later, he sent Hrdlička photos of his clients and their parents. Hrdlička at first claimed that it was too risky to make a conclusion based on photos alone, but then he ventured a scientific guess. Based entirely on photos of the parents, he concluded that the mother had “certainly no Indian blood.”<sup>94</sup> The father, in his view, had “a suggestion of an Indian,” “though if there is any such blood it is well diluted.”<sup>95</sup> The archives do not reveal if any fortunes were won or lost on the basis of Hrdlička’s scientific authority.

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<sup>89</sup> Letter, W.B. Jolls to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1935, box 36, “JJ-JZ, 1911-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Jolls, 5 October, 1935, box 36, “JJ-JZ, 1911-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Letter, Henry R. Duncan to Hrdlička, 4 November, 1938, box 20, “DOZ-DZ, 1904-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>94</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Duncan, 24 April, 1940, box 20, “DOZ-DZ, 1904-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

## D. THE BLACKS

In the southern states, the ability to tell white from black carried with it the legal power to consign individuals to inferior civil and social status. The most evident threat to the race line was miscegenation, which obviously occurred and just as obviously blurred the racial boundaries. Virginia took the most drastic steps in eliminating the uncertainties of race mixing with the Racial Integrity Act of 1924. Under this law, anyone with any amount of non-white blood was forbidden to marry a white.<sup>96</sup> This legal emphasis on purity pushed the question of who was really white into the foreground.<sup>97</sup> Theoretically, this law might have simplified race borders in the future, but presumably the law against miscegenation was necessary precisely because it had occurred so often in the past. But contemplating the possibility of past miscegenation raised all kinds of new problems because it meant that even people who considered themselves white could not be entirely sure that there was no “black blood” in their ancestry.<sup>98</sup> The discovery of ancestral black blood could potentially invalidate a marriage, derail marriage plans, or require a person to conform to other limits that segregation placed on blacks. The situation was even more complicated because the law made an exception for a certain amount of Indian blood.<sup>99</sup> This also raised numerous problems, including the possibility that people who should be classified as black escaped their “proper” status by claiming Indian ancestry.

One of the architects of the law, Walter A. Plecker, was the Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Virginia State Board of Health, and he was determined to apply it scrupulously, even if this meant challenging the white status of some citizens. Plecker was certain that there were 10,000 to

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<sup>96</sup> See Richard B. Sherman, “‘The Last Stand:’ The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia in the 1920s,” *The Journal of Southern History* 54:1 (Feb. 1988): 69-92; Douglas Smith, “The Campaign for Racial Purity and the Erosion of Paternalism in Virginia, 1922-1930: ‘Nominally White, Biologically Mixed, and Legally Negro,’” *The Journal of Southern History* 68:1 (Feb. 2002): 65-106.

<sup>97</sup> Because of segregation, there were obvious advantages to being classed as white. However, there were a few, like Marcus Garvey, who thought the more important issue was who was really black. See Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1986).

<sup>98</sup> Sherman, “The Last Stand,” 81.

<sup>99</sup> Sherman, “The Last Stand,” 77.

20,000 “near white people” in Virginia who were not officially classed as blacks and therefore free to marry whites.<sup>100</sup> He also believed that most Indians in Virginia were mixed with blacks.<sup>101</sup> The problem was how to identify them and legally consign them to the black race in a court of law. He, like many, turned to science for clarification, and in 1925, Plecker wrote to the Smithsonian’s Bureau of American Ethnology for help. The Bureau of Ethnology referred a copy of the letter to Hrdlička, who sent his advice to Plecker directly.

Hrdlička was eager to fortify Virginia’s racial regime with the Smithsonian’s scientific expertise, and he insisted that Virginia needed the help of scientific experts. Since the matter was complicated, he revealed little about which physical characteristics were important in assessing an individual’s race. Hair was significant because, “there is practically no curly hair in the American white.”<sup>102</sup> However, there were no simple rules, and there were “numerous other features which in cases of doubt have to be taken into consideration.”<sup>103</sup> Because of this complexity, Hrdlička reasoned, “the only satisfactory way to determine mixtures of Indians and whites or of negroes and Indians is through expert (anthropological) examination.”<sup>104</sup> Hrdlička offered the Smithsonian’s support to train physicians from Virginia to make challenging racial evaluations.<sup>105</sup> Otherwise, Plecker should, when difficult cases arise, call “on an expert from outside of your state.”<sup>106</sup> Either way, race judgments could be very complicated, and the “decision in all except plain cases should be placed in the hands of an expert.”<sup>107</sup>

There is evidence that ordinary citizens also worried about white people carrying black blood. In 1932 a woman from neighboring West Virginia named Virginia Kious wrote to Hrdlička because she believed there were “people who are classed as white, yet apparently have negro blood

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<sup>100</sup> Sherman, “The Last Stand,” 72.

<sup>101</sup> Sherman, “The Last Stand,” 81.

<sup>102</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dr. W. A. Plecker, 12 February, 1925, box 52, “PI-PO, 1924-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

or resemble negroes.”<sup>108</sup> She was interested “in learning how one can determine whether a person has negro blood.”<sup>109</sup> She had heard of a few tests. She thought “a person with negro blood” would not have “lunar shaped markings” at the base of the finger nails.<sup>110</sup> In fact, an “expert witness” really used this test in a court case in California in 1939, although it failed to impress the judge.<sup>111</sup> Kious also heard that the end of the nose of a black person was “soft,” while a white person’s was “firm.”<sup>112</sup> Finally, she asked, “is there a test to determine negro and Indian blood?”<sup>113</sup> Hrdlička replied by offering a few general rules. In “ordinary circumstances,” he claimed, individuals with black blood were identifiable by “curly hair, darker color, low broad nose and a negroid element in the physiognomy.”<sup>114</sup> However, many cases were not so “obvious,” and “where the proportion of the negro blood is small,” the assessment “may become very difficult” and should be “the domain of the expert.”<sup>115</sup> It is difficult to avoid wondering if Hrdlička ever reached his own conclusions by examining finger nails or feeling tips of noses.

In another case in 1931, Professor Samuel Holmes from the University of California at Berkeley forwarded a letter to Hrdlička, along with his own personal note of explanation, from the family doctor of Mr. and Mrs. “Taylor” and their adopted son “Mathew.”<sup>116</sup> The Taylors adopted Mathew from an unmarried mother, who was supposedly of Swedish heritage. The alleged father was “of mixed Irish and Spanish descent.”<sup>117</sup> According the professor’s explanatory letter to Hrdlička, “when Mathew was adopted he was a fair-haired, fine looking baby, but later negroid characters [sic] began to appear in the child, much to the distress of his foster parents.”<sup>118</sup> Although

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<sup>108</sup> Letter, Virginia Kious to Hrdlička, 6 April, 1935, box 37, “KI-KO, 1914-44,” Correspondence.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Peggy Pascoe, “Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of ‘Race’ in Twentieth-Century America,” *Journal of American History* 83:1 (June 1996): 44-69. The expert witness was a hairdresser, and the judge discounted her conclusion (Pascoe, 56).

<sup>112</sup> Letter, Virginia Kious to Hrdlička, 6 April, 1935, box 37, “KI-KO, 1914-44,” Correspondence.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Kious, 15 April, 1935, box 37, “KI-KO, 1914-44,” Correspondence.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Once again, I felt was a good idea to change the names because an adopted child was involved. He would be well into his nineties in 2020. The letters are found in box 54, “RON-RZ, 1925-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>117</sup> Letter, W. E. Carter, M. D. to Dr. Samuel Holmes, 26 March, 1931, box 54, “RON-RZ, 1925-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>118</sup> Letter, S. Holmes to Hrdlička, 29 March, 1932, box 54, “RON-RZ, 1925-43,” Correspondence.

Hrdlička's answer is not preserved, the story is another good example of the kind of racial quandaries that science was expected to resolve.

Mr. Taylor's job with the Commerce Department required the family to move to Washington, D.C., where they enrolled Mathew in kindergarten. The principle of the school immediately demanded to see the child's paperwork because Mathew had "obvious negroid features."<sup>119</sup> In the family doctor's words, Washington was "a southern city where the race line is closely drawn," and accordingly the principle refused to let Mathew attend the whites-only kindergarten.<sup>120</sup> The parents took Mathew for an examination to determine his race once and for all. The experts told the Taylors, "from a purely medical point of view, we cannot state whether there is or is not any negro blood in this child," but "anyone would be justified in suspecting it from the appearance of the child."<sup>121</sup> The medical professionals in San Francisco, who seemed to view themselves as "liberal" on race questions and relished pointing out that Washington was a southern city, recommended that the parents move to a northern town where Mathew could "be educated without racial prejudice."<sup>122</sup> There is much about this story that is disconcerting, yet in this case all of the scientific authorities seemed sympathetic to little Mathew. Most importantly, the mother firmly declared, "even if this child were of African descent, she would decline to give him up."<sup>123</sup>

Americans living in the North, though relatively free from legal segregation, were not free from curiosity and anxiety about race mixing, and like others, they felt certain that science could set things straight. In 1938, Mae Forbringer of New Jersey wrote to Hrdlička and disclosed that she had been seeing a young man, but she then found out from friends that there was "a mixture of negro blood in his family" and that his grandparents "were supposed to have been colored people."<sup>124</sup> She

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<sup>119</sup> Letter, W. E. Carter, M. D. to Dr. Samuel Holmes, 26 March, 1931, box 54, "RON-RZ, 1925-43," Correspondence.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Letter, Mae Forbringer to Hrdlička, 13 February, 1938, box 23, "FO-FRE, 1913-43," Correspondence.

was afraid to discuss it with him because she did not want to hurt his feelings, so she stopped seeing him. The relationship must have been serious because she asked Hrdlička if having children with him would “have any further effect on future generations.”<sup>125</sup> Hrdlička told her that this problem was very complicated and she should come to Washington for a consultation. In 1939, a treasury official in Chelsea, Massachusetts named George F. Hederson was troubled by “colored people from the Azores,” who were “black skinned” and considered locally to be “Portuguese negroes,” but “are listed by the W.P.A. as white.”<sup>126</sup> Hrdlička claimed that he knew of no studies about them and had no information to offer. In 1942 Caswell Adams, a relatively well known sportswriter for the *New York Herald Tribune*, wanted to know if Hrdlička had “any expert anthropological thoughts” on the racial ancestry of Joe Louis, “based on your look at his picture.”<sup>127</sup> Apparently Hrdlička did not consider this a difficult case and answered without reservation, “Lewis [sic] is undoubtedly a mixed-blood (white and negro).”<sup>128</sup> A contemporary historian has described Louis, a native of Alabama, as “descended from African slaves, white plantation owners, and Blackfoot and Cherokee Indians.”<sup>129</sup>

## E. WHO IS REALLY WHITE?

In a fascinating article, Peter Kivisto and Johanna Leinonen describe how in 1908 a Minnesota judge ruled that John Svan, a Finnish immigrant, could not be naturalized as a U.S. citizen because “being a Finn, he is a Mongolian and not a ‘white person’.”<sup>130</sup> According to U.S. naturalization law, only a “white person” could become a U.S. citizen; this made whiteness a key issue in immigration. It immediately raised the question of who was really white and how one could know. The courts, as Ian Haney López has argued, initially turned to science for definitive answers,

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Letter, George Hederson to Hrdlička, 13 October, 1939, box 28, “HAS-HEN, 1918-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>127</sup> Letter, Caswell Adams to Hrdlička, 10 April, 1942, box 6, “AA-AL, 1903-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>128</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Caswell Adams, 16 April, 1942, box 6, “AA-AL, 1903-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>129</sup> Lewis Erenberg, *The Greatest Fight of our Generation: Louis vs. Schmeling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>130</sup> Peter Kivisto and Johanna Leinonen, “Representing Race: Ongoing Uncertainties about Finnish American Racial Identity,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31:1 (2011), 11-12.

yet after numerous test cases, it became evident to American judges that science had nothing to offer them. They hung on to their beliefs in racial categories so fervently that they rejected science and relied on popular stereotypes and “common sense” instead. As López states, “science’s inability” to establish who was really white “should have led the courts to question whether race was a natural phenomenon. So deeply held was this belief, however, that instead of re-examining the nature of race, the courts began to disparage science.”<sup>131</sup>

Laws like Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act fostered even more uncertainty about whiteness by emphasizing “purity.” As the case of John Svan illustrates, there were surprisingly creative ways to question the whiteness of European immigrants, even if they had light skin. Could someone who looked white, like most Finns, really be black or yellow-brown due to ancestral mixing? After all, was not Finland on the northeastern edge of Europe and prone to occasional invasions from Asia? In 1935 a reporter named L.M. Dorsch wrote to Hrdlička asking, “how does science explain the fact that many people from the north of Europe have a distinct Mongoloid cast of features in spite of their fairness?”<sup>132</sup> Similar arguments could be made about other immigrants from the frontiers of Europe. For many years the belief circulated that the Slavic people originated in Asia, or that they were racially compromised by the Mongol invasions. Italians and Spanish came from the southern edges of the continent and might be mixed with African blacks. It was surprisingly difficult to say who was really white and who was not.

There were two general ideas about who was “really” white. The first notion was exclusivist, and it insisted that the only true whites were “Nordics” with ancestries in northwestern Europe. Madison Grant, author of *The Passing of the Great Race*, was the most vociferous proponent of this view in the 1920s. For Grant, generally light-skinned Europeans were made up of three unequal races. He considered Nordics, such as the “Anglo-Saxon” founders of the United

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<sup>131</sup> Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>132</sup> Letter, L. M. Dorsch to Hrdlička, 3 September, 1935, box 50, “Newspaper Information Service, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

States, to be superior. He feared that new immigrants to America, comprised of the inferior “Alpine” and “Mediterranean” races from eastern and southern Europe, were driving the Anglo-Saxon Nordics to extinction. For this reason he was a firm supporter of immigration restriction. He was also a proponent of eugenics, and he viewed the intermixture of Nordic Americans with the new immigrants as dangerously dysgenic. Although not the topic of *The Passing of the Great Race*, Grant made it clear that he also viewed blacks, Asians, and Jews as racially inferior. There were obvious affinities, mutually recognized in the 1930s, between Grant’s Nordic racism and Nazi ideas.<sup>133</sup>

While Grant viewed Nordics as the only real whites, Hrdlička’s concept of whiteness was much more inclusive. In response to a question about race classification, he told Herman Doepner in 1927 that there were five subcategories of whites, which included the “Nordic,” “Alpine,” “Mediterranean,” “Semitic,” and “Hamitic” groups.<sup>134</sup> In his essay called “Human Races,” he again presented these five categories and also some “additional strains” of whites, which were the “Dinaric,” “East Baltic,” “Armenoid,” and “Turkic.”<sup>135</sup> It is also clear, as will be demonstrated, that he viewed the “Slavs” as the largest and most robust segment of the white race.<sup>136</sup> He shared Grant’s belief that whites were superior to blacks and yellow-browns, but he considered all of the recent European immigrants, for example Armenians, Finns, Jews, and especially Slavs, to be white. He supported a liberal posture toward immigrants and argued that intermarriage between America’s Nordics and eastern and southern Europeans was perfectly eugenic. In the 1930s, he was an outspoken opponent of Nazi race concepts.

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<sup>133</sup> See Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936 [first published 1916]); Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont Press, 2008).

<sup>134</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Doepner, 24 May, 1927, box 20, “DE, 1906-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>135</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 172.

<sup>136</sup> Manuscript, “The Slavs,” n.d., box 138, European Ethnic History, 1908-1938. Hrdlička’s classification of whites was not always consistent, see chapter 1.

Like Finns, Armenians were another group that faced questions about their membership in the white race. Before 1909, when a court designated them as white, they were considered Asian, forbidden to buy agricultural land in California, and subject to legal discrimination in several other states.<sup>137</sup> However, doubts about their whiteness continued even after 1909, and according to Elazar Barkan, they were still forbidden to own property in the state of Washington in the 1920s because of their supposedly “Mongoloid racial characteristics.”<sup>138</sup> The Armenians of Washington even asked Franz Boas to testify in court on behalf of their whiteness. In 1924, New York lawyer and author of *Armenians in America*, M. Vartan Malcom, also approached Hrdlička because he needed “the testimony of an anthropologist.”<sup>139</sup> He was preparing an important case in which the key question was whether or not an Armenian was a “white person.”<sup>140</sup> Although Hrdlička’s response has not survived, in his essay “Human Races,” he classed the “Armenoid” strain as white.

The idea that Finns were “Mongolian” and not really white persisted for a long time, and many people at the time understood the political, social, and legal significance this theory. In 1934, Dr. W.A. Ehmke from Minnesota wrote Hrdlička to find out, “to what extent have the Suomi Finns Mongoloid blood, if at all?”<sup>141</sup> Ehmke was not the only one thinking about this, and he informed Hrdlička, “there are a number of Finnish people in this community who have often asked questions about this subject.”<sup>142</sup> In 1930 Eugene Van Cleef, a renowned professor of geography at Ohio State University and an expert on Finnish matters, also wrote to Hrdlička about the racial status of Finns. Van Cleef thought that the Finns “seem to reflect a good many characteristics of the oriental,” but he did not think this ancestral link was very important, especially because it “must be very old if it is true at all.”<sup>143</sup> Although he himself did not view Asian ancestry as a serious racial flaw, Van Cleef understood what was at stake, and he thought that if the idea was untrue, then “clarification of

<sup>137</sup> López, *White by Law*, 91. See also Earlene Carver, “On the Boundary of White: The Cartozian Naturalization Case and the Armenians, 1923-1925,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28:2 (Winter, 2009): 30-56.

<sup>138</sup> Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 84.

<sup>139</sup> Letter, M. Vartan Malcolm to Hrdlička, 24 January, 1924, box 42, “MAAS-MARTIN, 1921-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Letter, W.C. Ehmke to Hrdlička, 14 April, 1934, box 22, “EA-EM,” Correspondence.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Letter, Eugene van Cleef to Hrdlička, 15 December, 1930, box 64, “V, 1900-52,” Correspondence.

the situation as related to the Finns might prove wholesome for them.”<sup>144</sup> He knew, for example how much “the people of Finland including most of their scientists” disliked “the theory that they may have Mongolian ancestry.”<sup>145</sup> He also understood that the theory degraded the racial quality of Finns, “owing to the general attitude of the occidental world toward persons of Mongolian ancestry.”<sup>146</sup> He was also aware that the issue “arises in connection with immigration restriction.”<sup>147</sup> Could science clarify the matter once and for all?

After an interesting ethnographic detour, Hrdlička concluded that most modern Finns were white. Apparently because of the well-known linguistic similarities, he grouped the “original” Finns together with the “original” Hungarians. In “Human Races” he catalogued them both as “Semimongoloids,” who were racially situated between whites and mongoloids.<sup>148</sup> He therefore told Dr. Emcke, “the original Finns belonged to the so-called Finno-Ugrian stock of people ... and could be characterized as semi-mongoloid.”<sup>149</sup> In response to similar questions about Hungarians, Hrdlička explained that the original Magyars also came from “Finno-Ugrian tribes.”<sup>150</sup> He believed that these people were a distinct middle race, of which there were “mere remnants or traces” in the modern world.<sup>151</sup> In fact, this nearly extinct group was so “thinned out” that Hrdlička had never really even seen a specimen, which raises the question of how he knew about their existence.<sup>152</sup> He told Professor Van Cleef that he had visited Finland to find “original” Finns, “but without much success.”<sup>153</sup> Similarly, he traveled to Hungary “to find some of the real Ugrians and Magyars, and failed,” although he was sure that they existed, “to some extent,” in two places in the country.<sup>154</sup> The fact that he had never seen a semi-mongoloid Finn or Magyar strongly suggests that his

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races, 171.

<sup>149</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Ehmke, 18 April, 1934, box 22, “EA-EM,” Correspondence.

<sup>150</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dorsch, 5 October, 1938, box 50, “Newspaper Information Service, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>151</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races, 172.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to van Cleef, 17 December, 1930, box 64, Correspondence.

<sup>154</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dorsch, 5 October, 1938, box 50, “Newspaper Information Service, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

conclusions depended entirely on linguistic evidence, and maybe a bit of hearsay, but not on his own specialty of physical anthropology.

Since these “pure” Finns and Magyars were nearly all gone, this meant that the modern inhabitants of Finland and Hungary were white. In fact, the “Semimongoloids” in Europe had disappeared due to mixing with people that Hrdlička considered whites, such as Scandinavians, Germans, and Slavs. He told Emcke that almost no “real” Finns existed; modern Finns were the result of mixture “on one side by the Russians and on the other by the Scandinavians. In present day Finland in particular the Scandinavian element is strong; in most of the seacoast towns, in fact, it is quite predominate [sic].”<sup>155</sup> He told Van Cleef the same thing: “Today, of course, a large portion of the ‘Finns’ is merely Scandinavian or a mixture with these; and there surely is also some Russian blood.”<sup>156</sup> The same was true of the Hungarians, whose “substratum” was “largely Slav.”<sup>157</sup> Although the elusive “pure” Magyars still existed in a few remote locations, “the rest is a mixture of the old inhabitants of that region (principally Slavs),” and “the small proportion of blondness found in Hungary is partly derived from the Slavs, and partly from the Germans.”<sup>158</sup>

Another group whose racial status came into question was the Jews. Hrdlička’s attitude toward Jews might have changed over time, but he clearly classed them as white people. Very early in his career, when traveling through Bohemia and Moravia in 1896, he wrote to his first wife and told her, “I shall always, always deplore the Jews and the Germans.”<sup>159</sup> Frank Spencer, who first found this letter in the archive, claimed that this was the only anti-Semitic expression Hrdlička ever made.<sup>160</sup> The Hrdlička Papers are massive, so such a sweeping assertion demands some skepticism, but it is difficult to find any other clear cases. There is one hint of anti-Semitism in a letter from

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<sup>155</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Ehmke, 18 April, 1934, box 22, “EA-EM,” Correspondence.

<sup>156</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to van Cleef, 17 December, 1930, box 64, Correspondence.

<sup>157</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dorsch, 5 October, 1938, box 50, “Newspaper Information Service, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Marie Strickler, 2 July, 1896, box 3, “to Strickler from Hrdlička,” Early Personal Correspondence.

<sup>160</sup> Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D.,” 15.

May, 1917 to a Czech-American friend Tomáš Čapek, in which Hrdlička summarized the contents of lectures he had just heard about current events in Russia with the note, “it seems that most of the disturbing elements are again Jews.”<sup>161</sup> The other case is found in another letter from 1917, where Hrdlička described the advertising magnate Louis Hammerling as a “German Jew from Galicia” who was “very crafty.”<sup>162</sup> While these words suggest a degree of cultural bigotry, they are not racial in nature. This is certain because Hrdlička later took the trouble to clarify his racial views about Jews.

In terms of race, there is no doubt that he considered Jews white. While unions of whites and blacks troubled him, he was entirely comfortable with intermarriage between Jews and gentiles, even in his own family. In 1942 his niece wrote to him to invite him to her wedding and to ask for his advice about her upcoming marriage. She almost seemed embarrassed about the fact that she was preparing to marry a Jewish man. There was an “obstacle” to the marriage, she admitted. The barrier was, “he is Jewish, and I have always been anti-Semitic.”<sup>163</sup> Their solution, she told her uncle, was that they had “agreed not to have children.”<sup>164</sup> The aged Hrdlička, a nominal Catholic, who was known for being stubborn and conservative in many ways, was completely at ease with the marriage. He told his niece, “the fact that you are marrying a man of the Jewish religion means nothing at all, if otherwise he is the right man. Two of the best friends of my life were Jews, and there are many high class people of that faith.”<sup>165</sup>

It is possible that the American environment pushed him toward a more liberal perspective, and he always behaved amicably toward Jewish people. Hrdlička must have worked with many Jewish scientists over the years, such as Franz Boas. In fact, his relationship with Boas is a good

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<sup>161</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Tomáš Čapek, 4 May, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>162</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Chief of Secret Service, 1 September, 1917, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence. See chapter 6.

<sup>163</sup> Letter, Lucy Miller to Hrdlička, 19 August, 1942, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš, 1941-1945,” Correspondence.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Miller, 24 September, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš, 1941-1945,” Correspondence.

test case precisely because it was often tense. In 1911 he told his Czech friend Matiegka that Boas was “the enemy of everyone here,” but from the context this comment was clearly about the business of an upcoming anthropological congress and not particularly anti-Semitic.<sup>166</sup> Boas and Hrdlička were sometimes rivals, yet in 1912, when Paul R. Radosavljevich, who might have held some anti-Semitic beliefs of his own, wanted to pick a public quarrel with Boas, Hrdlička, in so many words, warned him that he was out of his league. Radosavljevich wanted to review Boas’ *Changes in Bodily Form*, a book that Hrdlička also mildly criticized.<sup>167</sup> Yet Hrdlička respected Boas, and he told Radosavljevich, “I cannot but admire Dr. Boas’ many and great abilities, and I am sure that everything will be properly explained.”<sup>168</sup> Radosavljevich refused to drop the matter, and in yet another letter Hrdlička again warned him, “I believe that Professor Boas, for whom I have a high regard, will readily be able to explain the various parts of his work to which you have referred.”<sup>169</sup> Hrdlička trusted the judgment of the German-Jewish Boas over Radosavljevich, who did his best to ingratiate himself to Hrdlička as a fellow “Slav,” even to the point of closing a letter, “with Slavic love.”<sup>170</sup> During and just after World War I, there is some evidence that Hrdlička was suspicious of Boas’ “German tendencies,” and although some in the scientific community chose to cast Boas as a Jewish menace, there is no indication that Hrdlička ever participated.<sup>171</sup> In general, the correspondence between Hrdlička and Boas was always polite and sometimes friendly.<sup>172</sup>

Certainly there was anti-Semitism in America, but Hrdlička also had to resist anti-Semitic ugliness from his Czech intellectual friends. For example, Jindřich Matiegka’s correspondence

<sup>166</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 30 June, 1911, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence.

<sup>167</sup> Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D.,” 628-630.

<sup>168</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Paul R. Radosavljevich, 6 January, 1912, box 55, “Radosavljevich, Paul R., 1911-16,” Correspondence.

<sup>169</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Radosavljevich, 12 April, 1912, box 55, “Radosavljevich, Paul R., 1911-16,” Correspondence.

<sup>170</sup> Letter, Radosavljevich to Hrdlička, 12 May, 1927, box 55, “Radosavljevich, Paul R., 1917-35,” Correspondence.

<sup>171</sup> See Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D.,” 633, 710-733; Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race: 1896–1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 148-150; Baker, “The Cult of Franz Boas and his ‘Conspiracy’ to Destroy the White Race,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. 154:1 (March 2010): 8-18.

<sup>172</sup> Matthew Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880 – 1940* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 102-3. Bokovoy sees the relationship of Hrdlička and Boas as very friendly, while Spencer emphasizes the antagonisms between the two. In a professional relationship spanning many decades, both could be true.

betrays a simmering mistrust of Jews that lasted well into the 1930s, although the rise of Nazism may have changed his mind, at least publicly. It is impossible to say for certain if Matiegka's dislike for Jews was rooted in racial theory, but he clearly considered them as "foreign elements" in Czechoslovakia.<sup>173</sup> Hrdlička never responded to Matiegka's bitter sentiments.

All the evidence indicates that Hrdlička behaved honorably, even during the desperate times of the German annexation of 1938 and the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939, when it was tempting to resort to a nationalist "survival of the fittest" mindset and turn on the Jews. For example, in January 1939 a patriotic Czech woman named Gabriela Prošková-Preissová wrote to Hrdlička from Minnesota to complain that Jews fleeing Europe were using up the immigration quota at the expense of Czechs. Whether Prošková was a U.S. citizen is hard to tell, but she wrote in Czech, kept close contact with friends in Czechoslovakia, and had recently visited Prague. While she claimed to have "deep sympathy for the Jewish people," she also thought "they are so clever and powerful, and they have ties everywhere," and, she added, "we should also take care of our own people."<sup>174</sup> She was especially worried by stories from her friends in Prague about Czech intellectuals losing their jobs. "All of our professors [apparently Czechs]," she moaned, "were kicked out of Slovakia in the most savage way. What will happen to them now?"<sup>175</sup> She was also deeply concerned about Czech professional women because "under Hitler's new spirit, there will be no place for women except in the kitchen."<sup>176</sup>

In order to help, she wanted to create a network in America to circumvent the quota system by finding token jobs for Czech professors at American universities, before the Jews took them all. For example, at the university near her, she was certain that Jews would get all the positions because there was a "Jewish professor," who "works with superhuman strength and by all means to

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<sup>173</sup> See chapter 7.

<sup>174</sup> Letter, Gabriela Prošková-Preissová to Hrdlička, 12 January, 1939, box 54, "Proskova-Preissova, Gabriela, 1938-39," Correspondence.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

save some of his own co-religionists.”<sup>177</sup> Although Prošková proposed no racial theory about Jews, her words evoke a sour view of the world as a battleground of rivalrous national identities. In her correspondence, she never once considered the fact that Czechoslovakia was a state in which Jews were citizens, and that many of them considered themselves Czech. She also proposed no method for distinguishing “real” Czech immigrants from Czech Jews, all of whom would presumably bear Czechoslovakian passports.

While Hrdlička was also eager to help Czechs, there is no evidence that he went down this ugly path of survivalist nationalism by turning against Jews. He would like to help, he told Prošková, “but I am handicapped along these lines by being a government official.”<sup>178</sup> He gave her a list of prominent Czech-Americans to contact, but otherwise he chose neutrality. In fact, at that time neutrality was the policy of the United States, and as a government employee it is understandable that he did not want to flaunt immigration laws. He answered Prošková’s surly suspicion of Jews with silence, the same way he handled his Czech friend Matiegka.

Instead of turning on Jews to save Czech professors, there is evidence that Hrdlička tried to help at least one Jew escape Europe. As the international situation deteriorated, many people of all nationalities wrote to him for help, and it appears that the aging Hrdlička, about to retire, really did his best when he could. In fact, Prošková would probably be unhappy to hear that Hrdlička had already done what he could to help a Jewish intellectual escape to America. A psychologist named Eric Mayor wrote Hrdlička from Zagreb in 1938. He had to flee Germany because his mother’s side was “half Jewish,” and he asked Hrdlička for help.<sup>179</sup> Hrdlička wrote back and told Mayor that he had forwarded his letter to friends in New York, and that he would be happy “if help could be found

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Gabriela Prošková-Preissová, 17 January, 1939, box 54, “Proskova-Preissova, Gabriela, 1938-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>179</sup> Letter, Eric Mayor to Hrdlička, 28 March, 1938, box 14, “Franz Boas, 1930-42,” Correspondence.

for you. Do not lose courage.”<sup>180</sup> At least one of the “friends in New York” was none other than Franz Boas. The very same day Hrdlička asked Boas, “please see if anything can be done for the writer [Mayor]. His letter makes a good impression, and I should be glad if he could be helped.”<sup>181</sup>

As tensions escalated in Europe, Hrdlička made increasingly strong statements showing his disdain for Nazi race policies. Even before the advent of the Nazi regime, in his 1930 essay on “Human Races,” he listed “Semitic” as a “daughter race” of the “white stem.” When asked about Jews in private correspondence, he always held the same opinion. In August, 1943, he received a letter, signed only by “a Jew,” from a person whose five brothers and father were living in Norway. The Red Cross was unable to locate this person’s relatives. The writer traced the family history, in which the “father’s grandfather was full-blooded as we say,” and then asked, “What would that make us children? What troubles me is, would there be enough [Jewish heritage] for Hitler to harass or ill-treat as I understand he’ll go as far back as he can.”<sup>182</sup> Hrdlička’s answer is worth quoting in full because it is a very clear statement of his understanding of Jewishness and race:

You have a wrong concept of your people. The Jews are not a separate race – they are just white people of Arab origin and Jewish faith. They have some physical and other difference from other groups of white people, but so have these other groups among themselves. You might just as legitimately ask “what would be a one-fourth of a Catholic or a Protestant or a Mohammedan?” However, all this would not save you if you came under the influence of such arch fiends as those who have maltreated not only so many of your co-religionists, but also others.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mayor, 11 April, 1938, box 14, “Franz Boas, 1930-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>181</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Boas, 11 April, 1938, box 14, “Franz Boas, 1930-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>182</sup> Letter, “A Jew” to Hrdlička, 18 August, 1943, box 36, “JA-JI, 1917-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>183</sup> Hrdlička to “A Jew,” 23 August, 1943, box 36, “JA-JI, 1917-43,” Correspondence.

## F. CONCLUSION

Although Hrdlička had examined and measured people around the world, and was probably good at classifying them, the theory and practice behind his racial diagnosis makes the procedure look more like divination than science. Nevertheless, Americans believed that the physical sciences were the proper tool for making straight the crooked boundaries of racial identity. Hrdlička was by no means unskilled or naïve, and at his best he almost understood the shortcomings of this endeavor. However, he chose to support racial classification with the powerful rhetoric of scientific authority, even when lives and fortunes were at stake. He also used science to argue for racial inequality between whites, blacks, and yellow browns, which is the topic of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV: HOW THE CZECHS BECAME WHITE

“If you and I were Americans, there’d be no problem. Those Hunkies that just got off the boat, they’re already Americans; Polacks are already Americans; the Italian refugees are already Americans. Everything that came out of Europe, every blue-eyed thing, is already an American. And as long as you and I have been over here, we aren’t Americans yet.”<sup>1</sup> (Malcolm X)

### A. INTRODUCTION

In October, 1917, Aleš Hrdlička and his wife Marie were looking for a housekeeper.

Hrdlička wrote Mr. J. Toula, a Czech-American friend in Baltimore, and asked if he and Mrs. Toula would put an advertisement in their local Czech paper for a servant. Hrdlička explained that he and Mrs. Hrdlička were “very tired of the colored help and would be very glad to have a good Bohemian woman.”<sup>2</sup> In May, 1918, Hrdlička was still looking for a Czech servant. Writing to Mr. A. B. Koukol of the Slavonic Immigrant Society of New York, Hrdlička enquired, “I wonder if you could ever send us a good Czech or Slovak servant or cook. We are entirely dependent here on colored help which is extremely unsatisfactory.”<sup>3</sup> Hrdlička’s personal dislike for “colored help” mirrored his theoretical commitment to racial hierarchy. Hrdlička believed that whites were superior to blacks. This meant that Czech maids, who were white, were also superior to black maids.

Given his earnest convictions, both in theory and in practice, about the inferiority of blacks, it is surprising that many have depicted Hrdlička as a champion of racial equality. For example, the website for the Museum of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička in Humpolec, Czech Republic, describes him as “a leading representative of the idea of the equality of human races.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the “Aleš Hrdlička” web page for the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that Hrdlička proved “human races have

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.J. Toula, 1 October, 1917, box 64, “Toula, J.J., 1911-1924,” Correspondence, Hrdlička Papers.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to A. B. Koukol, 2 May, 1918, box 38, “Koukal, A.B., 1918,” Correspondence.

<sup>4</sup> Muzeum Humpolec, “Dr. Aleš Hrdlička,” <http://infohumpolec.cz/muzeum/dr-ales-hrdlicka/dr-ales-hrdlicka.html> (accessed 30 August, 2017).

a single origin and are therefore equal.”<sup>5</sup> This heroic view of Hrdlička has a long history. Writing in Communist Czechoslovakia in 1953, anthropologist Vojtěch Fetter of the Prague Anthropological Institute construed Hrdlička’s ideals as promoting “lasting peace and the brotherhood of all nations without regard to racial affiliation.”<sup>6</sup> In 1979 Frank Spencer, author of the most cited study of Hrdlička’s thought and life, claimed that Hrdlička was convinced of “the general futility of formal racial classifications and the fallaciousness of racial arguments that supposed the biological superiority of one race over another.”<sup>7</sup> In his more recent study of Hrdlička’s exhibition at the San Diego World’s Fair, Matthew Bokovoy sees Hrdlička’s views on race as “guided by egalitarian principles and conclusions” although he also recognizes that some of Hrdlička’s ideas were still “racialist like many of his contemporaries.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Hrdlička’s “colored” maid, who was apparently on the verge of unemployment, would not have been so convinced of Hrdlička’s commitment to racial equality.

While the previous chapter described the fuzzy horizontal borders between Hrdlička’s race categories, this chapter explores his vertical divisions between the races. The equalitarian portrait of Hrdlička is far too simplistic. There is no question that Hrdlička ranked the races, placing whites first, blacks last, and yellow-browns in the middle. Although in between, the yellow-browns, according to Hrdlička, were closer to whites than blacks, whom he considered by far the most primal and least intelligent, and he often repeated his assertion that blacks and whites were the furthest apart in the hierarchy. Not surprisingly, he included Czechs in the superior white race.

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<sup>5</sup> Ivan Dubovický, “Aleš Hrdlička,” Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí České republiky, [www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o\\_ministerstvu/historie\\_a\\_osobnosti\\_ceske\\_diplomacie/osobnost\\_i\\_v\\_historii/ales\\_hrdlicka.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/historie_a_osobnosti_ceske_diplomacie/osobnost_i_v_historii/ales_hrdlicka.html) (accessed 30 August, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Vojtěch Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička světový badatel ve vědě o člověku* (Praha: Orbis, 1954), 7, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869–1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979), 310.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880 – 1940* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 77.

## B. THE MYTH OF THE EQUALITARIAN HRDLIČKA

Given the amount of energy Hrdlička expended demonstrating the racial superiority of whites over blacks, it is surprising that he has been so lauded as a hero of racial equality. Exaggerated claims about Hrdlička's commitment to racial equality generally rest on three misleading and over-simplified presumptions about the nature of racism in general and about Hrdlička in particular. Once these suppositions are set aside, the hierarchical logic of Hrdlička's race beliefs becomes evident.

The first assumption is that hostility to Nazi-style Nordic racism is the same thing as opposition to all racism in general. In the twentieth century, it was possible to be a passionate enemy of specifically Nazi racism and at the same time hold on to other versions of racist thought. For example, John Dower's provocative 1986 study, *War without Mercy*, has made a strong argument that the United States government, while publicizing its fight against Nazi racism, simultaneously framed the war against Japan in racist terms. This led Dower to claim, "apart from the genocide of the Jews, racism remains one of the great neglected subjects of World War Two."<sup>9</sup> Even more obvious is the fact that many states in the United States brazenly maintained their own "racial regimes," complete with detailed race laws, for two decades after the demise of Nazi Germany.<sup>10</sup> During the Second World War German race laws prohibited doctors from giving "Jewish blood" to Aryan soldiers. Ironically, at the same time, while claiming to fight against just such racist practices, the U.S. military also insisted on segregated white and "colored" plasma stocks.<sup>11</sup> In this context, there is no good reason to assume that Hrdlička's hatred for Nazi-style racism made him a crusader for racial equality in general.

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<sup>9</sup> John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 4.

<sup>10</sup> This terminology is borrowed from George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 100-101.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Starr, *Blood: An Epic History of Medicine and Commerce* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 72-73; See also Thomas Guglielmo, "Red Cross, Double Cross: Race and America's World War II-Era Blood Donor Service" *The*

Furthermore, Hrdlička's stance against Nazi race theories may have stemmed as much from his own life-long chauvinism towards all things German as from equalitarian premises. Because he viewed Germans as the primordial enemies of Slavs, it comes as no great surprise that Nazi theories about Slavic inferiority irritated him. Immediately after World War II, a patriotic Czechoslovakian author named Viktor Palivec interpreted Hrdlička's hatred for Nazi-style racism more as a declaration of Slavic superiority than a statement on human equality. Palivec idealized Hrdlička's life and work as demonstrative of the "triumphant power of the Czech soul."<sup>12</sup> Hrdlička's stellar career, thought Palivec, made a mockery of the Germans, who could never admit to the "supremacy of a Czech and a Slav," who was supposedly "a member of an 'inferior race.'"<sup>13</sup> According to Palivec, Hrdlička prophesied before his death that the conclusion of World War II would at last bring about the ascendancy of "Slavdom."<sup>14</sup> To Palivec, what really mattered most about Hrdlička was that he "never trusted the Germans."<sup>15</sup>

In the United States, Hrdlička was an outspoken and public foe of Madison Grant's similar style of Nordic racism, which denigrated recent immigrants, like Slavs, as racially unfit. Again, there is no reason to interpret Hrdlička's position as a determined crusade for universal equality. What upset him was Grant's narrow belief in Nordic superiority, which implied that recent European immigrants were inferior. In *Man's Most Dangerous Myth* (1945), Ashley Montagu remembered how this ethnic rivalry had underscored Hrdlička's attack on Nordic purity. Montague admired Hrdlička for proving that America's "founding fathers" were not racially pure Anglo-Saxon Nordics, but he also noticed that Hrdlička had an axe to grind because, "it was left to one of those scorned lowly 'Slovaks,' [apparently he forgot that Hrdlička was Czech] who had come to

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*Journal of American History* 97:1 (June 2010), 63-90; Spencie Love, *One Blood: The Death and Resurrection of Charles R. Drew* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Viktor Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička* (Praha: Orbis, 1947), 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička*, 27.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

these shores as a poor immigrant boy” to debunk the idea of Nordic purity.<sup>16</sup> Grant, on the other hand, considered himself an unspoiled Anglo-Saxon whose ancestors had lived in New York since colonial times.<sup>17</sup> Personal motivations do not invalidate Hrdlička’s claims, but they suggest that his advocacy of racial equality was limited to a very specific context.

The second assumption is that Hrdlička’s emphatic support for a single human origin, or monogenesis, inevitably led him to conclude that all races were equal. Writing in communist Czechoslovakia in the early 1950s, Vojtěch Fetter chose to highlight Hrdlička’s belief in monogenesis, which was supposedly “a redemptive, liberating idea for all humanity,” and a refutation “of all racist ideas about the inequality of human races ....”<sup>18</sup> Fetter even imagined that monogenesis led Hrdlička to denounce imperialism as the evil fruit of racist thought. This assertion is entirely deductive and ignores empirical evidence found in some of Hrdlička’s most accessible works, in both Czech and English; and astonishingly, it is almost the direct opposite of what Hrdlička actually said. In lectures that he gave in Prague and published in Czechoslovakia in Czech, Hrdlička very explicitly argued that imperialism resulted inevitably from the racial superiority of whites. As an academic figure at the forefront of Czech physical anthropology, Fetter must have known about Hrdlička’s famous Prague lectures, yet he ignored Hrdlička’s explicit statements and chose instead to imagine that monogenesis automatically meant racial equality and a radical critique of imperialism.

This creative rendering, almost exactly opposite to what Hrdlička very deliberately said, lived a long life. Since 1959, the Czech Anthropological Society has issued the Commemorative Medal of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička to selected scholars.<sup>19</sup> The reverse of the medal shows a Neanderthal

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<sup>16</sup> M.F. Ashley Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. 2d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 108.

<sup>17</sup> Charles C. Alexander, “Prophet of American Racism: Madison Grant and the Nordic Myth” *Phylon* 23:1 (1962): 73.

<sup>18</sup> Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Česká společnost antropologická [Czech Anthropological Society] “Historie České společnosti antropologické,” <http://www.anthropology.cz/old/index.php?page=historie> (accessed 8 October, 2018); Miroslav Prokopec, “Dr. Aleš

skull with an anthropologist's calipers and proclaims: "All mankind is of one origin."<sup>20</sup> There is nothing inaccurate about this statement; Hrdlička certainly believed in the single origin of all humans. However, the standard interpretation is that monogenesis convinced Hrdlička of "the potential equality of all peoples."<sup>21</sup> This seemingly viral inaccuracy might have spread to the United States through Miroslav Prokopec, a Czech anthropologist and a fan of Hrdlička, who worked as a scientist at the Smithsonian Institution in 1992-93 and spent some time examining the Hrdlička Papers in the Anthropological Archives.<sup>22</sup> As a guest on Czech radio and an author of several popular articles, Prokopec disseminated the soothing story that Hrdlička understood monogenesis as a "personal creed" that "refutes unscientific racism [and its] acceptance of naturally higher and lower human races."<sup>23</sup>

The third assumption is that Hrdlička suffered "oppression" in Austria-Hungary, which somehow made him more sympathetic to other targets of racism. Frank Spencer, whose work has heavily influenced American appraisals of Hrdlička, uncritically assumed that Austrian "German" state institutions were "oppressive" and that Czech national ideals signified "freedom." He believed, without presenting any specific examples, that when Hrdlička lived in Bohemia as a boy, Czechs "were denied sociopolitical freedom."<sup>24</sup> Spencer neither specified what this charge meant nor explained how it affected the pre-adolescent Hrdlička, who immigrated to the United States when he was thirteen. Donald Ortner, writing in 2010, picked up on this interpretation and claimed

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Hrdlička's Memorial Medal," in *Proceedings of the Anthropological Congress, Prague and Humpolec, 1969*, ed. Vladimír Novotný (Prague: Academia, 1971), 571-75.

<sup>20</sup> Prokopec, "Dr. Aleš Hrdlička's Memorial Medal," 571-75.

<sup>21</sup> K. Daněk, "Hrdlička's Role in the Development of the Anthropological Conception of Diseases of Civilization," in *Proceedings of the Anthropological Congress, 1969*, 39-44, ed. Vladimír V. Novotný (Prague: Academia, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> Jaroslav Brůžek, "Miroslav Prokopec (1923-2014)," *Živa* (5:2016), cxxv-cxxvi. Also, Stephen Loring, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, described Prokopec's views in a personal meeting with the author in August, 2017 in Washington, D.C. Prokopec and Loring co-authored an article about Hrdlička in 1994 but had some disagreements about Hrdlička's race beliefs. According to Czech sources, Prokopec "had access" (*Živa*, cxxv) to the Hrdlička Papers, but it is difficult to see what influence the archival sources had on Prokopec's interpretation. Prokopec, in fairness, was not a professional historian. See Stephen Loring and Miroslav Prokopec, "A Most Peculiar Man: The Life and Times of Aleš Hrdlička," in *Reckoning with the Dead: The Larsen Bay Repatriation and the Smithsonian Institution*, ed. Tamara L. Bray and Thomas W. Killion, 26-53. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Miroslav Prokopec, "Osobnost a dílo dr. Aleše Hrdličky," in *Kulturní stopou Humpolecká (Hrdličkův jubilejní sborník)*, ed. Jiří Bečvář, et. al. (Pelhřimov: Jihočeské tiskárny, 1969), 10.

<sup>24</sup> Spencer, "Aleš Hrdlička, M.D.," 24.

that Hrdlička “was less influenced than most” by “hierarchical biological” concepts of ethnicity, “probably because of his own early cultural heritage in Central Europe.”<sup>25</sup> Elsewhere Ortner explained that Hrdlička “had particularly strong feelings against German society and German science that undoubtedly were influenced by the repression of the Czechs by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.”<sup>26</sup> This is not the place to examine directly the claim that the Austrian Empire “repressed” Czechs, the Hrdlička family, or the pubescent Hrdlička, but it is at least possible to suggest that this coloring of the situation is unduly generous to a nationalist Czech version of history. Ethnic acrimony in Central Europe certainly influenced Hrdlička and his ideas about race and nation, but it did not turn him into a crusader for racial equality, especially when it came to African Americans.

### C. THE BLACK RACE: “A LONG WAY BEHIND”

Hrdlička’s belief in black inferiority stands out so clearly in his published writings and his personal papers that it is hard to miss. He began with the assumption that the black race was the oldest, and therefore the most “primitive” of the three main races. In a textbook chapter entitled “Human Races” from 1930, he depicted the three races as diverging, like branches of a tree, at different moments in human evolution; the whites were the most recent “stem” and the blacks were the oldest.<sup>27</sup> In a lecture in 1921 he explained that human racial features were about 10,000 years old, except in the cases of the blacks and some yellow-browns; two groups which were surviving examples of older human types.<sup>28</sup> This meant that modern blacks were, “in all probability the oldest surviving offshoot of the human stock.”<sup>29</sup> “Oldest” for Hrdlička clearly also meant “most primitive.” He believed he could see this evolutionary history encoded in the physical

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<sup>25</sup> Donald J. Ortner, “Aleš Hrdlička and the Founding of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*: 1918,” in *History of American Physical Anthropology in the Twentieth Century*, eds., Michael A. Little and Kenneth A.R. Kennedy (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 88.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>27</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” in *Human Biology and Racial Welfare*, ed. Edmund V. Cowdry (New York: Paul Heber, 1930), 166.

<sup>28</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>29</sup> Manuscript, “Delimitation of Races,” n.d. box 144, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

characteristics of “typical” modern blacks, whose “nose and prognathy” indicated, “the African negro skull is on the whole the most primitive.”<sup>30</sup>

Hrdlička’s evolutionary timeline put a permanent developmental gap between whites and blacks, and he made it a special point to single out blacks as the most distant race from whites. In contrast, the yellow-brown race stood between black and white, yet still “nearer to the white than to the negro.”<sup>31</sup> In physical composition, “the delimitation of the yellow-brown race from the white is less definite than is that of the negro from both the white and the yellow-brown.”<sup>32</sup> At opposite ends of humanity, whites were the most “modern” race and blacks the most “primitive,” therefore, “the whites and the negroes stand in general the farthest apart,” an idea that he restated often in his writings.<sup>33</sup>

Hrdlička used a kind of Lamarckian interpretation to explain the stubborn backwardness of the black race. Lamarckism is the theory that characteristics acquired during a lifetime can become hereditary.<sup>34</sup> Hrdlička argued that the races acquired physical features by responding to the environment, and these “many acquisitions” then became “fixed” and “hereditary” over “the course of the history.”<sup>35</sup> This explanation allowed Hrdlička to pay lip service to environmental influence but still think of the races as “more or less definite hereditary complexes.”<sup>36</sup> All humans, admitted Hrdlička, were “still quite plastic” and “capable of further favorable evolution,” but an overabundance of negative features had become hereditary for blacks and now held them back as a race.<sup>37</sup> For some reason, black racial characteristics had been fixed permanently for over 10,000 years and changed little over time.

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<sup>30</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 162.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>32</sup> Manuscript, “Delimitation of Races,” n.d. box 144, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>33</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 167.

<sup>34</sup> See George W. Stocking, Jr., “Lamarckianism in American Social Science: 1890-1915,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23:2 (April – June, 1962): 239-256.

<sup>35</sup> Manuscript, “Changes in Races,” n.d. box 144, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Manuscript, “Changes in Races,” n.d. box 144, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

Before explaining Hrdlička's beliefs about the stunted evolution of blacks, it is necessary to elaborate on his special usage of Lamarckism. Some have viewed Lamarckism as a criticism of racial determinism, but this is not how Hrdlička employed it. The idea that humans can acquire traits during a lifetime and pass them on to their progeny seems to suggest that better social conditions might improve hereditary qualities over time. In the 1920s, for example, many scholars in the Soviet Union felt that Lamarckism was more compatible with Marxist ideology because it seemed to empower humans to alter heritable characteristics by improving the environment. However, this is not the only way to interpret Lamarckism, nor is it the way Hrdlička used it. In the Soviet Union in the 1920s, a scientist named Jurii Filipchenko argued that there was another, much less optimistic, way to understand Lamarckism. Filipchenko's critique inadvertently describes exactly how Hrdlička used Lamarckism to explain racial inequalities. According to historian Loren Graham:

This view was superficial and false, said Filipchenko, because it assumed that only "good" environments have heritable effects, while a consistent interpretation of the inheritance of acquired characteristics would show that "bad" environments also have effects. Therefore, all social or physically deprived groups, races, and classes of people – such as the proletariat and peasantry and the nonwhite races – would have inherited the debilitating effects of having lived for centuries under deprived conditions. Far from promising rapid social reform the inheritance of acquired characteristics would mean that the upper classes are not only socially and economically advantaged, but genetically privileged as well, a result of centuries of living in a beneficial environment.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Loren R. Graham, "Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s," *The American Historical Review* 82:5 (December, 1977): 1152; See also Diane B. Paul, "'In the Interests of Civilization':

This is exactly how Hrdlička used Lamarckism; he was not trying to make a statement about the power of humans to change themselves by improving their environment; instead, he was explaining why blacks had fallen so hopelessly far behind and could probably never catch up to whites.

According to Hrdlička, something went wrong for blacks over 10,000 years ago and then became permanent and hereditary. He believed that the black race had formed in the African malarial regions, a bad environment that left lasting negative effects on the whole race. In his own words, it was an “old truism” that a “malarial region breeds few talents.”<sup>39</sup> Trusting his “truism” to be accurate, he conjectured that people in tropical regions, in this case blacks, had acquired fixed “intellectual” deficiencies.<sup>40</sup> Centuries of environmental adaptation to this hostile climate became permanent and left most blacks with a hereditary handicap, making them “belated” in comparison to whites. Since whites had developed in “wholesome” environments, Hrdlička reasoned, and blacks in a “malarial region,” there was no way for the two races to “progress equally” or “retain the same standards.”<sup>41</sup> In Hrdlička’s largely Lamarckian scheme, environment had damaged the black race and made the defects permanent.

This vast developmental gap, theorized Hrdlička, explained the imperialist conquest of pre-industrial people around the world. His stern conclusion was that the “belated” groups would never catch up to the superior ones, and that some of the former might even be headed for extinction. Certain groups were “already” too far behind due to a “gap” from “ten thousand years ago.”<sup>42</sup> While the belated races struggled to catch up, the “more advanced races” enjoyed accelerated development, so that the evolutionary chasm between the two groups was increasing exponentially rather than decreasing. In the 1920s, this racial conceptualization helped Hrdlička explain why the

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Marxist Views of Race and Culture in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42:1 (January-March, 1981): 116-120.

<sup>39</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 179.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

seemingly “white” and industrialized states always colonized the more dark-skinned parts of the globe:

... there is nothing that ... would stop these processes and would change them; that would make the white man wait upon the Japanese or the Chinaman who is only a little bit behind, or the Negro who is a long way behind; and if he will not wait, but increases his pace as he is doing today, the inevitable result will be that the white man really will have a supremacy over an inferior race; a man so much more effective will be by nature’s laws alone, as he is already today, the lord of the one below him.<sup>43</sup>

He presented this stark scenario of racial conquest even more stridently to a sold-out crowd of Czech admirers in Prague in 1923:

... much of humanity still might die out. As a result of uneven development over a long time, there are significant differences [between races]. And these differences are growing larger, not smaller. Already today we have ... above-average and below-average races, and modern humanitarian attempts at equalizing these differences are futile. This inequality will instead grow larger, because the more advanced the group the more effectively it improves itself, whereas the lower groups almost or entirely stand still. If some misfortune at the very beginning holds them back for a long time, then they fall too far behind and cannot catch up. The distance

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

between the two will only widen, and it ultimately will be difficult for the belated group to hold on. There will be great people and little people, mainly in terms of intellectual abilities; the weaker ones, wherever they come into contact with the stronger, will succumb, just as today already the Negrito, various Blacks, Australians, Siberians, and American Indians are succumbing. The superior humans, white or yellow-brown, wherever they confront a belated and therefore weaker group, even if from their own race, suppress it and make it into their servant, or violently push it out to the least hospitable regions, where it finally disappears entirely. No morality, no faith, nor any laws can avert this cruel, yet fundamentally natural path.<sup>44</sup>

Hrdlička knew that some scholars, like Franz Boas, were pushing a more environmental and cultural explanation for human variation, but he explicitly rejected this view. When dealing specifically with the question of the “Equality of Races” in a 1930 publication, he congenially acknowledged that there were “wide differences of opinion as to the equivalence of the races,” which “cannot easily be settled.”<sup>45</sup> He also understood that subjective prejudices might shape scientists’ beliefs in racial superiority, and that the issue was “greatly complicated by the social, language, religious and habit differences, through economic factors, and by the universal distrust of the less known.”<sup>46</sup> Far from an endorsement of the cultural and environmental explanation; however, this was only Hrdlička’s way of respecting the views of those with whom he disagreed.

After taking these ideas into consideration, Hrdlička categorically rejected them. It was the sceptics of racial hierarchy, not its proponents, who were most misled by subjectivity. He was

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<sup>44</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka i budoucnosti lidstva* [On Human Origin and Development and the Future of Humanity] (Praha: Nakladatel B. Kočí, 1924), 63.

<sup>45</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 178.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 178-79.

incredulous that there were “still some benevolent minds who would like to see all men, white and black, as potentially equal.”<sup>47</sup> In his view, the real facts of science left no room for such good-hearted idealism. “If the accumulated observations of anthropology count for anything,” he demanded, the races “are not equipotential,” and “especially the further distant ones like the white and the negro.”<sup>48</sup> While he agreed that the belated races might gain something from better education and conditions, and that evolution might, theoretically, improve them over time, he still alleged that their brains were so hopelessly underdeveloped that in practice they would never catch up. Any gains they made would not bring them to equality with whites. He pointedly rejected the thesis “that the brains of the belated human groups, such as the negro ... [are] of equal potentiality with those of the Old [white] American, the English, Scotch, Irish, French, Germans.”<sup>49</sup> In addition, racial inequality was inherent, not due to a lack of “training, enlightenment, and opportunity.”<sup>50</sup> This meant that the future was bleak for the belated groups, and in 1929 Hrdlička succinctly explained, “so far as can be discerned there is no promise of eventual equality of races, and the gulf between the front and the back ranks will probably increase rather than decrease. There will always be masters and servants, the pioneers of progress and the drags.”<sup>51</sup>

It is not easy to discern exactly which arguments for racial inequality he found so convincing. His most direct discussion of the topic, in a chapter called “Human Races,” has the tone of a desperate attempt to dredge up proofs for a foreordained conclusion. He claimed, firstly, that some people have “intuitive” feelings of “inferiority or superiority,” and that therefore the idea must have some scientific validity, especially when held by experts with “prolonged direct experience of one group with another.”<sup>52</sup> Secondly, the belief in racial inequality, he surmised, was

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<sup>47</sup> Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration and Destruction with Special Reference to the American People,” in *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference, Battle Creek, Michigan, January 2-6, 1928* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Race Betterment Foundation, 1928), 84.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 180.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Hrdlička, “Man’s Future in the Light of his Past and Present,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 68:1 (1929): 7.

<sup>52</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 179.

a “general and most deeply ingrained view” and thus worthy of serious consideration.<sup>53</sup> Thirdly, in evaluating the “quality” of a race, he felt it was important to consider “its relative position in regard to and esteem by other races.”<sup>54</sup> This ostensibly means that when considering the value of blacks, the scholar should remember that “other races” did not like them much.

These arguments, Hrdlička admitted, were only “circumstantial,” but he assured his readers that science had come up with still more “direct evidence” of racial inequality, which rested on the meticulous study of “demography, pathology, character, and potentialities of the race.”<sup>55</sup> He did not elaborate or leave a trail of footnotes to follow. Instead, he fell back on his pet “truism” that malarial environments retarded the development of blacks. Given the climatic differences between the “northern temperate zone” and the tropics, he asserted, “the results could not possibly be equality, physical, physiological, or intellectual.”<sup>56</sup> He knew this to be true because skulls, brains, and human heads differed significantly “between the moderate zone peoples and those of the tropics, or, more particularly, between the whites and the blacks.”<sup>57</sup> Even if these physical differences were as striking as Hrdlička suggested, he did not explain why they should imply mental inequality.

In his private correspondence with ordinary Americans who were curious about race, Hrdlička consistently utilized his “truism” that the malarial zones of Africa had permanently damaged African brains and made blacks more primitive. In 1926 James Thompson wrote from Honduras to ask “if the brain of the white man and the negro is the same.”<sup>58</sup> Hrdlička responded, “as to the brain of the white man and the negro, that of the latter is on average of somewhat lesser

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 179-80.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>58</sup> Letter, James Thompson to Hrdlička, 25 August, 1926, box 62, “TI-TR, 1918-43,” Correspondence.

weight and more simple patterns.”<sup>59</sup> In the same year, zoology professor and eugenics enthusiast H. F. Perkins wanted to know if there was “any racial difference in the convolutions of the brains of the Negro and the European.”<sup>60</sup> Hrdlička told the Vermont professor there were “differences of importance between the brains of the negro and European, to the general disadvantage of the former.”<sup>61</sup> Although some individual black brains “may come up to or near the standard for individual whites,” the general rule was that in “normal whites” it would be hard to find “such primitive brains as found in some negroes.”<sup>62</sup> When asked about the relative intelligence of races, he answered, “the most unintelligent contingents, on the whole, are found among the various blacks,” and of these, “the least intelligent blacks are probably those along parts of the Congo and along the Gold Coast with neighboring tropical regions of western Africa.”<sup>63</sup> In a follow-up letter, Hrdlička claimed, “the most intelligent race on the whole is the white race.”<sup>64</sup>

Hrdlička also saw intermarriage with blacks as a step down for whites. Superficially, some of Hrdlička’s statements might seem to suggest that he supported white and black racial mixing, but this conclusion is incorrect. In particular, his genuine commitment to monogenesis and the unity of the human species has misled a few modern scholars. It is true that Hrdlička believed that all humans were one species and could, and to some extent should, interbreed. He told Albert Johnson in a 1938 letter, “racial mixture, under normal conditions and with sound human elements, has in no part of the world been found deleterious, but rather the reverse.”<sup>65</sup> He even thought that whites and blacks could reproduce successfully. He derided the Southern “popular fallacy” that “the progeny of the white and the negro will not survive or breed beyond the quadroon or at most the octoroon.”<sup>66</sup> Scientific data contradicted this lore and instead showed, “there is no known limit to the fecundity

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<sup>59</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Thompson, 23 September, 1926, box 62, “TI-TR, 1918-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>60</sup> Letter, H. F. Perkins to Hrdlička, 30 November, 1926, box 52, “PELLAN-PH, 1918-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Perkins, 10 December, 1926, box 52, “PELLAN-PH, 1918-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.M.J. Hodges, 14 February, 1927, box 28, “HOA-HOP, 1912-42,” Correspondence; Hrdlička to Hodges, 18 February, 1927.

<sup>64</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.M.J. Hodges, 28 February, 1927, box 28, “HOA-HOP, 1912-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>65</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Albert Johnson, 14 February, 1938, box 36, “Albert, Johnson, 1921-1922,” Correspondence.

<sup>66</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 176.

of the white-black progeny.”<sup>67</sup> In a speech he claimed that even whites and blacks, though far apart, were “in the most important respects substantially alike” and “they freely interbreed” and successfully produce “different kinds of mixed bloods,” whose features usually “blend completely together.”<sup>68</sup> It is important to understand; however, that for Hrdlička “successful” breeding meant that mixed-race progeny did not go extinct, not that they were fine human specimens.

A closer look reveals that Hrdlička’s unwavering commitment to inequality always overrode his superficially liberal view of racial mixing, and his belief in monogenesis was no plea for interracial love. For blacks, Hrdlička thought that racial miscegenation was good because it improved them. As an example, he pointed to North Africa, where there was “extensive” and “normal mixture between the negro and various elements of the white race.”<sup>69</sup> In this case, there was no evidence of either “physical or mental” degeneration due to mixing. In fact, mixing was “a general improvement on the negro.”<sup>70</sup> Yet Hrdlička found the negative results of black and white pairing just a few kilometers away from North Africa in Spain. Here, a similar racial history had the opposite meaning, and “negro admixture may have retarded the general development” of the white population.<sup>71</sup> When viewing racial mixing from a white perspective, Hrdlička consistently held to the principle that “mixture with a poorer stock, physically or mentally, could not possibly be beneficial, or harmless. If there is added ninety to one hundred, the mean result will surely be less than one hundred.”<sup>72</sup>

He applied the same dismal math to the specific situation in the United States. On the surface, Hrdlička remained “optimistic” that as long as interbreeding remained limited, whites would, with time, absorb and dilute blacks. This would be good for blacks and at least not

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>69</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 178.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>72</sup> Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration,” 84.

catastrophic for whites. He told Bishop John William Hamilton, “within three hundred years there will probably remain not a single full blood negro and the blood will be widely diffused.”<sup>73</sup> This process, he wrote to Albert Johnson, would “take many hundreds of years, especially in the South.”<sup>74</sup> He explained in his essay on “Race Deterioration” how mixing would improve the blacks because “the limited influx of white into the colored blood is a gain to the latter.”<sup>75</sup>

Yet there was a down side, and Hrdlička thought that things could go badly for whites. The coming amalgamation of whites and blacks was a necessary evil, and, as he told Johnson, it was “nothing to be wished for.”<sup>76</sup> As in Spain, the mixture of blacks could become “a drag on the progress of the whites.”<sup>77</sup> If whiteness enveloped blacks, gains would ultimately outweigh losses, but if “the colored stream” flowed unchecked “into the body of the larger white group,” then “it would be a bold scientist who could argue that such an event might be beneficial.”<sup>78</sup> For this reason, black and white race mixing was “a danger to the American people.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, it was the one major threat to the assimilationist potency of white Americans, and “as anthropology sees it, is the one cloud on the otherwise clear and blue sky of the American people of the future.”<sup>80</sup>

It is almost certain that Hrdlička supported anti-miscegenation laws to prevent or at least curtail black and white mixing. In 1919 he wrote, “mixtures of colored races with the white are largely controllable by law and general enlightenment, and if found detrimental could be reduced to a minimum. In the United States we are confronted on the one side with the grave problem of mixture of white and negro, and on the other with that of white and Indian.”<sup>81</sup> By 1928, when writing on “race deterioration,” he had concluded that black and white mixing was mostly

<sup>73</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bishop John William Hamilton, 5 May, 1930, box 28, “HAA-HAR, 1897-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>74</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Albert Johnson, 14 February, 1938, box 36, “Albert, Johnson, 1921-1922,” Correspondence.

<sup>75</sup> Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration,” 85.

<sup>76</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Albert Johnson, 14 February, 1938, box 36, “Albert, Johnson, 1921-1922,” Correspondence.

<sup>77</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bishop John William Hamilton, 5 May, 1930, box 28, “HAA-HAR, 1897-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>78</sup> Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration,” 85.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Hrdlička, *Physical Anthropology, Its Scope and Aims: Its History and Present Status in the United States* (Philadelphia: Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, 1919), 24.

unhealthy, but “as long as the colored tenth is held apart, there is no danger.”<sup>82</sup> During the 1920s he was enthusiastic about helping Walter A. Plecker, the chief author of Virginia’s notorious miscegenation law, identify people with “black blood” in order to prevent them from marrying whites.<sup>83</sup>

For good measure, he came up with another objection to racial miscegenation between blacks and whites. After all, the sort of people who usually engaged in inter-racial sexual activity were generally of low eugenic quality anyway. Such people usually mingled clandestinely in states of drunkenness and debauchery. This meant that in practice the results of their unions could rarely be good. In most cases “affecting the whites and negroes in the United States,” the mixing was “between inferiors of both sides.”<sup>84</sup> This was not only a problem due to the hereditary weaknesses and immorality of the parents, but it also created bad social conditions for the offspring. The children grew up with “a complex of inferiority,” which meant that aside from purely hereditary issues, mixed unions were also “complicated by prejudice, social ostracism, poverty, and other factors.”<sup>85</sup> In Hrdlička’s understanding of racial mixing, it was better if the “colored” house maids stayed on their own side of town.

#### D. THE YELLOW-BROWN RACE: “ONLY A LITTLE BIT BEHIND”

Hrdlička also viewed yellow-browns as inferior to whites. In the great biological struggle for survival and supremacy, he insisted, “the white man” would never slow down to “wait upon the

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<sup>82</sup> Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration,” 85.

<sup>83</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dr. W. A. Plecker, 12 February, 1925, box 52, “PI-PO, 1924-41,” Correspondence; See chapter 3.

<sup>84</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 177.

<sup>85</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 176-77. He told Albert Johnson almost exactly the same thing in 1938: “Unfortunately, a certain proportion of such mixtures, and that particularly with races far apart, such as White and Negro, take place clandestinely, often in more or less of drunkenness, and mostly by low class individuals on each side; in addition to which the children born from such unions are raised generally under very unfavorable social conditions. The results in these cases are not very good.” Letter, Hrdlička to Albert Johnson, 14 February, 1938, box 36, “Albert, Johnson, 1921-1922,” Correspondence.

Japanese or the Chinaman,” who were “a little bit behind.”<sup>86</sup> This made “yellow Asia” a eugenic threat to white Europe. For this reason, he viewed Russia as a white “defensive block” against Asia. The Russians had dutifully absorbed and assimilated the yellow-brown waves, but they had “suffered terribly” and “remained culturally backward” because of it.<sup>87</sup> When it came to yellow-browns, Hrdlička’s views on mixing were analogous to his ideas about blacks. In 1922 he told the House of Representatives in a testimonial: “My personal opinion is this: That just as the black people represent in mental potentiality, say, only 80 percent of the average of white people, so the yellow-brown people represent, on the average, perhaps 95 percent of such potentiality, and that 95 united with 100 will never give 100 again.”<sup>88</sup>

Although he viewed yellow-browns as inferior, they were still better than blacks, and Hrdlička held out hope for their assimilation with whites. They were, after all, 95 % as good as whites. When the Congressional Committee on the Territories questioned Hrdlička in 1922, one of the Congressmen asked if racial mixing could ever make the yellow-browns into whites. Hrdlička answered “no,” but he added, “unless the admixture of the yellow-browns was so small that it would practically disappear by dilution.”<sup>89</sup> This was a very interesting answer because it left room for a successful racial amalgamation of whites and yellow-browns, which is exactly what Hrdlička thought was happening in the Soviet Union. Writing in 1942, Hrdlička estimated that white people, mostly Slavs, made up most of the Soviet population. The Slavs were “free mixers” who intermarried with yellow browns in the Soviet territories and were rapidly turning them into

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<sup>86</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “Lecture 27,” 27 May, 1921, box 151, Manuscripts of Writings, 1901-1944.

<sup>87</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 74.

<sup>88</sup> Hrdlička, “Testimony of Aleš Hrdlička,” in “Nonassimilability of Japanese in Hawaii and the United States,” *Hearings before the Committee on the Territories*. House of Representatives, Sixty-seventh Congress, Anthropological and Historical Data Effecting Nonassimilability of Japanese in the Territory of Hawaii and the United States, July 17, 1922. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 8.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073367636;view=1up;seq=2> (accessed 5.11.2018).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

whites.<sup>90</sup> In his view, “what remains of the Yellow-brown stocks” in the Soviet Union “is rapidly being diluted by White admixture.”<sup>91</sup>

In Hrdlička’s racial world, the Japanese were the worst of the yellow-browns. It is clear that Hrdlička did not like Japan, which he viewed suspiciously as a dangerous competitor to both Russia and the United States. “It was a great mistake,” he wrote in 1920, “of Mr. Roosevelt to have committed himself to the Japanese for interference in the Russo-Japanese war.”<sup>92</sup> He was also very unhappy about Japanese intervention in Russia in World War I and during the Russian Civil War. In 1920, he wrote a letter to Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby to complain and warn about Japan. Based on his contacts with Czechoslovak troops in Siberia and his personal tour of East Asia, his verdict was, “Japan has not a single friend in Asia.”<sup>93</sup> His Czech sources in Siberia provided a long list of damning accusations against Japan: The Japanese arbitrarily captured Vladivostok, they executed Russians, they bombed Nikolajevsk, they “demoralized China by morphine,” and they murdered hundreds of prominent Koreans.<sup>94</sup>

Of course, Hrdlička’s complaints about Japanese aggression might have been accurate, but he viewed Japanese behavior through the lens of race. He told Colby, “I became deeply interested” in the Japanese in the Far East, “principally because of the racial conditions.”<sup>95</sup> The Japanese were duplicitous and “jealous,” he told Colby, because they knew they “will never be, and they feel it, quite the equivalent of the white race.”<sup>96</sup> Hrdlička proclaimed his belief in Japanese racial inferiority again in his testimony before Congress in 1922. The Japanese had attained a high level of industrial development since the Meiji period, but, asked the Chairman of the Committee, had they really internalized “the spiritual and higher elements of civilization or simply the material

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<sup>90</sup> Hrdlička, *The Peoples of the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1942), 2. See chapter 8.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bainbridge Colby, 30 July, 1920, box 22, “Department of State, 1918-21,” Correspondence.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

benefits?”<sup>97</sup> Hrdlička understood this as a question requiring a racial answer. Yes, he responded, the Japanese had improved themselves in many technical ways, “but they have not yet generally and fully caught up to the white people, and they evidently have difficulty in keeping pace, because the white man does not wait on the road but keeps on advancing.”<sup>98</sup>

Given these views, it is no wonder that Hrdlička gave the Japanese a bad review before the United States House of Representatives in 1922, when the Committee on Territories called on him as an expert witness on Japanese “non-assimilation.”<sup>99</sup> At a time when immigration restriction was a pressing topic before the Congress, the committee wanted to ask about the possibility of Asian immigrants assimilating with whites in the United States. Hrdlička might have disappointed some of the congressmen by insisting that most yellow-browns could mix with whites, even though they were only “95 percent” as good. Nonetheless, he had special reservations about the Japanese. When asked if the Japanese could intermarry and successfully assimilate with whites, Hrdlička answered, “it is not impossible, but evidence shows that a Japanese assimilates with considerable difficulty; he is not what one would call a ‘good mixer.’”<sup>100</sup>

When World War II started, Hrdlička came to the surprising conclusion that Koreans were whiter than Japanese. The war reinforced his already deep dislike for Japan, which was now an ally of Germany, the occupier of Czechoslovakia, and this might have motivated him to see the Koreans as the white people of East Asia. As Robert Oppenheim has suggested, Hrdlička might have viewed the Japanese empire in Asia as analogous to the Third Reich in Central Europe.<sup>101</sup> This meant that he also viewed Korea as an unfairly subjected colony, something like Bohemia and Moravia. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Hrdlička corresponded with Homer B. Hulbert, a long-time resident of

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<sup>97</sup> Hrdlička, “Testimony of Aleš Hrdlička,” 9.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> The official title in the congressional record is “*Nonassimilability* of Japanese in Hawaii and the United States,” and the fact that someone took the effort to invent such a word strongly suggests a preordained conclusion to the debate.

<sup>100</sup> Hrdlička, “Testimony of Aleš Hrdlička,” 8.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Oppenheim, “Revisiting Hrdlička and Boas: Asymmetries of Race and Anti-Imperialism in Interwar Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 112:1 (2010): 92–103.

Korea and a respected scholar, and explained his theory about Korean whiteness. He told Hulbert, “I have visited the country, know the people, and like them very much .... There is decidedly something in them which is nearer [than the Japanese] to the white race.”<sup>102</sup> This was not an isolated comment. During the war, he conjectured in another text that the Koreans’ “main original components approached the white race,” and that there was “apparent white admixture in the Koreans.”<sup>103</sup> He even went public with this theory, to the joy of Korean nationals in Hawaii. According to the *Korean National Herald-Pacific*, a Hawaiian publication, Hrdlička proclaimed that Koreans “have many white physical characteristics” and are “nearer white men than any other peoples of Eastern Asia.”<sup>104</sup> The newspaper was eager to cite him, of course, because he was, according to his own racial logic, paying Koreans an important compliment. All the human races might be one species, but it was better to be white.

#### E. CZECHS ARE WHITE TOO

In general, the historical literature that praises Hrdlička for his presumed equalitarian beliefs has measured him against Nazi-style Nordicism, which took an extremely strict view of who was truly white. In the United States, Madison Grant was the best known proponent of this form of white exclusivity. In his notorious book, the *Passing of the Great Race*, Grant made it clear that there were not many real whites left in the world, and they were fading away fast. In his view, the superior whites, the “Nordics,” were the “Anglo-Saxon” founding fathers of the United States who originated in northwestern Europe. While the Nordics were pure whites, Grant believed that much of Europe was tainted by mixture with Asians and Africans and therefore less than distinctly white. He detested the recent waves of European immigrants, whom he classified as racially contaminated “Alpine” and “Mediterranean” types. Grant believed that these substandard races from eastern and

<sup>102</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Hulbert, 7 January, 1942, box 28, “HUL-HZ, 1904-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>103</sup> Manuscript, “The Korean,” n.d. [1943], box 38, “Korea,” Correspondence; see also Oppenheim, 99.

<sup>104</sup> Lili M. Kim, “How Koreans Replaced their ‘Enemy Alien’ Status: Korean Americans’ Identity, Culture, and National Pride in Wartime Hawai’i,” in *From the Land of Hibiscus: Koreans in Hawai’i*, ed. Yōng-Ho Ch’oe (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 209.

southern Europe would pollute and degrade America's Nordic master race. He also viewed dark-skinned peoples as inferior, but the *Passing of the Great Race* is a book about light-skinned European immigrants. For Grant, only a few fair-skinned Europeans were real whites.

Hrdlička likewise considered blacks and yellow-browns inferior, but unlike Grant he numbered all the European immigrants, including Jews, among the superior white race. In comparison to Grant and his Nazi admirers, Hrdlička was much more generous about who got to be white, and this makes him appear to be an equalitarian hero. Indeed, Hrdlička set the borders of the white race surprisingly generously. Matthew Bokovoy is correctly impressed with the variety of people who made it into the "White" category on Hrdlička's "Races of Man" chart, which he displayed at his 1915 San Diego Fair exhibit. Among the whites, Hrdlička included Turks, Southern Asians, Jews, Arabs, Moors, Abyssinians, Egyptians, Libyans, and Central and Western North-Africans.<sup>105</sup> Although it is difficult to gauge reactions to displays at the fair, Bokovoy might be right that Hrdlička's famous display "made vulnerable popular notions of white racial superiority."<sup>106</sup> However fairgoers felt about it, Madison Grant would have certainly disagreed with Hrdlička's list. In fact, Hrdlička was conscious of this difference of opinion, and in a speech in 1929 he singled out Grant by name and contended that all of his "so-called races" were really just white subgroups and all more or less equal.<sup>107</sup> This is what Hrdlička meant by "the radical question of equality," which was really not a discussion about equality, but rather about who belonged to the superior white race. Even while arguing for "equality" and against Grant, Hrdlička repeatedly explained that in doing so he was "disregarding the colored."<sup>108</sup>

Hrdlička attacked Nordic racism by denying that the kind of white racial purity Grant imagined was possible. All whites came from mixed backgrounds, he insisted, and "no nation of

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<sup>105</sup> Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs*, 93-94.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>107</sup> Manuscript, "Are We Truly Assimilating the Foreign Born," 10 April, 1929, box 19, "Conference on Immigration Policy, 1929," Correspondence.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

white people in the world is or has ever been racially pure.”<sup>109</sup> Americans should not be alarmed about new groups of whites coming to America and mixing with the older Anglo-Saxons. This was, after all, nothing new because “a wholesale (white) mixture has been going on for centuries in Europe.”<sup>110</sup> This high level of mixture among whites “applied equally,” although in separate spheres, “to the yellow-browns and the blacks.”<sup>111</sup> In other words, he was not referring to mixing between the three major races, but within them. Among the various components of the white race, Hrdlička believed that free mixing was healthy.

This made him eager to debunk eugenic worries that new white immigrants would diminish the racial quality of the older American Nordics. When addressing the topics of immigration and eugenics in 1928, he complained about alarmists warning of “deterioration of the American stock through the influx of the so-called ‘inferior races’ of white derivation.”<sup>112</sup> Real anthropologists “would surely be grateful,” he scolded, if the press, especially when reporting on the immigration debates in Congress, would realize that such claims were “bolstered up by pseudo-science only.”<sup>113</sup> To counter these charges, Hrdlička cited research showing that the white melting pot was succeeding and “there is no proof that the normal white immigrant, of any source, has lowered the physical or mental standards of the American people, or would threaten their deterioration.”<sup>114</sup> There was no doubt in his mind about the potential of the new immigrants to fuse racially with older Americans and create a new and biologically powerful racial block. He admiringly claimed, “never in the history of human kind has there been a unit such as white America, that is, white U.S.A.”<sup>115</sup> These optimistic predictions were for whites only. Just to be sure he was understood, he

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 177.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Hrdlička, “Race Deterioration,” 85.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Manuscript, “Are We Truly Assimilating the Foreign Born,” 10 April, 1929, box 19, “Conference on Immigration Policy, 1929,” Correspondence.

added, “there is only one class of immigrant in this great country of all of us, that justifies a real concern. He is the involuntary immigrant from Africa, the negro.”<sup>116</sup>

Given Hrdlička’s racial values, it is not surprising that he considered his people, Czechs, Slovaks, and Slavs, as real whites, and he went to the trouble of fending off any charges to the contrary. As several scholars have convincingly demonstrated, there were often doubts about the whiteness of light-skinned immigrants from Europe.<sup>117</sup> There are no examples; however, of Czechs facing the same level of racial scrutiny as Irish, Armenians, Finns, Italians, and Jews. There is also no evidence, for now, that anyone in the United States tried to place Czechs in the category of black.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, Czechs were often discussed as part of the broader category of Slavs, which positioned them geographically on the eastern edge of Europe. For Nordic purists, these regions were racially tainted by mixing, not with blacks, but with Asians. This is where doubts about the whiteness of Czechs began. For example, the *Dictionary of Races* described the Slavs as speaking European languages but “physically, and perhaps temperamentally,” more “Asiatic.”<sup>119</sup>

There was at least some discussion about the Czech racial pedigree in the American public. In 1937 Hrdlička received a letter from a Nebraska university student named Emma Hejtmanek, who informed him, “I’ve been told in my university classes that the Čechs [sic] (I am one myself) have some Mongolian blood.”<sup>120</sup> Hejtmanek did not seem to mind this, but it is interesting how a racial theory, presumably introduced by a professor, changed her perception of the world around her. “Since this has been brought to my attention,” she told Hrdlička, “I have noted oriental

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> See, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998); Peter Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America,” *The Journal of American History* 89:1 (June, 2002): 154-173; David R. Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How American’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

<sup>118</sup> The only attempt to study the path of Czech immigrants (in Texas) to “whiteness” (allegedly by lynching blacks) is Cynthia Skove Nevels, *Lynching to Belong: Claiming Whiteness through Racial Violence* (College Station: Texas A&M, 2007). Only a small portion of the book is focused on Czech immigrants.

<sup>119</sup> *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*, Reports of the Immigration Commission, 61<sup>st</sup> Congress, Document No. 662 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 128.

<sup>120</sup> Letter, Emma Hejtmanek to Hrdlička, 16 January, 1937, box 28, “HAS-HEN, 1918-1943,” Correspondence.

characteristics in certain Czechs, at least, I think I have.”<sup>121</sup> Hrdlička responded that the Mongols “were stopped in Moravia and never reached Bohemia.”<sup>122</sup> As to her recent discovery of Asiatic features in her Czech friends, he warned, “somewhat bulky cheek bones do not alone necessarily mean any such admixture.”<sup>123</sup> The real threat to Czech whiteness did not come from the Mongols.

It was fairly easy to dismiss the racial influence of the Mongols, but a more volatile discussion centered on the origins of the Slavs. The insinuation that Slavs were in some way “Asiatic” usually rested on the suspicion that their origins were less-than-white. There was speculation that the “Alpine” physical types, believed to be common in Slavic Europe, originally migrated from Asia. According to Madison Grant, “the Alpine race is clearly of eastern and Asiatic origin.”<sup>124</sup> Although “Slavic” was a linguistic category and “Alpine” was supposedly a biological grouping, it was easy to merge the two. For example, Grant assumed that in “most Slavic-speaking countries ... the predominant race is clearly Alpine.”<sup>125</sup> Most Slavic speakers were “Alpine,” so the argument went, and “Alpines” came from Asia.

Physical features, such as the cephalic index, supposedly gave away the true Asiatic essence of the Slavs. Hans Günther, who added the “East Baltic” type to the “Alpine” as a common Eastern European racial variety, agreed with the Asian origins theory. In Günther’s view, “the Alpine and the East Baltic races” were closely related to “the short, short-headed, broad-faced Inner Asiatic race; and we may suppose a migration out of Asia into Europe for both those races.”<sup>126</sup> Kenneth Roberts, a popular journalist in the 1920s, picked up on this theory and described the Alpines as “stocky, slow, dark, round-skulled folk who inhabit most of Central Europe.”<sup>127</sup> As specific

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<sup>121</sup> Letter, Hejtmánek to Hrdlička, 16 January, 1937, box 28, “HAS-HEN, 1918-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>122</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Hejtmánek, 19 January, 1937, box 28, “HAS-HEN, 1918-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Grant, *Passing of the Great Race*, 134.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>126</sup> Hans Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History*, trans. G. C. Wheeler (London: Methuen and Company, 1927), 85.

<sup>127</sup> Kenneth Roberts, *Why Europe Leaves Home* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1922), 47.

examples, he named, “the Czechs, the Poles, the Slovaks, the Russians ... and so on.”<sup>128</sup> This is the esoteric intellectual context in which Madison Grant believed he was insulting Hrdlička by calling him an “East European round head.”<sup>129</sup>

Hrdlička responded to these doubts about Slavic whiteness by firmly rejecting the theory of Asian origins. “The Slav strain is strictly indigenous to Europe,” he wrote in “The Slavs.”<sup>130</sup> The frequency of “short-headedness” in Eastern Europe had misled even “serious men of science,” but their musings were “mere hypotheses.”<sup>131</sup> In a Czech publication he asserted, “the Slavs are a group originally from Europe,” and this fact “cannot be denied even by those who prefer to think they are a secondary branch from Asia.”<sup>132</sup> Oddly for a physical anthropologist, Hrdlička provided little somatic evidence for his own theory of European origins. Instead he relied on language and culture. He knew the Slavs were Europeans mainly because “their languages, their myths and traditions, their sedentary habits and devotion to agriculture are all European.”<sup>133</sup> “The European whites,” Hrdlička proclaimed, “are divisible into four great strains, which are the Nordic, the Alpine, the Mediterranean, and the Slav.”<sup>134</sup> The reason it was so important to win this argument was because the whiteness of Slavs was in question.

Not only were Slavs originally white Europeans, but they also looked like whites. Hrdlička agreed with Grant that many Slavs had round heads, but he did not view this as a mark of racial inferiority. While Hrdlička agreed with Grant that skulls, such as those of blacks, could reveal the

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<sup>128</sup> Roberts, *Why Europe Leaves Home*, 47.

<sup>129</sup> Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont, 2008), 314.

<sup>130</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” *The Bohemian Review* 2:1 (January, 1918): 180; Manuscript, n.d., box 138, “Slavs (with a manuscript of Hrdlička’s paper ‘The Slavs,’),” European Ethnic History (1908-1938).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 68.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 180; Manuscript, n.d., box 138, “Slavs (with a manuscript of Hrdlička’s paper ‘The Slavs,’),” European Ethnic History (1908-1938). Hrdlička enjoyed calling Madison Grant’s work “pseudo-science,” but he uncritically accepted Grant’s racial division of Europeans into “Nordic,” “Alpine,” and “Mediterranean.” Hrdlička usually added “Slav” to Grant’s three categories and always argued that the differences between these “white” groups were insignificant and not hierarchical. See chapter 1.

primitive qualities of a race, he did not seem to think that the question hinged on narrowness or roundness. The big white race contained many types of skulls, both narrow and broad. There were also narrow skulls among the blacks. After the war, Viktor Palivec thought it was funny when Hrdlička taunted Germans by pointing out that their cherished narrow “Nordic” skulls were the most common among blacks.<sup>135</sup> Hrdlička agreed that round crania were a characteristic of Eastern Europe, but this did not bother him as long as they belonged to white people.

Hrdlička assumed that other features about Czechoslovakians were white as well. In truth, Hrdlička, although a physical anthropologist specializing in anthropometry, had little specific to say about the measurable physical features of Czechs and Slovaks. This was fine because he was not going to be too picky about their ranking among European whites. There was an “original type” of Czechoslovak which was “best preserved in parts of Moravia and Slovakia,” but he acknowledged that due to mixing “some diversity” was inevitable.<sup>136</sup> Czechs and Slovaks were, in some unspecified way, a distinct biological unit, but they did not differ much from their white neighbors in Central Europe. Physically speaking, both fit comfortably into Hrdlička’s generous white category with “hair varying from blond to brunette and eyes ranging from blue to medium brown.”<sup>137</sup> They possessed other, less measurable but still flattering characteristics like, “good stature,” “strong, well-proportioned” bodies, and “frank, smiling, intelligent and attractive” features.<sup>138</sup> One trait not found among Czechs and Slovaks was the “prognathism,” which Hrdlička took to be the very feature that distinguished the black skull as “the most primitive.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička*, 17-18.

<sup>136</sup> Hrdlička, “What are the Czechoslovaks,” in *World’s Fair Memorial of the Czechoslovak Group: International Exposition, Chicago, 1933*, eds. Jaroslav E. S. Vojan and Michal Laučík (Chicago: Czechoslovak Group, 1933), 24.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. See also Oppenheim, 95.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Hrdlička, “The Czechoslovaks: Anthropological Notes,” in *Czechoslovakia: Twenty Years of Independence*, ed. Robert J. Kerner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940), 5; Hrdlička, “Human Races,” 162.

## F. CONCLUSION

Hrdlička merits renown as an equalitarian only when it comes to people he considered white. Compared to Nazi-style Nordicists, he was very liberal with the borders of whiteness and included many groups that Madison Grant would likely reject. With the exception of the Japanese, his generosity even extended to yellow-browns, whom he considered good enough in most cases for whitening through intermarriage. However, his liberality ended abruptly with the black race. It is inaccurate to view Hrdlička as a critic of racial hierarchy. Instead, he was a passionate champion of a more inclusive, white master race. It is therefore not surprising that he included people like himself, namely Czechs, Slovaks, and other Slavs, among the whites. The full story of how the Czechs became white remains to be told, but Hrdlička's racial hierarchy is part of it. The next chapter explores Hrdlička's attempt to identify Czechoslovaks as a specific racial category within the big white race.

## CHAPTER V: WHAT ARE THE CZECHOSLOVAKS RACIALLY?

“In anxious dread of isolation the people scanned each other in the vain quest for some portentous mark that would tell them who belonged together.”<sup>1</sup> (Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*)

### A. INTRODUCTION

In 1933 Hrdlička was preparing a short article for a book commemorating the Czechoslovak Pavilion at the World’s Fair in Chicago. In a letter to one of the publication’s editors, he planned to call his contribution “What are the Czechoslovaks Racially.” Although he later changed the name to “What are the Czechoslovaks,” his original title suggests that he wanted to take a racial perspective. The rest of the letter confirms this. Viewing racial features as the most essential of human qualities, he asked the editor to put his piece first in the volume because “everyone would naturally like to know what are the Czechoslovaks before reading anything else about them.”<sup>2</sup> To better illustrate what he called the “racial characteristics of our people,” Hrdlička also asked the editor to publish photographs of all the book’s Czech and Slovak contributors. This chapter attempts to explain what Hrdlička meant by Czechoslovakian “racial characteristics” and why they were important to him. It argues that Hrdlička believed in some kind of Czechoslovakian racial identity, which in his view legitimized the destruction of Austria-Hungary, the creation of independent Czechoslovakia and the political union of Czechs and Slovaks. Hrdlička used racial reasoning to legitimize national identity as the basis for the political reordering of Central Europe.

### B. SORTING OUT THE CZECHS AND SLOVAKS

Hrdlička spent much of his career looking for “portentous marks,” which were supposed to reveal an individual’s proper racial identity. The struggle for Czechoslovakian independence

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, Second Edition (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 249.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Aleš Hrdlička to R. Jaromír Pšenka, 3 December, 1920, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

involved him in a different yet parallel discussion about how to sort humans into the right groups. Just around the time of the war, some Czech Americans were demanding official recognition for their national identity as superior to their civil ties to the Austria, but what made Czechs and Slovaks different from Germans and Hungarians, especially when they all came from the same state of Austria-Hungary? Once the war began, national identity became even more important because it spared Czechs and Slovaks from an inconvenient civil attachment to Austria, which was then an enemy state. It was not always easy to convince the Allied governments, which were accustomed to the official documentation accompanying citizenship, that self-identifying Czechs and Slovaks were not “really” Austrians. Hrdlička tried to strengthen this distinction by arguing that national identity was somehow racial and more “natural” than Austrian citizenship.

Even before the war started, some Czech Americans insisted on official recognition for their national identity. In 1912, initial reports from the 1910 census angered Czech Americans by classifying them simply as “Austrians.” The Chicago newspaper *Denní Hlasatel* reported, “Slavic immigrants are only presented according to the empire they came from: Czechs as Austrians, Slovenes as Austrians, Slovaks and Croats as Hungarians, Poles as Germans and Austrians or Russians.”<sup>3</sup> On behalf of the offended Czechs, Hrdlička utilized his Washington connections by writing to the Director of the Census, E. Dana Durand to inform him that Czechs “never were nor wish to be regarded as ‘Austrians’.”<sup>4</sup> Hrdlička also complained that mere civil association with the Austrian state left open the possibility that Czech people could wrongly be taken for German in nationality. According to Hrdlička, one of Chicago’s German newspapers was “claiming practically all these ‘Austrians’ as Germans.”<sup>5</sup> Hrdlička politely reminded Durand that Czechs, and especially those in Chicago, were a major voting block and that the census bureau should identify them by nationality. Durand seemed eager to appease Czech voters and wrote back immediately, promising to be more sensitive about Czech national identity in the future. However, as of 1918, Hrdlička was

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<sup>3</sup> “Jsme Rakušani!” *Denní Hlasatel*, 4 May, 1912, box 20, “DOS-DZ, 1904-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to E. Dana Durand, 6 May, 1912, box 20, “DOS-DZ, 1904-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

still complaining to the Census Office. At that time he was trying to study criminality among Czechs and Slovaks but was unable to get information because in official reports, “prisoners are classified by country of birth but not by race nor in such detail as to distinguish the Czechs and Slovaks from other Austrians.”<sup>6</sup>

The gravity of the issue intensified when the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917. It is easy to see why Czech immigrants did not want to be classified simply as “Austrian,” which suggested German nationality in the minds of most Americans. In May 1917, for example, eight Czech immigrants working on a government ship in Baltimore were summarily fired for being “Germans.” In a letter to the local paper, the Baltimore Branch of the Bohemian National Alliance complained, “the taking of Bohemians for ‘Austrians’ is a grave injustice, as the Secret Service of the United States well knows the Bohemians in this country have tried from the beginning of the European War to be of the greatest possible assistance in all directions to the Allies as well as to the United States.”<sup>7</sup> The Bohemian National Alliance cited the authority of Hrdlička, who was lobbying the government to “remove from the Bohemians this shameful brand of Austrians.”<sup>8</sup>

In December 1917, the United States finally declared war on Austria and the stakes again rose for Czech Americans. Now that Austrians were citizens of an enemy state, some Czechs insisted that the U.S. government ignore their civil connection to Austria and instead focus entirely on national affiliation.<sup>9</sup> Reflecting on the impending state of war with Austria, Czech-American J. J.

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Frank Viktor Martinek, 18 October, 1918, box 43, “Martinek, Frank V., 1918-1936,” Correspondence.

<sup>7</sup> “Loyal Bohemians Should not be Classed as Austrians and Considered as Enemy Aliens,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 May, 1917, box 64, “Toula, J.J., 1911-14,” Correspondence. In the early days of the war, and even after, many American Czechs referred to themselves as “Bohemians,” and from the context it is usually clear that they did not mean for the term to include Germans. Of course, there were also German Bohemians.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph S. Roucek, “The Image of the Slav in U.S. History and in Immigration Policy,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 28:1 (January, 1969): 29-48. According to Roucek, “The Slavs especially presented a real problem to Washington. The census showed that in 1917 the American population included about 4,662,000 people born within the borders of the Central Powers, half of them Germans and the other half a queer conglomeration of

Toula of Baltimore wrote to Hrdlička warning, “we have to be sure that Czechs, who are not yet citizens [of the U.S.A.], will not suffer from the same laws that will apply to Germans from Austria.”<sup>10</sup> A few days later Hrdlička wrote to his friend, Congressman Adolf Sabath, who was also an immigrant from the Czech zone of Austria-Hungary, and who sometimes attended the Washington “Bohemian Circle” at Hrdlička’s home. Hrdlička advised Sabath, “it will be of the utmost importance that the Czecho-Slovaks [sic] are kept ... distinct from the Austrians and Hungarians, and that if war is declared against Austria-Hungary some recognition be afforded to Bohemia, which as you well know is as much one of the Allies as Belgium or Serbia.”<sup>11</sup> A few days after the declaration of war, Hrdlička again wrote to Sabath asking him to intervene on behalf of a Czech man with an American wife and children who could not get back into the United States because U.S. consular officials were “treating them as ‘Austrians’.”<sup>12</sup> The consular officials, who were certainly more used to the tangible paperwork of citizenship than the vagaries of national belonging, were probably doing their jobs correctly. It was Hrdlička and Sabath who were proposing a new classification for certain individuals with Austrian passports.

It was not always so easy to tell which Austrians were friendly Czechs and Slovaks and which were hostile Germans and Magyars. The roots of this uncertainty stretched back to Europe. Scholars such as Tara Zahra, Chad Bryant, and Eagle Glassheim have demonstrated that there were still significant numbers of individuals in Central Europe whose nationality was at best ambiguous.<sup>13</sup> Alert Americans were aware of this haziness as well. Herbert Adolphus Miller told

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nationalities from Austria-Hungary. Although about one-third of America’s foreign born came from the enemy territory – and this included all the Slavs (except those from Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution). An overwhelming majority had not become citizens – and thus, technically, they became enemy aliens when the U.S. declared war on Austria-Hungary in December, 1917” (38).

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Toula to Hrdlička, 23 November, 1917, box 64, “Toula, J.J., 1911-14,” Correspondence.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Adolph Joachim Sabath, 14 April, 1917, box 58, “Sabath, Adolph J., 1917-33,” Correspondence. On Sabath, see Burton A. Boxerman, “Adolph Joachim Sabath in Congress: The Early Years, 1907-32,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 66:3 (Autumn, 1973): 327-340.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Sabath, 13 December, box 58, “Sabath, Adolph J., 1917-33,” Correspondence.

<sup>13</sup> Chad Bryant, “Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939-1946,” *Slavic Review* 61:4 (Winter, 2002): 683-706; Eagle Glassheim, “National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945,” *Central European History* 33:4 (2000): 463-486; Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005); Tara Zahra,

American readers in 1915, “in centers like Pilsen or Prague, where the two races have lived together for a long time, it is absolutely impossible to tell them apart until they begin to speak, and then the identity may be concealed by using the other language.”<sup>14</sup> Thomas Čapek, a respected Czech immigrant, also advised, “a person cannot say confidently that his ancestry is either pure German or pure Bohemian.”<sup>15</sup> The uncertainties of national identity confounded other Slavic nationalists in the United States, such as Paul R. Radosavljevich, the author of *Who are the Slavs*, who complained, “if college people are not able to discriminate what is Slavic and what is Germanic what can be expected of the rest.”<sup>16</sup>

Names that did not match the current national identities of their bearers were often an embarrassment. In *Austria under Hapsburg Misrule*, Hrdlička’s friend Thomas Čapek apologized for the unfortunately named Czech nationalist politician Francis L. Reiger: “Despite his German name, an uncompromising patriot.”<sup>17</sup> When writing a professional recommendation for the Czech anthropologist Vojtěch Schück, Hrdlička felt obliged to note, “his name is German, but he is of Slav extraction.”<sup>18</sup> Schück, like many in Central Europe, came from a “mixed” family. To make matters even more complicated, the Czech physical anthropologist Jindřich Matiegka speculated, with a degree of disdain, that Schück was Jewish.<sup>19</sup> In the early days of the republic, Schück earned congratulations from both Hrdlička and Mateigka by officially changing his suspicious German name to “Suk,” which sounded more Czech.<sup>20</sup>

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“Imagined Noncommunities;” Zara, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Henry Adolphus Miller, “The Bohemian Character,” in *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, ed. Thomas Čapek (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915), 131.

<sup>15</sup> Tomas Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Paul R. Radosavljevich, *Who are the Slavs? A Contribution to Race Psychology* (Boston: The Gorman Press, 1919), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 115.

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Edmond V. Cowdry, 4 January, 1919, box 19, “Cowdry, Edmund Vincent, 1917-21,” Correspondence.

<sup>19</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1912, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence. See chapter 7.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter 7; See also, Kevin McDermott, “A ‘Polyphony of Voices’? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slánský Affair,” *Slavic Review* 67:4 (Winter, 2008): 846. Around the same time, according to McDermott, Rudolf Slánský suggested that a Jewish friend change his name from a “German-Jewish name” to a “Czechized” one (McDermott, 846).

According to nationalists, this confusion arose because there were an unknown number of latent Czechs and Slovaks, who were the victims of the Habsburg Empire's alleged "Germanization" and "Magyarization" programs. Fervent nationalists, like Hrdlička's friend Čapek, interpreted the entire history of Austria-Hungary as a grand "scheme" that divided Czechs and Slovaks and "tore apart peoples of the same race."<sup>21</sup> This divide and conquer plan made Slavs "easier victims of Magyarization in Hungary and of Germanization in Austria."<sup>22</sup> Hrdlička frequently discussed the problem of "Germanization" and "Magyarization." He argued that there had been "constant and strenuous efforts" at the "Germanization" of Bohemia and Moravia, which began as a project in the Middle Ages, lasted until World War I, and resumed in 1938.<sup>23</sup> During roughly the same period, the Slavs in Hungary "suffered Magyarization."<sup>24</sup> Because the Austrian state supposedly favored Germans and Hungarians, there were ample reasons to hide one's "true" nationality. Supposedly, some of these erstwhile Czechs and Slovaks betrayed their "true" identities due to moral laxity, and Čapek claimed that many hidden Slovaks were "opportunists who everywhere go with the ruling element."<sup>25</sup> Others, felt Čapek, were less complicit because they were "compelled, for various reasons, to conceal their nationality."<sup>26</sup>

The purported occurrences of "Germanization" and "Magyarization" suggested that there was an unknown number of Germans and Hungarians who were "really" Czech and Slovak. In his recent book, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, Kevin McNamara has recounted an interesting story that illustrates this mystical belief in latent national identity. The famous odyssey of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia began in Chelybinsk in May, 1918, when an Austro-Hungarian prisoner of war threw a chunk of iron out of a train window and killed a Czech legionnaire.<sup>27</sup> The Czechoslovak soldiers stopped the train, identified the perpetrator, and executed him on the spot.

<sup>21</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 70.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>23</sup> Hrdlička, "The German Race," *The Scientific Monthly* 56:3 (March, 1943): 242.

<sup>24</sup> Hrdlička, "The Slavs," *The Bohemian Review* 2:1 (January, 1918): 181.

<sup>25</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin J. McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation: The Mutinous Army that Threatened a Revolution, Destroyed an Empire, Founded a Republic, and Remade the Map of Europe* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 201.

Later, a Czech sergeant remembered, “the name of the culprit was Malik.”<sup>28</sup> This was a typically Czech name, and for the sergeant this meant, “the man was of Czech descent, but a renegade.”<sup>29</sup> The sergeant then reflected on Malik’s “true” identity in a way that Hrdlička and his fellow nationalists would consider entirely plausible:

What turned him so violently against his blood brethren is not known ... but it occasionally happened that by means of promises, bribery or force, weak Czechs and Slovaks were seduced from their natural allegiance to become mere creatures of the Austrians. Doubtless Malik had become one of these, or at least the son of such a man who, perhaps, had been compelled to send the unfortunate lad to a German school where he had learned to forget his Czech ancestry. The Austrian habit of Germanizing in this manner their Czech subjects was one of the reasons which caused us to rise up against the empire.<sup>30</sup>

Since even committed nationalists admitted that the lines between nationalities were not always clear, outsiders were often more uncertain. Czechoslovakia’s founding father and first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, later recounted that during the war he had some difficulties, unsurprisingly, in convincing the Allied governments that Czechs and Slovaks were different from other Austrian prisoners. Especially, “in the eyes of many Russian administrative officials,” he complained, “prisoners were still ‘Austrians.’ Legitimist even in regard to Austria, they could not

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<sup>28</sup> Gustav Becvar, *The Lost Legions: A Czechoslovakian Epic* (London, Stanley Paul, 1939), 88-90, quoted in McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 201. “Malík” is still a common Czech surname.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 201-202. For some reason, McNamara identifies the assailant as “Hungarian-speaking,” even though his own source suggests that the man was a German speaker. Tomáš Masaryk, who was well informed but not an eyewitness, remembered that the man was “a German prisoner,” in Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914 – 1918*, trans. Henry Wickham Steed (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 254.

comprehend that our men should be Czechs and Slovaks.”<sup>31</sup> Not only the Russians were obsessed with “legitimacy.” Masaryk recorded that for the other Allies, “our prisoners were, internationally speaking, Austrians; and it was long before people in allied countries could understand the difference between Czechs and Slovaks, on the one hand, and Austrians on the other.”<sup>32</sup> After considerable diplomatic effort, remembered Masaryk, “several allied states began to treat more leniently our prisoners and those of the other non-German and non-Magyar races of Austria-Hungary.”<sup>33</sup>

Once nationalist leaders like Masaryk persuaded the Allied governments that Czechs and Slovaks were not “real” Austrians, there were obvious advantages to being a Czech national instead of an Austrian citizen. For free Austrians living abroad, joining the Czech national cause meant avoiding the harsher treatment that their fellow citizens endured during the war. Masaryk viewed this as a problem in expatriate communities and later complained about an “influx of brand-new Czechs and Czechoslovaks into our colonies .... Since, in Paris and elsewhere, it was not pleasant to be classed as a German, all kinds of renegades who know a few words of Czech claimed fellowship with us, especially when the Allied governments granted privileges to our citizens and recognized us not only as a nation but as an Allied nation.”<sup>34</sup> In the United States, Hrdlička was also aware of this problem, and in 1917 he advised his friend Toula to purge Czech nationalist circles of all criminals, socialists, and Germans. Above all, he extolled, “we must all keep away from Germans now, like from an infection”<sup>35</sup> Also in 1917, Hrdlička wrote to the Russian Ambassador in Washington to insist, “that the Slavic press in this country be cleansed of all German and Austrian influences.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Toula, 19 May, 1917, box 64, “Toula, J.J., 1911-14,” Correspondence.

<sup>36</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to George Bakhméteff, box 11, “BAA-BAM, 1903-1943,” Correspondence.

Just a few days after the United States declared war on Austria-Hungary, Hrdlička's friend Toula found a symptom of the German "infection" in Czech circles. He reported to Hrdlička, "some of our people complained that Frank Novotný from Washington, who wanted to become a member of the local branch of the Czechoslovakian National Council, is a '*Deutsch-Böhm*,' and that he raised a German flag whenever the Germans won (this was supposedly before America declared war on Germany)."<sup>37</sup> Toula seemed to think that Novotný was probably a genuine Czech, and he suspected that Novotný's Teutonic inclinations were "only a rumor and maybe someone was trying to get revenge on him."<sup>38</sup> Whatever Novotný's sympathies may have been, this episode demonstrates how the boundaries of national identity were subjective, negotiable, uncertain, and potentially dangerous. In the near future, in harsher times and places, questionable national identity would soon lead to the loss of civil rights for many, including the very right to life itself.

### C. "NATURAL" NATIONS INSTEAD OF "ARTIFICIAL" STATES

The promotion of national identity as the crucial principle for rearranging Central Europe caused much confusion and vied with civic identities connected to historic states, especially Austria-Hungary. In order to make subjective national identities seem more concrete and more competitive with the relative straight-forwardness of citizenship, some enthusiasts argued that the nation was a physical reality found in "nature." This made national identity sound "scientific." It also suggested that the nation was older and more authentic than any meager state. However, it also raised the question of exactly what "natural" characteristics united people in national groups. Not everyone thought about this problem specifically in terms of biology and physical traits; most were happy with vaguely defined terminology like "blood" or cultural indicators like language. Hrdlička, however, was a scientist who believed that measurable physical traits explained human variation, and this preoccupation pushed him to find some kind of bodily markers for identifying national

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<sup>37</sup> Letter, Toula to Hrdlička, 11 December, 1917, box 64, "Toula, J.J., 1911-14," Correspondence.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

groups. As with American race categories, he wanted to define Central European national boundaries in terms of measurable physical features. Once again, he failed.

In order to understand just how revolutionary the idea of Czechoslovakian national identity was, it is useful to explore for a moment the ideas of its first president and most forceful advocate, Tomáš Masaryk. Masaryk certainly possessed the intellectual equipment needed to lead such a revolutionary cause. Many agreed that along with his personal integrity, Masaryk's philosophical aptitude was the main feature that propelled him into the role of leader. At the age of sixty-four in 1914, he was a man who conveyed deep confidence in his hard won convictions. Joseph S. Roucek wrote in 1931 that Masaryk, "sees and understands things in their interconnections and meaning," and these few words go a long way toward explaining why people looked to him for leadership.<sup>39</sup> As a university professor and polyglot, Masaryk was especially popular with intellectuals like Wickam Steed and R. W. Seton-Watson in Britain, and with university professors of Czech heritage in the United States.<sup>40</sup> Still, despite the complexity of his style, many average Czech-Americans revered him. At a 1918 rally in Chicago, for example, he drew a crowd of at least 100,000 supporters.<sup>41</sup> Many Czech Americans, including Hrdlička, viewed Masaryk as a prophet who could explain Czechoslovakia's place within European political traditions and philosophies.

Although difficult to verify, it is likely that Hrdlička derived his philosophical and moral ideas mostly from Masaryk. Hrdlička and Masaryk corresponded on a semi-personal level on a few occasions. For example, Masaryk sent Hrdlička a condolence letter when his first wife died in 1918 and a congratulatory note on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Nevertheless, they never met personally, they were not close, and their intellectual outlooks were different in many ways. As a scientist, Hrdlička was far more concerned with identifying the supposed measurable physical details of Czechoslovakian identity. In contrast, Masaryk had exactly the kind of prestigious philosophical education that

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph S. Roucek, "Thomas Garigue Masaryk as Politician and Statesman," *Social Science* 6:3 (July, 1931): 274.

<sup>40</sup> For example Otto Kerner and Joseph Roucek in the U.S.A.

<sup>41</sup> Josef Kalvoda, "Masaryk in America in 1918," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 27:1 (1979), 88.

Hrdlička lacked and perhaps envied, and he was far more interested in religious and moral problems than in measuring noses and inspecting teeth. Of the two, only Masaryk was really capable of explaining the meaning of Czechoslovakian national identity in a deeply idealistic way and connecting it to a broader intellectual tradition. In a 1929 letter, Hrdlička reverently praised the aging president: “Masaryk is not only Masaryk, but ‘the grand old man of Czechoslovakia.’ And all this has a deep moral effect on our people everywhere. Therefore, I wish you again a long journey ‘through cultural achievements to true humanity and freedom.’”<sup>42</sup>

However one feels about Masaryk’s conclusions, it is clear that they emerged from his sincere personal struggle with the weightiest questions of his time. Even as a young scholar, Masaryk worried intensely about the demise of traditional religious beliefs, which he considered a “moral crisis” with stark psychological and political repercussions.<sup>43</sup> He believed this crisis was inescapable because modern science invalidated ecclesiastical authority and superstition, which had buttressed the old moral and ethical order. “Reasoned critical scientific knowledge,” wrote Masaryk, meant that “childlike faith,” was no longer viable.<sup>44</sup> The core issue of his day, in his words, was “the great antagonism between the Churches and modern thought.”<sup>45</sup> Although he believed this conflict with religious tradition was unavoidable, he also saw something tragic about it. There was no going back. “Do we wish to return to the creeds and the doctrines of the Church,” asked Masaryk, “is there to be a complete return, a philosophical Canossa?”<sup>46</sup>

The evidence strongly suggests that Masaryk found a substitution for old-fashioned religious belief in Czech national identity. Throughout his career, he held that the forfeiture of old

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<sup>42</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 20 March, 1929, box 44, “Masaryk, Thomas G., 1918-1930,” Correspondence.

<sup>43</sup> Roman Szporluk, “Masaryk in Search of Authority,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 7 (1965), 236; R. R. Betts, “Masaryk’s Philosophy of History,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 26:66 (November, 1947): 31.

<sup>44</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 370.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

beliefs created “spiritual and moral anarchy,” and that finding a suitable replacement was crucial.<sup>47</sup> As a young scholar, he argued in his first published study that the modern spiritual crisis caused rising suicide rates in Europe.<sup>48</sup> One of his conclusions was that suicides were increasing because, “belief and the disposition to believe were vanquished by skepticism, criticism, irony, negations and disbelief. Men lost their peace of mind [and] grew restless, inconstant, nervous.”<sup>49</sup> In 1930, Wickham Steed recounted how Masaryk’s psychological research had convinced him, “that the cure for the increase of suicide would lie in the general acceptance of a new religion in harmony with science.”<sup>50</sup> After a few years of searching for this new piety, Masaryk emerged, in historian Roman Szporluk’s words, as a “national ideologist and prophet.”<sup>51</sup> Acting out these convictions, Masaryk devoted the remainder of his life to politics, yet even at the end of his career he still claimed, “I saw politics as an instrument, [but] my goal was religious and moral.”<sup>52</sup> Czech nationalism was his new religion.

For Masaryk, the rise of the new religiosity synchronized nicely with the end of Austria-Hungary and the subsequent rise of Czechoslovakia. In his timeline, the Great War was the historic moment when the old spiritual order, represented by Austria and Germany, crumbled, and the new era, supported by the Allies and the Czechoslovaks, began. In Masaryk’s view, spiritual and moral emptiness caused the war, but the conflict itself actually stimulated a new longing for religiosity. He claimed that during the war, he “felt that there was a yearning for religion but that the creeds of

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<sup>47</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 314. Betts, “Masaryk’s Philosophy of History,” 31; Alexander Gillies, “Herder and Masaryk: Some Points of Contact,” *The Modern Language Review* 40:2 (April, 1945): 120; Szporluk, “Masaryk in Search of Authority,” 236.

<sup>48</sup> Masaryk, *Der Selbstmord als sociale Massenerscheinung der modernen Civilisation* (Wien: Verlag von Carl Konegen), 1881.

<sup>49</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 315; Wickham Steed, “Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. The Man and the Teacher,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 8:24 (March, 1930): 467.

<sup>50</sup> Steed, “Thomas Garrigue Masaryk,” 467.

<sup>51</sup> Szporluk, “Masaryk in Search of Authority,” 236.

<sup>52</sup> Karel Čapek, *Hovory s T.G. Masarykem* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 130. Also quoted in Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30. It is Orzoff’s book that led me to the original source. I have translated the sentence for myself, but Orzoff’s rendering is almost the same: “my goal was religious and moral: politics was just an instrument” [*Já jsem viděl v politice nástroj, cíl mně byl náboženský a mravný*].

the Churches had, and have, far less influence than was supposed.”<sup>53</sup> In the darkness of war, humans still longed for spirituality, but not the old fashioned kind, for “modern men see more clearly the true nature of religion.”<sup>54</sup> This was exactly the right moment to formulate “a fresh comprehension of nature, of men and of social relationships” and “new spiritual and ethical ideals and foundations of the organization of society.”<sup>55</sup>

Masaryk believed that the victorious Allies were on the right side of this struggle because they stood for “democracy” against the Central Powers, who represented the old “theocratic” order. There is considerable scholarly discussion about Masaryk’s use of the term “democracy,” and it requires some explanation here.<sup>56</sup> In *The Making of a State*, published in 1925, he usually used the word to mean something like “national self-determination,” mainly in the context of Central Europe, and particularly for Czechoslovakia.<sup>57</sup> The whole war, according to his rendering, was “a fight between theocratical [sic] absolutism and democratic humanity” and “a great fight for freedom and democracy.”<sup>58</sup> The main reason he viewed the western Allies as champions of “democracy” was because, “in contradistinction to Germany and Austria,” they supported “the cause of small states and nations” and the “the modern principle of nationality for all peoples.”<sup>59</sup> Whereas Woodrow Wilson probably intended the term “democracy” to mean something like “participatory government,” Masaryk preferred to associate it more with the rights of nations.<sup>60</sup> Masaryk was not very interested in democracy in the sense of “rule by the people,” with “people” meaning “distinct

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<sup>53</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 320.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 403.

<sup>55</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 303.

<sup>56</sup> Masaryk’s vague use of the term democracy left plenty of room for further discussion. Orzoff, in *Battle for the Castle*, observes: “he used the term imprecisely, referring to an idealized state and society, rather [than] to legal or formal characteristics such as universal suffrage and free election” (30). See also Peter Bugge, “Czech Democracy 1918-1938 – Paragon or Parody?” *Bohemia* 47 (2006/07): 3-28; Szporluk, “Masaryk’s Idea of Democracy,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 41:96 (December, 1962): 31-49.

<sup>57</sup> Masaryk published the *Making of a State* in Czech as *Světová revoluce za války a ve válce 1914-1918*. [*World Revolution*] (Praha: Orbis, 1925). The English translation first appeared in 1927.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 386.

<sup>59</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Trygve Throntveit, “The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination.” *Diplomatic History* 35:3 (June, 2011): 446. According to Throntveit: “Rather than the national right of self-determination, Wilson promoted the civil right of *self-government* [sic], by which he meant participation, by all constituents of a polity, in determining public affairs.” See also Betty Unterberger, “The United States and National Self-Determination: A Wilsonian Perspective,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:4 (Fall, 1996): 926-941.

individual citizens;" instead, he preferred to substitute "nations" for "individual people." Assuming that nations were analogous to human individuals, he argued, "the democratic principle implies that small states and nations stand on a footing of equality with the big, just as the rights of the so-called 'small man' within his own community are, in theory, equal to those of the wealthy and powerful."<sup>61</sup> In another place he wrote, "all nations, big and small, are equally entitled to their own individualities in political organization and in culture."<sup>62</sup> He equated "nations" with "individuals," and he viewed national self-determination as an updated extrapolation of democracy practiced by individual citizens.

This macroscopic view of democracy is consistent with other elements of Masaryk's political philosophy, which left no room for human individuals to exist outside of nations. He believed that the only true way to understand the abstraction of "Mankind" was within the "concrete" and "practical" framework of the "organization of nations."<sup>63</sup> In order to embrace humanity, one must first belong to a nation, for "the more national we are the more human we shall be, the more human the more national."<sup>64</sup> This outlook explains why *Making of a State*, which is well over 400 pages long, dedicates only a few vague paragraphs to practical details like voting, representation, and civil protections for individual citizens, but no reader can forget its long and passionate passages on the "rights of nations."<sup>65</sup> For Masaryk, the self-rule of nations was the modern version of rule by the people.

Masaryk also believed that national self-determination for Czechoslovakia would realign Central Europe more precisely with "nature." Because nations were "one of the facts of nature," political organizations should match them, and thus Austria-Hungary had to be destroyed.<sup>66</sup> To

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<sup>61</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 325.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 371.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 409.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 390-396.

<sup>66</sup> Gillies, "Herder and Masaryk," 125.

make this claim, Masaryk refurbished another term borrowed from a previous age, “natural rights.” Masaryk rarely applied “natural right” to individuals, instead he viewed it as the primal “right” of nations to “equality,” or as the “natural right” of Czechs and Slovaks to political union. As with his usage of democracy, Masaryk again assumed that the nation equaled a human individual. Eager to link his ideas to the liberal heritage of the French Revolution, he hastily agreed that natural rights implied “equality between all citizens of a state,” but he immediately added that the individual’s “natural right to freedom and equality” applied equally “to communities and nations.”<sup>67</sup> It apparently never occurred to him that there might be an inherent conflict between the rights of nations and the rights of individuals. How could there be? Human individuals would never want to exist simply as citizens of a state without a nation. “Nations,” after all, were “the natural organs of mankind.”<sup>68</sup>

The premise that “natural” identity was more authentic than “artificial” civic identity was influential in the interwar period, and here the line between nation and race grew blurry. What exactly was “natural” about national identity? For many, the real motivating forces behind the deceptive veneer of political history were “nature,” biology, and race. In his preface to Madison Grant’s *Passing of the Great Race*, Henry Fairfield Osborn urged readers to pay attention to “the racial history of Europe.” For him, race was the true but hidden “natural” history, “as influenced by the hereditary impulses, predispositions and tendencies which, as highly distinctive racial traits, date back many thousands of years ....”<sup>69</sup> In 1921 Lothrop Stoddard agreed that race was the real story and that “viewing world affairs solely from the angle of politics” was a “dangerous delusion.”<sup>70</sup> States come and go, but race was primal and constant. Stoddard was almost certainly referring to the demise of Austria-Hungary when he wrote, “the late war has taught many lessons as

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<sup>67</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 304.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 390.

<sup>69</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn, in Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936 [1916]), viii.

<sup>70</sup> Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), 4-5.

to the unstable and transitory character of even the most imposing political phenomena, while a better reading of history must bring home the truth that the basic factor in human affairs is not politics, but race.”<sup>71</sup> In a recent book, Johann Chapoutot has shown how Nazi thinkers extended this already well-worn appeal to “nature” to its most extreme and logical conclusions. Hitler wrote, “the state is only a means to an end. Its end and its purpose is to preserve and promote a community of human beings who are physically as well as spiritually kindred.”<sup>72</sup> Hitler agreed with Czechs like Hrdlička that one particular state, Austria-Hungary, had been “doomed to failure by biology and history.”<sup>73</sup> Ironically, and very cogently, Nazi ideologues extended the same biological reasoning to Czechoslovakia in 1938. To be sure, Nazi ideology lay at the extreme end of the spectrum of twentieth-century thought, but the underlying presumption that “nature,” meaning racial and national identity, should shape the political order, not the other way round, was ubiquitous.

If nations were the most “natural” human associations, then any state standing in their way, namely Austria-Hungary, was “unnatural.” Masaryk pointedly aligned himself with those philosophers who believed, “the state is an artificial and the race a natural institution.”<sup>74</sup> In what sounds like an outright renunciation of geographical reality, he even denied that the Danube River had ever functioned as a “natural link between the peoples living on its banks.”<sup>75</sup> Habsburg Austria’s long history was illegitimate because, “nationality, as expressed in terms of race, played little or no part” in its formation.<sup>76</sup> Austria was a barrier to future progress precisely because it elevated “the multi-racial state as ideal.”<sup>77</sup> Many Czech nationalists felt that World War I was a revolutionary opportunity to discard this synthetic state, which stifled them racially. In the early days of the war, Czech-American Thomas Čapek hoped that “the map makers” would redraw

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Adolph Hitler, cited in Johann Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood: Thinking and Acting as a Nazi*, trans. Miranda Richmond Mouillot (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 114.

<sup>73</sup> Chapoutot, *Law of Blood*, 286.

<sup>74</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 413; Alexander Gillies, “Herder and Masaryk,” 125.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 372.

<sup>76</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 385.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 306.

borders “according to racial, not political lines.”<sup>78</sup> After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, many Czechs continued to glorify the elimination of the Austrian state. “With the destruction of the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy,” Czech-American professor Victor Vraz lectured in 1937, “came a racial triumph.”<sup>79</sup> In the 1920s, Masaryk remembered the Czech national victory in similar terms: “having no state of our own,” he revealed, “we organized ourselves racially and set ourselves, as a people, above the Austrian state.”<sup>80</sup> He wrote these words as president of Czechoslovakia, when it occurred to him, perhaps with some trepidation, that this foundation myth, which he had helped to create, also “engendered a certain inclination to be anarchical.”<sup>81</sup>

After the war, the winners supposedly rearranged the world according to its “natural” foundations, and for Masaryk, this resolved Europe’s most serious problems; now the new religion of national piety could shine brightly. Healing could now begin because the “division of Austria into her historical and natural elements was a condition of the reconstruction of Europe.”<sup>82</sup> The values of national identity were now unleashed, and “the new order in Europe [and] the creation of the new states ... has shorn nationalism of its negative character by setting oppressed peoples on their own feet.”<sup>83</sup> Masaryk’s millennial interpretation of the Great War prompted him to make some staggeringly bad predictions in the 1920s. Because the post-war treaties “created juster [sic] conditions throughout Europe,” he prophesized, “we are entitled to expect that the tension between states and races will decrease.”<sup>84</sup> Now that the Slavic nations had their own states (at least to Masaryk’s satisfaction), diplomacy would be “clearer and more practical than it was under Austria-Hungary.”<sup>85</sup> He even believed that defeat was a good thing for vanquished Germany, not only

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<sup>78</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 12-13.

<sup>79</sup> Vraz, “Central Europe’s Last Democracy,” 16 March, 1937, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>80</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 413.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

because it was now a republic, but also because it was “racially more homogenous and is consequently able to pursue pacific, democratic aims.”<sup>86</sup>

Most importantly, Masaryk believed that the unleashing of national values would finally resolve the spiritual crisis of the modern age, the very problem that he first took up as a young scholar. In the war, the side of national freedom and democracy won out over theocracy and absolutist monarchy, and Masaryk believed “these political changes will stimulate endeavors to bring about a renaissance and regeneration in ethics and culture.”<sup>87</sup> The unshackled nation could now be the source of spiritual rejuvenation. “Now that we are free,” he wrote, “our chief task ... is to work out a critical, scientific philosophy of nationality and culture.”<sup>88</sup> This mission involved the rewriting of “literature and art, philosophy and science, legislation and the state, politics and administration,” and a renaissance of “moral, religious and intellectual style,” all of which “have to be national.”<sup>89</sup> Even the Christian ideal of neighborly love, preached Masaryk, had survived the spiritual crisis and was once again viable, now that it could be applied primarily to members of the nation. The ideal of loving all humankind in an abstract sense might be admirable, but “it is not always selfish for a man to care chiefly for those about him, his family, his own people.”<sup>90</sup> In other words, the biblical injunction to “love thy neighbor” did not require Czechoslovakians to “pour out our souls in bootless love for some distant folk in Asia.”<sup>91</sup> No, the nation was the natural and practical forum for demonstrating neighborly love. One first learned to love humanity at home in the nation. By the end of his life, Masaryk had finally solved the spiritual crisis by overhauling his lost Christian values as Czechoslovakian nationalism.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 378.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 326.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 381.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 390.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Although less philosophically sophisticated than Masaryk, Hrdlička followed a similar intellectual track. His parents had planned a religious career for him, but by the time he was a young man he had already discarded traditional faith and decided, “old props, reliances [sic], ideals, have seemingly given away or threaten to do so.”<sup>92</sup> Like Masaryk, Hrdlička also feared that the loss of traditional religious beliefs could be dangerous if “there is nothing provided to take their place” because people would be left “bewildered.”<sup>93</sup> Because of this problem, Hrdlička shared the feeling that humanity was passing through a “critical period.”<sup>94</sup> In contrast to Masaryk, Hrdlička placed more responsibility on “science,” as he understood it, to generate new moral guidelines, and as argued in chapter one, this led him to a mystical interest in eugenics. However, he also mirrored Masaryk’s faith that the nation could be a source of spiritual regeneration. Echoing Masaryk’s philosophy, he told his friend Jindřich Matiegka that he hoped World War I would end with “the dawn of true civilization and democracy.”<sup>95</sup> A few years later, he viewed the foundation of Czechoslovakia as an opportunity for moral rebirth: “It will be necessary to erect from the political, social, and mental ruins new temples, new aims and ideals.”<sup>96</sup> Reflecting on the war years from the perspective of the 1930s, Hrdlička told the story thusly: “Since long before the World War the Czechoslovaks [were] in open intellectual warfare with Austria-Hungary; from the moment the war start[ed] they [were], wherever they exist[ed], with the Allies, assisting them in every way possible. And eventually, on the 28th of October, 1918, they terminate[d] their three-hundred-years-long vassalage to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and bec[ame] once more, with the help of the Allies and America in particular, an independent unit of the human family.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Manuscript, “Human Welfare and Science,” 1936 (?), box 39, “LE, 1901-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Jindřich Matiegka, 17 September, 1914, box 44, “Jindřich Matiegka, 1914-1920,” Correspondence.

<sup>96</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 13 May, 1919, box 44, “Jindřich Matiegka, 1914-1920,” Correspondence.

<sup>97</sup> Hrdlička, “What are the Czechoslovaks,” in *World’s Fair Memorial of the Czechoslovak Group: International Exposition, Chicago, 1933*, ed. Jaroslav E. S. Vojan and Michal Laučík, 22-24 (Chicago: Czechoslovak Group, 1933), 24.

#### D. WHAT ARE THE CZECHOSLOVAKS RACIALLY?

For enthusiasts of the ambiguous world of national identity, it would have been expedient if “nature” provided clear and measurable physical traits distinguishing the various nationalities of Central Europe. This was Hrdlička’s specialty, and as a physical anthropologist who wrote a definitive textbook on anthropometry, he hoped such features existed and sometimes tried to pretend that they did. After all, he assumed that physical traits were paramount to understanding human variation. In truth, Hrdlička often noted that the biological border between Czechs and other Central Europeans was porous. Nevertheless, he could not resist the mystical belief that there was some, as yet unidentified, physical basis that made Czechs and Slovaks a naturally united nation, distinct from Germans and Hungarians. With clever and well-chosen words, he implied that Central European national groups were biologically derived, somehow, from “nature” itself. On close examination, however, it is clear that Hrdlička struggled to find any measurable features that visibly separated Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, and Hungarians.

Hrdlička’s language turned most racial when he described the Slavs, to whom the Czechs and Slovaks belonged. However, he immediately faced the problem that Slavs are, by definition, a linguistic and not a biological group. Even Hrdlička had to confess on one occasion that Slavs were really only “people who speak Slavic languages.”<sup>98</sup> However, he desperately wanted the Slavs to share some physical bond, and he told an audience in Prague that a merely linguistic description was “hardly satisfying.”<sup>99</sup> Since language was not enough, he had to fall back on three wobbly assertions about Slavic racial identity: “familial” relationship, membership in the white race, and remarkable fertility.

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<sup>98</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka i budoucnosti lidstva* (Praha: Nakladatel B. Kočí, 1924), 68.

<sup>99</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu*, 67-68.

Hrdlička often asserted that a mysterious familial heritage linked Czechs and Slovaks to other Slavic language speakers and endowed them all with physical similarities. “Originally,” he declared, all Slavs “were but one great strain of people of the same blood.”<sup>100</sup> For a long time, imagined Hrdlička, the primeval Slavs “remained, physically as well as otherwise, a homogeneous or but slightly mixed group.”<sup>101</sup> Over the ages, these pure Slavs mixed with other people and took on local variations, yet “certain general bodily and mental similarities” remained visible.<sup>102</sup> If one looked closely, one could still spot the “original type” of Slav in the less industrialized regions of Slovakia, Russia, and the Balkans. In the 1920s, he contended that although the Slavs were not a race in “the full sense of the word,” there were still “enough similarities that they relate to each other with familial sympathy.”<sup>103</sup> This familial solidarity endured until the modern age and still had political significance because, “there was never lost a strong basic feeling of common parentage and mutual sympathy, feeling which in the recent epoch and among the more cultured became largely responsible for the so-called Pan-Slavism, the bug-bear before the war of Germany and Austria-Hungary.”<sup>104</sup>

Hrdlička also stressed that the Slavs were a segment of the white race, but his efforts to lump them together with other whites at times undermined his assertion that they were a distinct group with specific physical traits of their own. It was obviously a priority for him to class the Slavs as white. This is why he was always defensive about theories that the Slavs originated in Asia, which called their whiteness into question. In response, he insisted that the Slavs were “derived from the same source as the rest of the European population.”<sup>105</sup> Because the Slavs emerged from the same racial cradle as other whites, Hrdlička admitted that it would not “be expected that they

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<sup>100</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” *The Bohemian Review* 2:1 (January, 1918): 181.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>102</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 69.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 181.

<sup>105</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 183.

would show any radical differences” from whites in general.<sup>106</sup> This raises the issue of what exactly made Slavs distinct from other whites, especially since Hrdlička dismissed the most obvious marker, language, as insufficient. He never reconciled this inconsistency. Lacking any data, he was satisfied with the pronouncement that there were four “strains” of “European whites,” which consisted of “the Nordic, the Alpine, the Mediterranean,” and “the Slav.”<sup>107</sup> Thus Slavs were racially just like whites, but they still remained physically distinct, largely because Hrdlička introduced the word “strain” to keep them so.

Hrdlička’s most empirical argument for the distinct racial identity of Slavs was their high fertility rates, but this line of reasoning did not help much in defining Czechs. In general, thought Hrdlička, the Slavs noticeably out produced all of “the more important European peoples.”<sup>108</sup> However, the Czechs were an exception to the rule. Unlike their more rustic Slavic cousins, Czechs were “drained out by factories and tiring and tense modern life” and therefore “not as fresh and original as other branches of the Slavs.”<sup>109</sup> Hrdlička theorized that high fertility rates must be a feature of Slavs in their most “natural” state, before encountering the degenerative processes of industrialization. Fortunately, Czechoslovakia still had undeveloped regions in Moravia and Slovakia, where the population was “still youthful, preserved, and full of strength.”<sup>110</sup> This explanation inadvertently suggests that environmental conditions influenced Slavic fertility rates, but of course this is not the road Hrdlička chose to go down. Instead, he speculated, “there seems to be something in the Slav constitution,” “which favors a high birthrate, otherwise the phenomenon would not be so general. It is a gift of nature which if properly safeguarded and preserved, would lead to far reaching consequences in the future.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>109</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 76-78.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>111</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 183.

In the dawning days of Czechoslovakia, racial arguments from “nature” helped to explain why the union of Czechs and Slovaks was more legitimate than the historic political organization of Austria-Hungary had been. In addition, race and “nature” provided a primordial argument that redirected attention away from Czechoslovakia’s conspicuous lack of political tradition. After all, “nature” was older than Austria-Hungary. In the early days of World War I, Czech American author Čapek wrote that Czechs and Slovaks “are one – one in language and one in racial traditions – and nothing divides them except political boundaries.”<sup>112</sup> Masaryk overtly argued that racial history, not political history, justified Czechoslovakia. During his stay in the United States, he worked hard to enlighten the public about the natural union of Czechs and Slovaks. He found that Americans often knew something about “the former Kingdom of Bohemia,” but they “found it hard to understand that the Slovaks were comprised in our race.”<sup>113</sup>

To make this argument, Masaryk appealed to “nature” by again utilizing his creative rendering of “natural rights.” In his understanding of natural rights, “nature” gave Czechs and Slovaks the “right” to political union. “Kinship of blood and speech,” he theorized, “naturally led to reciprocity in culture.”<sup>114</sup> This was his single most important argument for why Czechs and Slovaks belonged together in a state. It is true, as some scholars are quick to point out, that Masaryk also argued for the “historic” rights of the Kingdom of Bohemia. The problem with this contention was; however, that the medieval Kingdom of Bohemia was never “national” in the modern sense and did not include Slovakia. Therefore it had to be “nature,” not history, which united the Czechs and Slovaks. Masaryk stubbornly insisted on using both the “historic right” and the “natural right” arguments as each suited him best. “Many of our public men,” he wrote, “under the influence of a reactionary German conception of the historical rights of the Bohemian lands, ignored our natural rights to union with Slovakia; and, though I admitted historical rights, I always upheld natural rights

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<sup>112</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 113.

<sup>113</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 253.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 380. Masaryk also thought that in terms of “blood and speech,” pan-Slavism was “more natural” than pan-Latinism or pan-Germanism, 380.

alongside of it.”<sup>115</sup> Not everyone thought this dual assertion was reasonable. The “historic” rights of Bohemia disregarded the “national” claims of minorities living there, while the “natural” right to union with Slovakia flagrantly elevated nationality over historicity.<sup>116</sup> This style of argument is reminiscent of the humorous English idiom: “Heads I win, tails you lose.” In *Paris 1919*, Margaret MacMillan describes how some diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference grew exasperated with this opportunistic rhetorical strategy.<sup>117</sup>

Masaryk’s idea of “nature” harmonized well with many of Hrdlička’s own beliefs. Hrdlička similarly viewed the creation of Czechoslovakia as the long-awaited official recognition of a primordial racial reality found in “nature.” Such an interpretation allowed him to argue that Czechoslovakia was, despite all appearances, even more ancient than Austria-Hungary. In a radio address in 1938, Hrdlička claimed, “Czechoslovakia is no recent creation,” but “it is one of the oldest political and racial units of Europe.”<sup>118</sup> This is a confusing sentence because in 1938 Czechoslovakia was obviously a very recent political creation and not “one of the oldest.” However, the statement makes some sense if one combines, as Hrdlička did, the two “facts” that the Bohemian Kingdom was politically old and the “Czechoslovakian race” was ancient. One year previously, a Czech-American professor named Victor Vraz gave a speech at Northwestern University in which he used a slightly different but recognizably similar formula for Czechoslovakia: “it is a country racially old, yet politically new.”<sup>119</sup> Although Hrdlička received a published copy of this speech and a newspaper report about it, it is impossible to know if he read it, yet he was clearly using race with the similar intention of making Czechoslovakia seem ancient despite its obvious lack of political tradition.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 361.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 236.

<sup>118</sup> Hrdlička, “Address on Columbia Broadcasting System,” 9 April, 1938, box 55, “Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938, Correspondence.

<sup>119</sup> Vraz, “Central Europe’s Last Democracy,” 16 March, 1937, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

Masaryk was happy with the vague belief that “blood and speech” made Czechoslovakians an ancient and cohesive nation, but as a physical anthropologist preoccupied with measurable bodily features, Hrdlička alleged that something more tangible united them. The two peoples, he supposed, had “so much in common,” “physically and otherwise,” “that they must be regarded as one and the same people.”<sup>120</sup> Elsewhere he commented that the Czechs and Slovaks, “are closely related,” and he deliberately added that they were similar not only in language, but also “physically.”<sup>121</sup>

Still, despite being a specialist in physical anthropology, he failed to point out specifically which bodily features they shared. In his most thorough description, he wrote that the original Czechoslovakian “type” had featured “good stature, strong, well-proportioned body, face more rounded than oval, physiognomy frank, smiling, intelligent and attractive, hair and eyes ranging from light to medium brown, absence of prognathism.”<sup>122</sup> This somatic description was disappointingly brief, subjective and vague, especially for a scientist. Hrdlička tried to embellish it by listing the supposed “mental characteristics” of Czechoslovaks, which included “cordiality, sensitiveness, idealism, valor [and] love of family, music, dance, and of everything good and beautiful.”<sup>123</sup> This gushing elaboration unfortunately carried him even further from his stated professional goal of achieving “the complete elimination of personal bias” through precise measurement.<sup>124</sup>

In the absence of physical evidence, Hrdlička fell back on his presumption that Slavic speakers must share biological origins and therefore have familial similarities. He envisioned prehistoric Czechs and Slovaks as related tribes descending from one primal family, but he

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<sup>120</sup> Hrdlička, “What are the Czechoslovaks,” 22.

<sup>121</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Joseph G. Pruša, 13 January, 1942, box 60, “Slovak Catholic Sokol, 1936-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>122</sup> Hrdlička, “What are the Czechoslovaks,” 24. In Hrdlička’s understanding of race, “prognathism” was a “primitive” feature common to the skulls of blacks. See chapter 4.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Hrdlička, *Anthropometry* (Philadelphia: The Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, 1920), 7.

presented no evidence from physical anthropology to support this claim. “The facts that are at my disposal,” he reported to Thomas Čapek in 1917, “seem to make it utterly impossible that [the Slovaks] could have been even as much as a completely separate tribe from the Moravians and Bohemians.”<sup>125</sup> The facts at his disposal must have been sketchy because he also asked Čapek, a bank executive, to look up the word “Slovak” in his Czech encyclopedia and report back his findings.<sup>126</sup> Apparently, Čapek’s encyclopedia confirmed Hrdlička’s presumption that Czechs and Slovaks were “cousins,” and he repeated this as an indisputable matter of fact for the rest of his life. Far back in the mists of prehistory, the Czechs were “one of a number of closely related Slavic tribes,” which spread out “from the mother-territory of all Slavs.”<sup>127</sup> Of these, the Slovaks were the most closely related branch. There had once been an “original type” of “Czechoslovak,” over 1,000 years before Czechoslovakia existed, which was “best preserved in parts of Moravia and Slovakia.”<sup>128</sup> Imagining this family history allowed Hrdlička to think of Czechs and Slovaks as “twin brothers by origin.”<sup>129</sup>

Finding physical markers to distinguish Czechs from their neighbors was an enduring and apparently unresolvable problem. From 1939 to 1945, the German Protectorate in Bohemia and Moravia also picked up the problem of differentiating physical characteristics, predictably without any breakthroughs. Especially under Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, the authorities tried to collect anthropometric data to find physical traits distinguishing the “German” and “Slav” populations. In 1940 the protectorate took over the Faculty of Natural Science at Charles University and turned it into the Institute for Racial Biology, led by the physical anthropologist Bruno Kurt Schultz.<sup>130</sup> On several occasions the institute undertook programs to make anthropometric registers

<sup>125</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 30 October, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Hrdlička used the word “*slovník*” [dictionary]. He was referring to *Ottův slovník naučný*, a famous Czech-language encyclopedia published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>127</sup> Hrdlička, “What are the Czechoslovaks,” 24.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>129</sup> Hrdlička, “Address given at the ‘Freedom Rally,’” 7 May, 1941, box 55, “Radio Talk at Freedom Rally, New York, May 7, 1941,” Correspondence.

<sup>130</sup> Michal Šimůnek and Uwe Hossfeld, “The Avantgarde of the ‘Rasse’: Nazi ‘Racial Biology’ at the German Charles University in Prague, 1940-1945” *Acta universitatis Carolinae* 54:1 (2014): 56.

of the population. Its researchers studied, for example, policemen, university students, and schoolchildren.<sup>131</sup> The institute attempted to use the data for selection decisions regarding citizenship, marriage, and in two horrible cases, life and death.<sup>132</sup> As might be expected, the search for clearly visible physiological differences distinguishing Germans from Slavs was not terribly rewarding, and especially in the many cases of mixed ethnicity, the classification process remained frustratingly arbitrary.<sup>133</sup>

#### E. THE GERMAN: “THE INBORN ANTAGONIST OF THE SLAV”

Hrdlička presented the ancient “natural” history of Czechoslovaks as an ongoing struggle for survival against racial enemies. In his 1917 *National Geographic* article, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” Hrdlička declared, “the same natural law of preservation that rules over individuals rules also over nations – only the strongest survive the struggle for existence.”<sup>134</sup> In Central Europe, this law of nature made Czechs and Germans eternal enemies, even if artificial political borders mixed them together. “The history of the Czechoslovak tribes,” he wrote, “from the dawn of written records to the present day, has been one of everlasting struggles against invaders, on the west, northwest and southwest the Germans, or, the southeast the Magyars.”<sup>135</sup> Czechoslovakia had no political history in 1917, but it had a long racial history comprised of, “a 1,500-year-long life-and-death struggle with the race who surround it from the north, west, and south.”<sup>136</sup> Writing for the broader American public in *National Geographic*, Hrdlička reassured his readers that Czechs and Slovaks were inherently incapable of aligning themselves with Austro-German interests in the war. Even if Czech Americans had presented Austrian passports upon arrival to the United States, they were not really Austrians. To Czech-Americans, he claimed, “the very word of Austria sounds

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 74-82.

<sup>132</sup> Chad Bryant, “Either German or Czech,” 693; Šimůnek and Hossfeld, 82.

<sup>133</sup> Bryant, “Either German or Czech,” 693.

<sup>134</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” 163.

<sup>135</sup> Hrdlička, “What are the Czechoslovaks,” 22-23.

<sup>136</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” 163.

strange and unnatural.”<sup>137</sup> The Czechs and Slovaks, by the very nature of their race, were instinctive enemies of Austria, which was “German.”

After 1918, Hrdlička and other Czech nationalists also implied that the right to live in the new Czechoslovakian state ultimately belonged to the race that got there first. Hrdlička believed that not only all of Bohemia, but also most of eastern Germany had originally been Slavic. In a 1943 publication called “The German Race,” he warned against the theory, “held especially by German writers,” that this region “was vacated by German peoples,” and only later inhabited by Slavs.<sup>138</sup> This idea upset Hrdlička because it suggested that the Germans had gotten there first. On the contrary, Hrdlička claimed to have evidence that the Slavs had occupied the area since the beginning of recorded history, and even before. Hrdlička reasoned thusly:

These [Slavic peoples] are assumed to have spread over the country from beyond the Vistula after the Germans moved out. This assumption is unsatisfactory. If the Slavs moved in and stayed, then the country could not have been worthless and would not have been abandoned by its older inhabitants. Nor were the Slavs of the time as well armed as the Germans so that they would have been able to drive the latter out, besides which there is no mention anywhere of such a major event, which would have caused as great disturbances, at least, as the Hunnish invasion in 375 of the Goth territories further southeast.<sup>139</sup>

Not only Bohemia, but the entire territory of modern Czechoslovakia had been German-free at the beginning of the Middle Ages. “The complete Slavicizing of today’s Czechoslovakia,” Hrdlička

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Hrdlička, “The German Race,” *The Scientific Monthly* 56:3 (March, 1943): 240.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 240.

told a Prague audience, “was achieved so long ago that there is not one mention of any other people preserved in the oldest Czech and Moravian traditions, and the majority of non-Slavic local names disappeared, and any feelings of difference among the inhabitants.”<sup>140</sup> The violent German invaders began to infiltrate the fully Slavic lands of Czechoslovakia only later, at some point in the Middle Ages.

Hrdlička pictured this “Germanization” as an endless racial threat that continued unrelentingly from prehistory right down to the Lidice Massacre in 1942. In the Middle Ages, the Germans took over most of eastern Europe, including eastern Germany, by a deliberate process of Germanizing the Slavs. Next, the German menace breached the lands of Czechoslovakia (centuries before it existed) by means of royal invitation. This widely popular myth implies that the modern Germans of Czechoslovakia were really foreigners, who, due to royal patronage, enjoyed unfair privileges at the expense of the indigenous, and therefore more deserving, people. In a report on the Czechoslovakian census of 1930, Emanuel Čapek placed the first serious German intrusion in the early Middle Ages, when “the Germans were introduced into the towns by the kings of the Přemyslid Dynasty, not only near the frontiers, but also in the central part of the kingdom ....”<sup>141</sup> Masaryk also believed the Germans “originally came to us as colonists” in the Middle Ages.<sup>142</sup> Hrdlička agreed with the formulation that modern Germans in Czechoslovakia were “the descendants of immigrants, who came mostly on the invitation of Czech rulers.”<sup>143</sup>

Although this encroachment supposedly began in the Middle Ages, nationalists blamed the Habsburgs for deliberately intensifying the “foreign” German element in Czechoslovakia. Hrdlička shared the popular belief that the 1620 Battle of White Mountain was a significant moment in the Habsburg plot to Germanize the Czechs. Thomas Čapek stated this theory the most strongly: “if

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<sup>140</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 70.

<sup>141</sup> Emanuel Čapek, “Racial and Social Aspects of the Czechoslovak Census,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 12:36 (April, 1934): 596.

<sup>142</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 387.

<sup>143</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” 171.

there is one thing deeply rooted in the minds of the Bohemian people it is the belief, or rather the conviction, that the Hapsburgs beginning with Ferdinand I and ending with Francis Joseph, the present sovereign, one and all planned the Germanization of the nation.”<sup>144</sup> This meant, according to Masaryk, that much of Czech history was a very sad story because the Czech nation had long been subject, “to an alien dynasty and its anti-Czech system, its foreign army, its alien nobility, and a church that was forced upon us.”<sup>145</sup> For Hrdlička, “near-burial within the Austrian Empire for the last three centuries” was only one part of the 1,500-year “life-and-death struggle” with the surrounding German “race.”<sup>146</sup>

There was a religious element to the Germanization plot as well. According to Hrdlička, the indigenous Slavs were peaceful people practicing their own unadulterated paganism, which was “related in general to the Greek [religion],” but then the Germans invaded and forced Christianity on them. Christianity was supposedly crucial to the Germanizing process, which entailed “domination, colonization, and Christianization.”<sup>147</sup> In the early Middle Ages, all of Prussia was Germanized “under the guise of Christianity.”<sup>148</sup> The founder of the Early Modern Habsburg Dynasty, Ferdinand I, continued where the earlier Germans had left off, and he began immediately with the “religious persecution and then general oppression of Bohemia.”<sup>149</sup> After 1620, the scheming Habsburgs openly pursued religious persecution hand in hand with a full scale Germanization program, and German became “the language of commerce, of courts, of all public transactions,” the university was German, and “in schools the native tongue barely [found] space in the lowest grades.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 85.

<sup>145</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 423.

<sup>146</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” 163.

<sup>147</sup> Hrdlička, “The German Race,” 241.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” 169.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

Although Hrdlička knew very well that the biological lines between Czech and German speakers intersected, he usually chose to emphasize what he imagined were their inherent differences. Hrdlička's 1943 article on "The German 'Race'" typifies this contradiction. His main purpose was to argue against the idea that Germans, "at any time could have constituted a 'pure race.'" <sup>151</sup> He emphasized intermarriage and mixing to show that there was no such thing as a racially pure German. Similarly, in a 1938 radio speech he told Americans that the German population in Czechoslovakia was "everywhere largely admixed and mingled with the Slav population." <sup>152</sup> Thus, he acknowledged that linguistic identities and genetic lines had to be separate. Yet in utter contradiction to this argument, he also refused to let go of the mystical belief that speakers of the German language shared a common biological origin, despite all the mixing over the ages. The original Germanic tribes, for example were somehow "apparented [sic] in blood." <sup>153</sup> The "The German 'Race'" article awkwardly concludes that the Germans could justifiably be proud of their race (which did not exist) if only they would keep their pride "within wholesome limits." <sup>154</sup> After all, thought Hrdlička, "racial pride, while not inborn, is, wherever conditions permit, a universal part of both our idealism and egoism, and within bounds is a potential agency for much that is beneficial." <sup>155</sup> Apparently Hrdlička believed that Germans were a race after all, and that they were even entitled to a polite amount of "racial pride."

Hrdlička's commitment to racial ideology compelled him to imagine an abstract familial union of Czechs and Slovaks but at the same time to overlook the empirical truth that Czechs and Germans were heavily intermarried and actually had real families together, especially in Bohemia. His semi-mystical belief in a common biological heritage made Czechs and Slovaks "twin brothers," yet hundreds of years of Czechs and Germans living side by side in the Austrian lands

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<sup>151</sup> Hrdlička, "The German Race," 238.

<sup>152</sup> Hrdlička, "Address of Columbia Broadcasting System," 9 April, 1938, box 55, "Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938, Correspondence.

<sup>153</sup> Hrdlička, "The German Race," 238.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

and raising real-life families made little impression on Hrdlička. The empirical evidence that German and Czech speakers were often, literally, spouses, siblings and cousins, was everywhere. People like Vojtěch Suk, who came from a bilingual family, were still ubiquitous in the Czech lands. When anthropologist Jindřich Matiegka asked him about his nationality in 1912, Suk nonchalantly replied, “you know how it used to be, mother is Czech, father is German.”<sup>156</sup> Suk, the biological result of this union, spoke both languages perfectly. Hrdlička’s own mother, whose maiden name was Wagner, came from a family of Bavarian immigrants, and due to her influence he learned German at an early age.<sup>157</sup> Like many other observers, Hrdlička noted that German speakers frequently had names derived from Slavic languages, and that Czechs bore German names. In his mind, these linguistic discrepancies were due to insidious “Germanization” and not to willful intermarriage or simple convenience. He casually took note of the complex empirical reality around him, but he never allowed it to undermine his ideological deduction that current German speakers in Czechoslovakia descended in a direct genetic line from “colonizing” interlopers in the Middle Ages.

The nationalist advocates of Czechoslovakia demanded that the Austrian state was irredeemably infected with German chauvinism and therefore an invalid model for the future. Even before the war, Masaryk’s aim had been to “de-Austrianize” Czechs. Because Czech nationalists perceived Austria Hungary as a sinister agent of “Germanization,” the campaign to “de-Austrianize” inevitably became anti-German. Fervent Czech nationalists concluded that Austria was so hopelessly inscribed with German values that the old empire could never offer Czechs a fair deal. In 1915 Thomas Čapek denounced the “German-made” Austrian constitution.<sup>158</sup> In 1912 Chicago’s *Denni Hlasatel* proclaimed that very few German Austrians immigrated to the United States because, “the Germans have it so good in Austria, where they rule nationally and

<sup>156</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1912, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence.

<sup>157</sup> Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist” (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1979), 17-18.

<sup>158</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 67.

economically.”<sup>159</sup> According to Čapek, the Germans were the richest “race” because they enjoyed “special favors from the government.”<sup>160</sup> Once Czechoslovakia was established in 1918, the Germans supposedly had no right to complain because they had previously enjoyed so many centuries of privilege. They could live in Czechoslovakia, and as in the case of all minorities, the “rights of race must be safeguarded.”<sup>161</sup> Nonetheless, as Masaryk generalized, “a large number” of the Germans allegedly still harbored an “intolerant demeanor” and would have to “get rid of the old habit of mastery and privilege.”<sup>162</sup> Hrdlička embraced this view, and in 1920 he angrily rebuked the Swedish scholar S. A. Arrhenius for writing an article critical of the new Czechoslovakian republic. Hrdlička implied that Arrhenius’ critique was untrustworthy because his words were only “a reflection of the old feelings of the German towards the Slav element of the population.”<sup>163</sup> “It is hard,” Hrdlička continued, “for some of the people of the old regime of exploitation to get used to new conditions, under which they can be no more the favored few.”<sup>164</sup> In a 1938 radio address he explained that Sudeten Germans were angry because “under Austria they were the privileged elements.”<sup>165</sup>

Hrdlička died in 1943, just before the 1,500 year racial struggle finished conclusively, but his perspective helped to provide at least some of the justification for doing away with German Czechoslovakians once and for all. Hrdlička’s racial view supported the popular national mythology that the Czechs were “indigenous” to Central Europe and that the Germans never really belonged there.<sup>166</sup> In 1947, Viktor Palivec praised Hrdlička for his dogged insistence that the Slavs were indigenous to the region. According to Palivec, other scholars eventually “proved” Hrdlička’s contention true. As an example, he pointed to a feverish little 1946 pamphlet by Metod Nečas,

<sup>159</sup> “Jsme Rakušani!” *Denní Hlasatel*, 4 May, 1912, box 20, “DOS-DZ, 1904-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>160</sup> Čapek, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, 26.

<sup>161</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 387. Significantly, the “rights of race,” not the civil rights of individual citizens.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 387-389.

<sup>163</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Svante August Arrhenius, 6 June, 1920, box 6, “ARN-AY, 1916-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Hrdlička, “Address of Columbia Broadcasting System,” 9 April, 1938, box 55, “Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938, Correspondence.

<sup>166</sup> See Glassheim, “National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing.”

called *My před 2,000 lety* [*Us, through 2,000 Years*].<sup>167</sup> This sneering post-war tract purports to demonstrate that people recognizable as Slavs had occupied Central Europe for 2,000 years, before any Germans showed up. The real point of this zealous little rant is about post-war Czechoslovakia and comes at the end, where the author exclaims, “the Germans must be aware that we Slavs have been here from time immemorial, and that they [the Germans] are the aliens, and that the ones who have the right of domicile here in Central Europe are we Slavs!”<sup>168</sup> The “natural” right of the indigenous race now superseded the civil right of citizenship.

The individual’s right to the presumption of innocence also took a back seat to racially based collective guilt. Just after World War II, all the “foreign” Germans finally lost the right, as a group, to live as citizens in the state of Czechoslovakia. Palivec and Nečas had just witnessed the thorough ethnic cleansing of nearly all residents identified as German.<sup>169</sup> Between May and August, 1945, about 660,000 Germans were cruelly evicted from Czechoslovakia, and somewhere between 19,000 and 30,000 died as a result of the forced removal, many from direct violence.<sup>170</sup> While not explicitly a “racial” policy, racialized thinking often played a role. It is obvious, for example, that these “punishments” were more related to national grouping than to actual crimes committed by individuals during the occupation. The Czechoslovakian government’s official language conflated the categories of “German,” “fascist,” and “traitor” and encouraged rough “people’s courts” to dish out harsh and abnormally swift punishments to all of these vaguely interconnected enemies.<sup>171</sup> After August, 1945, the Czechoslovakian government commenced an official removal program, which evicted yet another 2.8 million. Tellingly, 88,614 “anti-Fascist” Germans were also expelled.<sup>172</sup>

According to Chad Bryant, three out of ten people living in Bohemia and Moravia before 1939

<sup>167</sup> Viktor Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička* (Praha: Orbis, 1947), 27.

<sup>168</sup> Metod Nečas, *My před dvěma tisíci lety* (Nakladatel Karel Jelínek, 1946), 141.

<sup>169</sup> There was still a large number of “amphibians” in Czechoslovakia, and there is no reason for modern historians to accept the national categories as unambiguous. See Bryant, “Either German or Czech;” Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities,” 93-119; and also Zahra, “Reclaiming Children for the Nation: Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1945,” *Central European History* 37:4 (2004): 501-543.

<sup>170</sup> Bryant, 697; Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 159-60.

<sup>171</sup> Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 156-60.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 156-61.

were considered German, while in 1950, the purged regions were 94% Czech.<sup>173</sup> Czechoslovakia's ancient "life-and-death struggle with the race who surround it," as Hrdlička framed it, was finally over, and the state was at last in harmony with "nature."

## F. CONCLUSION

In the first half of the twentieth century, Hrdlička joined forces with those who wanted to overthrow the existing political order and reorganize Central Europe according to group identities presumably derived from "nature." It has never been clear what exactly "nature" meant, but many people linked it to race and nation. As a physical anthropologist specializing in anthropometry, Hrdlička was inclined to think that the key to racial identity must be encoded in measurable bodily features. For him, the deepest truths about human variation could be found in skull measurements, facial shapes, and other somatic features. He applied this viewpoint consistently throughout his career, whether he was separating "full blood" Indians from "half-bloods," sorting out black babies from white ones, or distinguishing Slavs from Germans. If anyone could find the specific physical markings that separated Czechs and Slovaks from Germans and Hungarians, it would have been Hrdlička, who spent his life measuring people's body parts. Yet in the end his supporting evidence, what there was of it, was unconvincing, and he had to prop it up with speculation and mysticism. Perhaps this was because the categories of race and nation were not measurable bodily features, but immaterial constructions of the human mind.

Although he could muster very little evidence, Hrdlička still insisted that Czechoslovaks were some kind of racial "unit." For Hrdlička, race justified the creation of Czechoslovakia. During World War I, he claimed that Austria-Hungary thwarted the natural racial order and should be dismantled. In his view, racial affinity meant that Czechs and Slovaks should live together as fellow

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<sup>173</sup> Bryant, "Either German or Czech," 683.

citizens, while Czechs and Germans probably could not, a problematic prescription for the multinational Czechoslovakian First Republic. During the crisis of 1938, Hrdlička argued that despite all appearances, Czechoslovakia was not a new creation at all, but really more than 1,500 years old. This was so because a mere twenty years of Czechoslovakian political history were nothing in comparison with more than a millennium of racial history, stretching deep into the primordial past. In 1938 at least, the Germans seem to have more or less agreed with him.

## CHAPTER VI: “PUBLIC OPINION IS A POWERFUL WEAPON,” 1914-1943

“Convictions are more dangerous enemies of the truth than lies.”<sup>1</sup> (Friedrich Nietzsche)

### A. INTRODUCTION

Although Hrdlička and others liked to emphasize the confluence of Czechoslovakian national aspirations with the interests of the United States in the world wars, the two agendas did not align perfectly. For most of World War I, the United States was neutral, and it only embraced the destruction of Austria-Hungary and its replacement with independent Czechoslovakia in the very final stages of the conflict. In the early years of World War II, many Americans remained committed to neutrality even while Germany dismembered Czechoslovakia in 1938-39. Due to this dissonance in both world wars, Hrdlička and other Czech-Americans grew frustrated with the American public for failing to prioritize their own parochial interests. In this setting, the uncompromising earnestness of nationalists sometimes gave Czechoslovakian propaganda the tone of professorial elitism, as cultivated foreigners preached to allegedly ill-informed Americans about their supposedly clear-cut moral obligations to a far-way cause. This chapter will examine Hrdlička’s role in the Czechoslovakian struggle to make a case to the American public from 1918 to 1943.

Much historical literature treats Czechoslovakian propaganda in the United States uncritically and heroically.<sup>2</sup> However, a more even-handed approach, which does not share the moral certainty of the Czechoslovakian propagandists, makes the story look different. From a less

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 63.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent example is Kevin J. McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation: The Mutinous Army that Threatened a Revolution, Destroyed an Empire, Founded a Republic, and Remade the Map of Europe* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 13-50; 80-83. Although this book seems largely to share the traditional patriotic Czech narrative of events, it tells an important story in great prose and does a splendid job using hard-to-get English-language sources.

partisan perspective, Czech and Slovak immigrants were cooperating with foreign interests to manipulate Americans, sometimes underhandedly, to become involved in a distant, confusing, and parochial issue that was of marginal strategic interest to the United States. Much of the Czech propaganda simply bypassed democratic channels altogether by wooing the powerful behind the scenes. At the popular level, it reduced very complicated problems to a simple set of “facts” that educated people preached to the less cultivated. Furthermore Czech propaganda deliberately attempted to undercut opposing agendas, for example those of German-language immigrants, not by argument, but by attacking their sincerity or by outright censorship. The point here is not that this was somehow morally “wrong.” In a society where free speech was usually honored, Czech-American nationalists had as much right as anyone to press their agenda, and in messy democratic cultures, verbal competitors rarely play “fair” and according to academic rules of argumentation. However, a modern historian has no compelling reason to portray Czechoslovakian propaganda as more righteous than that of any other group competing for military assistance from the United States.

## B. WORLD WAR I

It was not clear to all Americans, especially in the long period of neutrality from 1914-1917, that the Czechoslovakian cause was more worthy of support than the many other foreign interests vying for U.S. approval. Czechs and Slovaks were only one of many groups seeking to persuade the United States to use its untapped military potential to tilt the war in favor of a foreign concern. Some German-American immigrants also hoped to influence U.S. policies for the benefit of their homeland, at least in the first years of the war. However, the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, Germany and Austria’s bumbling public relations, and aggressive British propaganda severely reduced their ability to influence public opinion in America. Especially when the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, most German-Americans had to abandon all public expressions

of idealism for their old country, sometimes from fear of persecution.<sup>3</sup> Czech and Slovak Americans also felt tension between their allegiance to the United States and the foreign cause of Czech nationalism, but in comparison with German Americans, the Czechoslovakian position grew stronger as the war progressed. This meant that Czechoslovakian Americans did not have to make such a stark choice between the politics of Europe and citizenship in United States.

The most vocal foreign interest in America in the early days of the war was Britain, which used almost any methods available to manipulate information and prejudice the public against Germany and Austria. Almost as soon as Britain entered the war in 1914, the British navy severed direct telegraph cables between Germany and the United States. This enabled the British government secretly to edit many of the European news reports coming to the United States.<sup>4</sup> The British further capitalized on their secretive control over information by dramatizing reports of German “atrocities” and “plots” for the benefit of the American public. As the war progressed, the British strategy focused on drumming up support from nationalist groups from Austria-Hungary in order to provoke rebellion behind enemy lines.<sup>5</sup> This program merged well with Czechoslovakian propaganda aims, especially in the United States, where there was a large Czech and Slovak immigrant population. Czechoslovakian nationalists linked themselves to British propaganda efforts to the extent that some Czech Americans even operated in the neutral United States as paid spies for British agents.

For most of the war, Czechoslovakians in America, often working in direct contact with nationalist leaders from Europe, tried hard to convince the United States to support the demolition

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 173-205; Donald R. Hickey, “The Prager Affair: A Study in Wartime Hysteria,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 62:2 (Summer, 1969): 117-134; Frank Trommler, “The Lusitania Effect: America’s Mobilization against Germany in World War I,” *German Studies Review* 32:2 (May 2009): 241-266.

<sup>4</sup> Philip M Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 177-78; See also J. Lee Thompson, ““To Tell the People of America the Truth” Lord Northcliffe in the USA, Unofficial British Propaganda, June-November, 1917,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34:2 (April, 1999): 243-262.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 195.

of Austria-Hungary and the creation of Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, the American public preferred neutrality, which was so popular that Woodrow Wilson made it key to his successful re-election campaign in 1916. As soon as the war began in 1914; however, some Czech Americans immediately committed themselves to persuading their fellow citizens to take sides. As early as September 1914, one of the more outspoken Czech-American nationalists, Thomas Čapek, had concluded it was already time to “familiarize the broader American public with the efforts of the Czech nation.”<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1915 Čapek, now convinced that “the final reckoning” was at hand for Austria-Hungary, published his book, *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule*, to insure that “the Bohemian question” was “sufficiently and generally known among influential Anglo-Americans.”<sup>7</sup> Another Czech immigrant living in Chicago, E.[nrique] St.[anko] Vráz, recalled after the war how he worked to convince Czech Americans to vote for Wilson in 1916. Vráz, who coordinated directly with foreign leaders like Vojta Beneš, remembered, “during the [1916] presidential elections I wrote and I spoke so that our people would vote united for President Wilson, who is favorable to Czech and Slovak matters.”<sup>8</sup>

Even after the U.S. declarations of war against Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1917, the American and Czechoslovakian agendas did not align perfectly, and it was not easy for a few Czech nationalist leaders to convince the United States government to do their bidding. This is because President Wilson, despite the mythology that surrounds him until today, did not favor the complete dismemberment of Austria-Hungary until the very end of the war, and then only for pragmatic reasons. Wilson’s visions of both the past and the future biased him against secessionist movements. As diplomatic historian Betty Unterberger convincingly argues, Wilson, who was an accomplished historian, looked to the American Civil War as a home-grown and decidedly

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, Thomas Čapek to Hrdlička, 30 September, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>7</sup> Letter, Čapek to Hrdlička, 6 May, 1915, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>8</sup> Enrique Stanko Vráz, “České veřejnost na vysvětlenou,” *Svornost*, 4 October, 1919, box 65, “Vraz, E. St., 1917-22,” Correspondence. The official name and birthplace of this mysterious individual, who usually identified himself as “E. St. Vráz,” are not entirely certain. See Ctibor Votrúbec, “E. St. Vráz stále ještě záhadný,” *Vesmír* 74:583 (1995) <https://vesmir.cz/cz/casopis/archiv-casopisu/1995/cislo-10/e-st-vraz-stale-jeste-zahadny.html> (accessed 29.9.2019).

unacceptable precedent for “self-determination.”<sup>9</sup> Looking toward the future, Wilson believed that representative governments, chosen democratically by individual citizens, would allow different national groups to work out their differences constitutionally and live together in unified states. His vision of the League of Nations likewise assumed increasing political unity, not endless fragmentation. According to one scholar, “Wilson was committed to the cosmopolitan state, which inherently fused people in political union.”<sup>10</sup> Even while asking Congress to declare war on Austria-Hungary on 4 December, 1918, Wilson still insisted, “We do not wish in any way to impair or rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire.”<sup>11</sup> A few weeks later, on 8 January, 1918, Wilson gave his famed “Fourteen Points” speech, which mentioned “autonomous development” in Central Europe but stopped short of endorsing independence. This speech disappointed Tomáš Masaryk, who interpreted it as “pro-Austrian.”<sup>12</sup> Masaryk’s view was correct. As Trygve Throntveit has forcefully argued, “the principle that groups bound by common language or lines of descent have a right to political and territorial independence – was not one of Wilson’s Fourteen Points.”<sup>13</sup>

While in the United States, Masaryk did not easily gain access to the president or his support. As historian Josef Kalvoda has shown, Masaryk only got his first official visit to the White House on 3 June, 1918, when he met with Secretary of State Robert Lansing.<sup>14</sup> Lansing probably agreed to meet Masaryk because the British and French had recently announced their willingness to recognize the Czechoslovak National Council, with Masaryk as its leader. President Wilson did not get around to meeting Masaryk until 19 June, 1918, when the two men disagreed about the important issue of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia.<sup>15</sup> As late as 23 August, 1918, Lansing still

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<sup>9</sup> Betty Miller Unterberger, “The United States and National Self-Determination: A Wilsonian Perspective,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:4 (Fall, 1996): 928.

<sup>10</sup> David Steigerwald, “The Reclamation of Woodrow Wilson?” *Diplomatic History* 23:1 (Winter, 1999): 96.

<sup>11</sup> Woodrow Wilson, State of the Union Speech, 4 December, 1917, cited in Unterberger, “United States and National Self-Determination,” 931.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914 – 1918*, trans. Henry Wickham Steed (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 246; Unterberger, “United States and National Self-Determination,” 936.

<sup>13</sup> Trygve Throntveit, “The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination,” *Diplomatic History* 35:3 (June, 2011): 445-46.

<sup>14</sup> Josef Kalvoda, “Masaryk in America in 1918,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 27:1 (1979): 97.

<sup>15</sup> Kalvoda, “Masaryk in America,” 91.

opposed independence for Czechoslovaks.<sup>16</sup> On 3 September, less than three months before the war ended, the United States finally agreed to recognize the Czechoslovak National Council as a belligerent in the war, but still without any territorial claims.<sup>17</sup> This record suggests that Masaryk's efforts to lobby Wilson were not very successful until the very end of the war, when other circumstances, namely the Czechoslovak Legion's military conquest of Siberia in 1918, strengthened his position.

Nonetheless, there are still some reasons to think that the Czechoslovakian propaganda campaign, but possibly not Masaryk's presidential lobbying, achieved something. Wilson was deeply concerned about winning over public opinion to support his lofty diplomatic aims, and by the end of the war it seemed clear that the idea of "national self-determination," whether Wilson's own or not, had captured the imagination of people around the world.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the logic of Wilson's own propaganda efforts eventually forced him to embrace self-determination. Even before the United States entered the war, British propagandists had already decided to push the propaganda of self-determination in the hopes of provoking unrest within Austria-Hungary.<sup>19</sup> Almost immediately after declaring war, Wilson used an executive order to create the Committee of Public Information (C.P.I.), which arguably became the most sophisticated government propaganda agency in the world at the time. Like the British government, the director of the C.P.I., George Creel, was eager to preach self-determination in order to stir dissent within Austria-Hungary, but he also wanted to use it to motivate immigrants living in America.<sup>20</sup> Tellingly, one of Masaryk's rare visits to the White House was arranged by Creel, whose propaganda strategies the president considered essential to winning the war.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 91-97.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>18</sup> See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Harry Hanak, "The New Europe, 1916-20," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 39:93 (June, 1961): 384.

<sup>20</sup> Unterberger, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2000), 123.

<sup>21</sup> Cedric Larson and James R. Mock, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee of Public Information, 1917-1919* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), 261.

Even though it was at odds with his own ideals, Wilson eventually embraced “national self-determination” because it was good propaganda. He changed his position and used the term “national self-determination” for the first time in a speech to Congress on 11 February, 1918.<sup>22</sup> According to Throntveit, “Wilson’s anxious desire to have the weight of world opinion backing his assault upon the old diplomacy might explain his failures to distinguish between the internationalist ideal he embraced and the ethno-nationalist ideals his rhetoric inspired.”<sup>23</sup> In his desire to win the war of ideas, Wilson “found the phrase convenient – convenient as a propaganda tool.”<sup>24</sup> After seeing the popular response to his new terminology, he began to use it more often. Even if it brought short-term victory; however, there was a long-term downside to allowing propaganda to lead policy, as some of Wilson’s advisors had warned.<sup>25</sup> Throntveit has even labeled Wilson’s willingness to embrace self-determination as “irresponsible.”<sup>26</sup> It produced, as Ezra Manela has argued, a euphoric but short-lived “Wilsonian moment” around the world. However, the termination of the war very quickly revealed that national self-determination applied only to select groups. In fact, it appears that the United States government was not even enthusiastic about applying its new doctrine to Austria-Hungary until the final months of the war. Certainly “national self-determination” was never intended for nationalist groups in Ireland, India, Egypt, China, Indochina, and Korea, to name a few of the most disappointed. Bolshevik leaders, equally eager to take advantage of nationalism for their own ends, were quick to point out the hypocrisy of Wilson’s propaganda.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that Czechoslovakian and US propaganda aims fortuitously congressed at the end of the long war obscures the reality that during the early years immigrants who embraced the nationalist cause were pedaling a foreign agenda in a neutral state. While the United States was

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<sup>22</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 41; Throntveit, 476; Unterberger, “United States and National Self-Determination,” 930.

<sup>23</sup> Throntveit, 479.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Unterberger, “United States and National Self-Determination,” 929.

<sup>26</sup> Throntveit, 476.

<sup>27</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 42-43.

attempting to stay out of the fight, the firebrands for Czechoslovakian independence were urging it to take sides. Not all Czechs and Slovaks, either U.S. citizens or hopeful citizens, were so eager to challenge America's official neutrality. In April, 1915, for example, 3,000 Czechs assembled in New York City to display publicly their support for American neutrality.<sup>28</sup> In 1916, the outspoken Thomas Čapek criticized the New-Yorský Český Pomocný Sbor [New York Czech Aid Society] because its members felt embarrassed that organizations like the more aggressive Bohemian National Alliance, "collect funds to free the country."<sup>29</sup> The New York Czech Aid Society, Čapek complained, thought Czech Americans "should be neutral" and "collect for food, etc., only [sic]."<sup>30</sup> Hrdlička sent them some money and became a member, but he agreed more with Čapek, who had no patience for "hair-splitting contentions."<sup>31</sup> For Čapek, American neutrality, even if popular, was utterly unimportant compared to the righteous cause of Czechoslovak liberation.

Hrdlička also did his best to push the public to support the Czech cause, yet he insisted that Czech-American propaganda should always display loyalty to the United States. In summer 1915, the *New Yorský listy* published a letter from Hrdlička, in which he summoned Czechs to "big meetings in our main centers" to protest alleged Austrian atrocities, "by right as loyal citizens of this country."<sup>32</sup> These public demonstrations against Austrian misconduct, he advised, should also dutifully include a patriotically American complaint about "the crime against the *Lusitania*," which would tie Czechoslovakian animosity toward Germans in general to American anger at Germany in particular.<sup>33</sup> One of the editors of *New Yorský listy* added a note endorsing Hrdlička's proposal and further explaining that demonstrations would "strengthen the Czech and Slovak cause and at the same time would display loyalty to the American government through strong opposition to

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<sup>28</sup> Unterberger, *United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, 24-25.

<sup>29</sup> Letter, Čapek to Hrdlička, 5 March, 1916, box 17, "Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943," Correspondence.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Hrdlička, "Protestujme," *New Yorské listy*, [July, 1915?], box 17, "Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943," Correspondence.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Teutonic atrocities.”<sup>34</sup> After the United States joined the war and the Committee of Public Information began to condone the propaganda of rebellious nationalist groups from Austria-Hungary, it became easier to advocate for Czech national aims, but Hrdlička continued to emphasize loyalty to America. In at least two cases in the summer of 1917 he was willing to affix his name to public resolutions, but only if he and other immigrants could sign as “Americans of Bohemian or Slovak descent” and not as “Bohemians in America.”<sup>35</sup>

After the war, Tomáš Masaryk bragged extensively about his efforts to influence the policies of the United States through propaganda. Although he talked about capturing American public opinion, most of Masaryk’s efforts aimed at lobbying the powerful in private. Even as president of Czechoslovakia, Masaryk viewed propaganda as a means for the sophisticated to guide the simple populace. He saw the press, for example, as “a vital instrument through which the elite could educate other citizens.”<sup>36</sup> This is exactly the kind of “cultivated propaganda” he pursued during the war. Andrea Orzoff, a specialist in Czechoslovakian propaganda, summarizes the war effort thusly: “propaganda and cultural diplomacy were of crucial importance. Connections mattered—to academics, politicians, journalists, and elegant society hostesses alike, in Paris, London, Geneva, and Washington. Rather than trying to persuade the public, the Czechs set out to cultivate elite opinion.”<sup>37</sup> Although there were some attempts at “mass” propaganda in the United States, Orzoff’s description fits most of the Czechoslovakian efforts.

Masaryk’s propaganda efforts in Britain can serve as a brief example of his style. “In England,” he mused after the war, “the name of Hus helped us. In a word, a policy of culture needs

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<sup>34</sup> J.J. Nový, “Redakční poznámky,” *New Yorké listy*, [July, 1915?], box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 28 July, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence; Hrdlička to Vojtěch Preissig, 21 August, 1917, box 53, “Vojtěch Preissig, 1917,” Correspondence.

<sup>36</sup> Andrea Orzoff, “‘The Literary Organ of Politics’: Tomáš Masaryk and Political Journalism, 1925-1929,” *Slavic Review* 63:2 (Summer, 2004): 298.

<sup>37</sup> Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 44.

cultivated propaganda.”<sup>38</sup> It is hard to imagine that the theology of the fifteenth-century Jan Hus meant much to the general British public, but Masaryk was really more interested in “getting in touch” with “the universities, particularly with historians and economists.”<sup>39</sup> In order to influence a slightly broader public, Masaryk, along with his friends Professor Robert Seton-Watson and journalist H. Wickham Steed, founded *The New Europe*. Although an attempt to reach the public, this journal probably had little appeal beyond a small, niche readership. Not surprisingly, *The New Europe* focused single-mindedly on the national aspirations of Slavic people and, as one critical historian wrote, it “idealized subject peoples and small nations.”<sup>40</sup> The same writer wryly observed that when the war ended, “to the average Englishman peace meant that he had survived the greatest massacre in world history. To the *New Europe* it meant something more: the dawn of a new Europe and the fulfilment of all the hopes of the small band of men gathered round Seton-Watson.”<sup>41</sup> In reality, peace meant the rapid extinction of the esoteric *New Europe*, which having accomplished its parochial aims, had nothing more to say and disappeared in 1920.

This is the kind of “cultured” propaganda Masaryk intended to conduct in the United States. Although it is true that he hoped to reach the general public through periodicals, he still seemed far more interested in “politicians and men in official positions.”<sup>42</sup> Just as he imagined that the name of Jan Hus had opened doors for him in Britain, he thought that in America, “we could invoke President Wilson’s book, *The State*,” to support “the argument that our state had never lost its historical rights.”<sup>43</sup> While in Washington, his goal was “to cultivate the society of the Senators and Congressmen of the two chief parties and of all shades of political opinion ....”<sup>44</sup> Although Masaryk did not get much attention from the White House, he had influential friends in the United States. One of these was the extremely wealthy Charles R. Crane and his son Richard Crane, both

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<sup>38</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 91.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Hanak, “The New Europe,” 381.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 384.

<sup>42</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 253.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 221.

of whom were enthusiastic friends of the Czechoslovakian cause and had real connections in the government.<sup>45</sup> Richard, for example became the secretary to Robert Lansing and later a US diplomat to Czechoslovakia.

Well-to-do Czech-Americans embraced Masaryk's ideal of "cultivated propaganda," which essentially meant lobbying the powerful on behalf of foreign political interests. In 1915, Čapek reported to Hrdlička that he was busy writing letters to "distinguished men" and "begging them to plead for Bohemia's cause publicly and privately."<sup>46</sup> Hrdlička also liked to make strategic suggestions to the Czech nationalist leaders about how to persuade and "inform" powerful politicians. While the U.S. was still neutral, he wrote to Ludvík Fisher, leader of the Bohemian National Alliance in Chicago to alert him about, "Mr. Mann, representative from Illinois," who was allegedly "doing a great deal of harm by his pro-German activities."<sup>47</sup> Hrdlička thought, "it is essential that this be counteracted as promptly as possible .... Everything possible should be done towards this end, for at this juncture behavior of such nature is detrimental to the best interests of this country."<sup>48</sup> Just a few days before the US declared war on Austria, he told Fisher that there was too much "misinformation" about Czechs, Slovaks, and Magyars, and that he should contact Senator Lewis from Illinois and "reach him and set him straight."<sup>49</sup> In August 1917, he wrote to Vojta Beneš, who came as a liaison to harness the energies of Czech Americans for the cause, "it would help very greatly all around if the Bohemian National Alliance could get some Congressman or Senator to bring up the question of Bohemia in a dignified proper way openly before the Congress ...."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Joseph Jahelka, "The Role of Chicago Czechs in the Struggle for Czechoslovak Independence," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 31:4 (December, 1938): 383; Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 212; McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 82; Unterberger, "The Arrest of Alice Masaryk," *Slavic Review* 33:1 (March, 1974): 92.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Čapek to Hrdlička, 2 June, 1915, box 17, "Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943," Correspondence.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Ludvík Fisher, 28 February, 1917, box 23, "FI-FL, 1903-41," Correspondence.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fisher, 27 November, 1917, box 23, "FI-FL, 1903-41," Correspondence.

<sup>50</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Vojta Beneš, 30 August, 1917, box 14, "Beneš, Vojta, 1917-18," Correspondence.

Hrdlička helped in the “cultivated propaganda” campaign by organizing what he called the “Bohemian Circle,” whose meetings eventually involved around 20 to 30 people.<sup>51</sup> The group was small, partly because there were not many Czechs in the Washington area, and partly because Hrdlička promoted it as exclusive. Writing to Czech-American friends from nearby Baltimore, Hrdlička asked them to recruit “first-class men and women” for the club in Washington.<sup>52</sup> When inviting Congressman Adolph Sabath to come and give a lecture, Hrdlička forewarned him, “Please do not be disappointed in the number of those present, it will not be very large for as you know there are only a few of us of Bohemian descent in the District, besides which we are very careful whom we accept as a member of the circle.”<sup>53</sup> He boasted to Fisher in 1918 that the group was “necessarily small,” but it included “the best people of the city as well as a few prominent men and women in Baltimore and elsewhere.”<sup>54</sup>

Hrdlička put considerable effort into organizing the Bohemian Circle. It began meeting at the end of 1916, when its members voted to join the Bohemian National Alliance, to which they sent regular dues and special voluntary financial contributions.<sup>55</sup> It appears to have broken up sometime in 1919. It usually met at Hrdlička’s home on Sunday afternoons at 2:30 or 3:00 p.m. The meetings were a combination of lectures, discussions, and entertainment. Hrdlička often gave a short talk, for example, a ½ hour lecture about the “Ethnic Composition and History of the Warring Nations.”<sup>56</sup> At one meeting, Congressman Adolph Sabath agreed to make some remarks “on the immigration question.”<sup>57</sup> At another time, Hrdlička tried to schedule a wounded French veteran who fought at Ypres, but it is uncertain whether he came due to ill health.<sup>58</sup> Hrdlička’s friends the

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<sup>51</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Senator William H. King, 28 May, 1919, box 38, “King, William H., 1919-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>52</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Toula, 16 December, 1916, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence.

<sup>53</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Adolph Joachim Sabath, 4 January, 1917, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence.

<sup>54</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fisher, 16 May, 1918, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Toula, 16 December, 1916, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence.

<sup>57</sup> Letter, Sabath to Hrdlička, 2 January, 1917, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence.

<sup>58</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Meyer London, 1 May, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence.

Toulas came regularly from Baltimore, and Mrs. Toula was a musician who sometimes performed for the group. One week a Ludmila Řetický, also a musician, planned to come from New York City. Hrdlička informed her that his house was equipped with a piano, and she should prepare some “high-class Bohemian songs.”<sup>59</sup> A Czech-American doctor from Nebraska named Karel Breuer stopped in one month while traveling through Washington. In 1926 he reminisced to Hrdlička in a letter: “I do not know if you remember me ... but during the war we were at a small meeting of Washington Czechs and we made plans for the liberation of Bohemia.”<sup>60</sup>

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of Hrdlička’s high-level lobbying, but because of his position at the Smithsonian he had some important contacts in Washington. On at least four occasions, US Congressmen came to address the Bohemian Circle. The four legislators were Adolph Sabath, Senator William H. King (1863-1949), Congressman Thomas F. Konop (1879-1964), and Congressman Meyer London (1871-1926). Congressman Sabath and Senator King were both important life-long politicians, and at various times during the course of the war each used his platform to promote Czechoslovakian issues in the Congress. In January, 1917, when France and Britain first began to endorse the independence of Czechs and Slovaks as a war aim, Hrdlička wrote officially to the British and French ambassadors and referred to himself as, “President of the Bohemian Circle in Washington.”<sup>61</sup> It is impossible to know how seriously the ambassadors took Hrdlička’s organization, but his location in Washington and his connections to high-level politicians clearly enhanced the value of the small Bohemian Circle.

Beyond the Bohemian Circle, Hrdlička helped to spread Czechoslovakian propaganda on a more popular level by writing articles, the most important of which, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” appeared in the February, 1917 issue of *The National Geographic Magazine*. Although a popular

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<sup>59</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Ludmila Řetický, 13 March, 1918, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence.

<sup>60</sup> Letter, Karel H. Breuer to Hrdlička, 13 July, 1926, box 15, “Breuer, Charles, 1917-1926,” Correspondence.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Sir Arthur Spring-Rice, 22 January, 1917, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18,” Correspondence; Hrdlička to J.J. Jusserand, 22 January, 1917, box 15, “Bohemian Circle in Washington, 1916-18.”

magazine, *National Geographic* is famous for its “scientific” themes, and readers might have viewed Hrdlička’s article as a dispassionate work of professional anthropology rather than Czechoslovakian propaganda. Under the title of the article and his name, the magazine described him as “Curator of Physical Anthropology in the U.S. National Museum.”<sup>62</sup> Some writers, like Paul Radosavljevich, treated Hrdlička’s article as professional literature by citing it extensively as an authoritative source.<sup>63</sup> Hrdlička did not disclose whether he was writing as a professional anthropologist or simply as a Czech-speaking immigrant who happened to support the creation of Czechoslovakia, thus leaving open the possibility that the article represented a “scientific” view.

In fact, the article had nothing to do with the kind of science Hrdlička practiced. Instead, most of it consisted of very unoriginal history, which Hrdlička gathered second-hand from whatever sources his Czech-American friends provided him with. For Hrdlička, Czechoslovakian history predictably demonstrated: “No evil of humanity has ever originated in Bohemia .... Few nations can boast of as clean a record.”<sup>64</sup> A large part of the article was simply unsupported stereotyping, as when Hrdlička wrote that the Czechoslovakian, “is not cold, calculating, thin-lipped, nor again as inflammable as the Pole or the southern Slav, but is sympathetic and full of trust.”<sup>65</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the article also featured the sweeping racial theory that Czechoslovakians were an ancient biological unit engaged in a “1,500-year-long life-and-death struggle with the race who surround it,” and that therefore they were “natural” enemies of Austria.<sup>66</sup> It provided no evidence from Hrdlička’s research in physical anthropology to substantiate this colossal claim.

However, a discriminating reader, who was capable of resisting the intimidating aura of scientific authority, could have perceived the political goal behind Hrdlička’s article. Writing in the

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<sup>62</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” *National Geographic* XXXI (February, 1917): 163.

<sup>63</sup> Paul R. Radosavljevich, *Who are the Slavs? A Contribution to Race Psychology* (Boston: The Gorman Press, 1919), 108-109.

<sup>64</sup> Hrdlička, “Bohemia and the Czechs,” 167.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 163; See chapter five.

final months of American neutrality, Hrdlička was hoping to win over American support for Czechs and Slovaks against Austria-Hungary. Just like Masaryk, Hrdlička threw in a reference to Wilson's book *The State* in the hope of impressing a few bookish Americans with the similarities between Czechoslovakian aims and the American president's ideals. In the opening paragraph of the article, he referred to the French and British announcement in January, 1917 of their willingness to consider "the liberation of Czecho-Slovaks from Austria-Hungary."<sup>67</sup> This event, continued Hrdlička, "introduces on the international forum a most interesting new factor, of which relatively little has been heard during the war and which in consequence has largely escaped, in this country at least, the attention which it deserves."<sup>68</sup> The closing lines of the article brought the reader straight back to current events and concluded, "the true Bohemian here as elsewhere, as can easily be understood, has nothing but the bitterest feelings toward Austria, the stranger and usurper, who, since the war started, is once more in the full swing of persecutions."<sup>69</sup>

A behind-the-scenes study of Hrdlička's correspondence shows that the *National Geographic* article was part of a strategically coordinated propaganda campaign and had nothing to do with anthropological research. After the war, Masaryk described how he had labored in Britain and America, "to gain the favor of the public" by placing "interviews and articles in the largest and most influential daily papers" and by establishing "personal relations with prominent writers of all opinions."<sup>70</sup> Hrdlička's article, like many other books and publications, was part of this media assault. Within the Czech-American community there was high pressure to "place" articles and essays in influential periodicals. In this zealous spirit, Hrdlička's friend Thomas Čapek, a banker from New York, decided, almost as soon as the war in Europe began, that it was his duty to rally Americans for the Czech cause. In 1915 he published *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule* to inform

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<sup>67</sup> Hrdlička, "Bohemia and the Czechs," 162.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>70</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 221.

the public and raise money.<sup>71</sup> As soon as the publication was arranged, he wrote to Hrdlička and asked, “Will you help in this missionary propaganda and buy one or more copies? You have influential friends, could you give them copies, or influence them to buy?”<sup>72</sup> As soon as the book came out Hrdlička ordered three copies and then sent Čapek \$3.10 for the books and \$50.00 as a donation to the “missionary” cause.

There were always reminders within the Czech-speaking community that everyone must do his or her part for the cause. In 1916, Lou Dongres, a Czech living in the Midwest, wrote to Hrdlička to tell him, “Vojta Beneš, my old friend from Bohemia came to see us. I was happy when he told me he spoke with you and that you are an enthusiast for Czech freedom.”<sup>73</sup> Hrdlička usually responded defensively to prompts like this by explaining his role in the propaganda program: “I am in a way like an exile; I can do little of what I would and perhaps should; and yet I feel that I am an anchor in the right place and that what I do is not entirely useless to our interests.”<sup>74</sup> Sometimes the demand for patriotic contributions grew more intense.

A few of the Czech leaders managing the propaganda campaign in America were ambitious political operatives eager for results. Men like Charles Pergler, Ludvík Fisher, and Emanuel Voska eventually got positions in the Czechoslovakian republic after the war. Pergler and Voska, both born in Europe, had worked hard to win success and fortune in America. Both men knew how to get what they wanted, one way or another, in the rough world of immigrant patronage, with all of its subtle expectations of reward, punishment, and revenge. Voska, an independently wealthy businessman, was especially hard-nosed. Those who shared his beliefs viewed his exploits as heroic, yet his methods involved stealing information and funding a staff of spies in order to feed the public salacious evidence of “Teutonic treachery.” Vojta Beneš, the brother of Eduard, was on

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas Čapek, ed., *Bohemia under Hapsburg Misrule* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915).

<sup>72</sup> Letter, Čapek to Hrdlička, 6 May, 1915, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>73</sup> Letter, Lou W. Dongres to Hrdlička, 7 March, 1916, box 20, “DI-DOR, 1903-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>74</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dongres, 10 March, 1916, box 20, “DI-DOR, 1903-40,” Correspondence.

assignment from Europe specifically for the purpose of pushing propaganda and stirring Czech-Americans to contribute to the struggle. Some evidence suggests that those men who remained closest to Beneš had opportunities to win positions in the Czechoslovakian state, while those who crossed him, like E. St. Vráz and perhaps Jaromír Pšenka, were eventually either sidelined or subjected to public criticism. Like Masaryk, these men simply assumed they were disseminating truth and dispelling lies on behalf of a morally righteous cause. They were quick to criticize those who did not share their passion, even to the point of publicly shaming allegedly unenthusiastic individuals. All the evidence suggests that Hrdlička shared their zeal and contributed willingly, yet even for him, there was considerable pressure to help, mostly by “placing” articles friendly to the national cause.

Dr. Ludvík J. Fisher, the head of the Czech National Alliance in Chicago, who later went on to a career in the Czechoslovakian army, could be especially pushy.<sup>75</sup> In 1916 he and V. Beneš wrote a letter, together, to Hrdlička. They thanked him for some articles he had already written, but they immediately moved on to their demands: “We are asking you, please, now is the most important time. You have access to magazines. Please write about our matters and Austrian questions in a magazine [sic]. Can we look forward to this?! [sic].”<sup>76</sup> Along with all the dramatic underlining and exclamation, the letter bore the bold stamp of the Czech National Alliance in all capital letters with the signatures of Fisher and Beneš on either side of it. Hrdlička wrote back and thanked the pair for noticing his “small articles,” and then he added defensively, “I would do more, but at the moment the situation does not allow it. In any case I am happy to do what I can. Just now there are some articles coming out in the *Boston Transcript* and several other good magazines – maybe at least some seeds have been planted.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Václav Vondrášek and František Hanzlík, *Krajané v USA a vznik ČSR v dokumentech a fotografiích* (Praha: Ministerstvo obrany České republiky, 2008), 14; Unterberger, *United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Letter, Fisher and V. Beneš to Hrdlička, 13 September, 1916, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>77</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fisher, 16 September, 1916, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

Fisher gave Hrdlička orders suited to the propaganda needs of each moment. In 1917, he again wrote Hrdlička abruptly to state: “Mr. Čapek in New York wrote me that you would be able to write a 16-page English brochure about Purkyně. Thank you for this and I look forward to it.”<sup>78</sup> In about a fortnight Hrdlička received yet another urgent letter from Fisher, who reported, “we got a letter today from Paris stating that we are involved in a great struggle over public opinion in America.”<sup>79</sup> According to the new party line from authorities in Paris, Jacob Schiff, a German-Jewish-American financier, was working as an agent for Austria and spreading its propaganda in America, and this meant that Hrdlička now had a new mission. “At such a moment we have only men like you,” Fisher implored, so “could you, as an expert on domestic affairs, please take up this issue and refute these proven lies in the press.”<sup>80</sup> Fisher’s exhortation went on: “Certainly you, so well-known in the US, will find some American, English paper in Washington, Baltimore, or Philadelphia, which will be happy to print your articles.”<sup>81</sup> Remembering his previous assignment for Hrdlička, Fisher curtly added, “you can catch up on the work on Purkyně later.”<sup>82</sup>

This feverish propaganda war produced Hrdlička’s 1917 *National Geographic* article, not years of careful research in physical anthropology. In fact, Hrdlička threw the article together quickly and relied on his fellow propagandists to feed him the necessary information. He started working on the article for the February issue of *National Geographic* in the first week of February, and it went to circulation in March. On 8 February he wrote to Čapek, “I am glad to tell you confidentially that I have just been asked by the National Geographic Society to prepare for their magazine an article on ‘Bohemia and Bohemians.’”<sup>83</sup> He immediately viewed it as a propaganda opportunity and told Čapek, “I am anxious to make this article worthwhile.”<sup>84</sup> In order to do this, he needed information, and he asked Čapek, who apparently had a good Bohemica collection, to send

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<sup>78</sup> Letter, Fisher to Hrdlička, 18 January, 1917, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence. Jan Evangelista Purkyně (1787-1869) was a Bohemian scientist.

<sup>79</sup> Letter, Fisher to Hrdlička, 2 February, 1917, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 8 February, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

pictures of figures like Hus, Komenský [Comenius], and Dvořák. He also needed “a list, as far as possible with the date and place of birth, of about 25 foremost Bohemians in art, music, literature, science, and among inventors.”<sup>85</sup> Right from the start his intention was to cast Austria-Hungary in the worst possible light, so he also requested, “absolutely reliable [sic] data on the persecution, executions and imprisonments, revolts in regiments, etc.”<sup>86</sup> He also wrote to Vojta Beneš to request pictures of famous Czechs and “a thoroughly reliable and extended record of Austrian atrocities.”<sup>87</sup>

Once it was finished, Hrdlička was very proud of his article because it contributed to the propaganda effort and earned the respect of his peers. “Please accept my thanks for your good remarks about my article,” he wrote to Čapek, “I am getting some appreciative letters about it from Americans, so that it may really do some good. As the magazine has over six hundred thousand readers, we must really regard it as a privilege that such an article was called for.”<sup>88</sup> Hrdlička also wrote to Fisher in Chicago and asked, “How did you like my article in the *Geographic* magazine?”<sup>89</sup> Fisher responded, “Everyone is talking about your article in the *National Geographic Magazine*. It is an excellent piece of work and has done a lot of good.”<sup>90</sup> Vojta Beneš, whom all the Czech-Americans seemed especially eager to impress, also sent his thanks and remarked, “the *National Geographic* is an excellent journal and this is a great present.”<sup>91</sup> All the evidence suggests that Hrdlička was a willing propagandist for the cause, but he probably also felt some relief in meeting the demands of his compatriots.

Beyond “placing” articles, Czech nationalist leaders in America also tried to organize “mass” support in the United States, and they achieved some success, at least within the immigrant community. One writer friendly to the cause wrote that cities with high Czech populations became

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Vojta Beneš, 15 February, 1917, box 14, “Beneš, Vojta, 1917-18,” Correspondence.

<sup>88</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 31 March, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>89</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fisher, 16 April, 1917, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>90</sup> Letter, Fisher to Hrdlička, 25 April, 1917, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>91</sup> Letter, V. Beneš to Hrdlička, [1917?], box 14, “Beneš, Vojta, 1917-18,” Correspondence.

“centers of zealous propaganda,” which helped to spread the “true facts of the Bohemian cause.”<sup>92</sup> In his memoirs, Masaryk, who preferred “cultured” propaganda, seemed almost surprised by the massive reception that Czech Americans gave him in Chicago, which at the time had the second highest number of Czech inhabitants after Prague. “Before the war I used to denounce ‘flag wagging’,” he wrote, “but, in America, I realized that in so doing I had overshot the mark. Professor as I then was, I had failed to see that a well-organized procession may be worth quite as much as an ostensibly world-shaking political article or a speech in Parliament.”<sup>93</sup> Hrdlička had publicly advocated public demonstrations on behalf of Czech national issues as early as July, 1915, long before the United States was a combatant. In a New York Czech-language publication he urged Czech-Americans across the country to meet publicly, draw up resolutions, and make sure that the president and English-language press got the news. “If we raise the Czech voice across the country,” he wrote, “the moral result will be assured. We live in the twentieth century, in which public opinion is a powerful weapon.”<sup>94</sup>

After the war, E. St. Vráz, a Czech patriot who lived in Chicago for many years, gave an account of his wartime activities in a Czech-American newspaper, and this piece provides some insight into attempts at “mass” propaganda. Vráz recalled giving speeches and writing editorials during the 1916 elections to convince Chicago Czechs, at that time an important block in America’s complicated electoral system, to vote for Wilson, whom they considered friendlier to Czech interests than his Republican opponent. Vráz also claimed that during the war he “gave almost 100 lectures throughout Czech America” in which he “begged people to give money.”<sup>95</sup> In one case, Vráz was sent to Cleveland on what the leadership considered a “sensitive” mission due to the large number of empire-loyal Czechs who lived there. According to Vráz’s account, Vojta Beneš praised him for his work in this difficult atmosphere. Vráz claimed that he urged the Clevelanders to show

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<sup>92</sup> Jahelka, “The Role of Chicago Czechs,” 400-401

<sup>93</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 207.

<sup>94</sup> Hrdlička, “Protestujme,” *New Yorkské listy*, [July, 1915?], box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>95</sup> Vráz, “České veřejnost na vysvětlenou,” *Svornost*, 4 October, 1919, box 65, “Vraz, E. St., 1917-22,” Correspondence.

“more fervent love for the old country” and scolded them “that only an undeserving son of his fatherland would hesitate to protect and defend it.”<sup>96</sup> Of course he asked them for money. “Do your duty,” he nagged them, “those who do not contribute to the funds of the National Alliance I would call traitors, or worse.”<sup>97</sup>

If Vráz’s story was accurate, Czech Americans must have been subjected to at least hundreds of preachy lectures about their obligations to the old country. In truth, they were often willing to help. They were most generous in terms of money, and one historian has estimated that Czech-Americans gave at least \$1 million to the cause.<sup>98</sup> A few took the more drastic step of joining the Czechoslovak Legion in France. By November, 1917, Milan Štefánik had organized a special contingent of Czechoslovak volunteers to fight in France.<sup>99</sup> By the end of the war approximately 3,000 Czech-Americans volunteered to fight in the new legion.<sup>100</sup> One of the very first to enlist was František Mička in September 1917. “Frank” Mička was the artist who had sculpted scores of busts designed to illustrate different racial features for Hrdlička’s famed San Diego Exposition of 1915.<sup>101</sup> In 1917 Mička signed up as a translator for the Czechoslovakian forces and was preparing to leave for France. Mička was working as a recruiter for the Czechoslovak contingent and asked Hrdlička if he would also join in the capacity of a doctor or scientist. Hrdlička’s induction into the Czech-American band of warriors, thought Mička, “would have a big influence on our people in America.”<sup>102</sup>

Hrdlička did not join, but the Czech-American league evoked romantic words of military glory from his pen. In his response to Mička, he excitedly listed five other men he knew who were

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 81.

<sup>99</sup> Unterberger, *United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, 60.

<sup>100</sup> Jahelka, “The Role of Chicago Czechs,” 404.

<sup>101</sup> Matthew Bokovoy, *The San Diego World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880 – 1940* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 91; Samuel J. Redman, *Bone Rooms: From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 178, 235-36.

<sup>102</sup> Letter, František Mička to Hrdlička, [September, 1917?] box 46, “Mička, Frank, 1913-40,” Correspondence.

joining up. Although unable to fight in the Czechoslovak league, he promised to “do what I can here and especially among the Americans. Next week I have two lectures about Bohemia.”<sup>103</sup>

During the war he and the Bohemian Circle read Mička’s correspondence. He told Mička that the group wanted “the Bohemian Army to do us honor, to be at least equal of the American.”<sup>104</sup>

Although himself a non-combatant, Hrdlička had plenty of advice for the Czech soldiers, which he offered to Mička:

No man of the Bohemian army should ever be taken alive, to be jeered at or tortured by the Germans; and that should instill a fear in the enemy to meet them, such as the Bohemians did in the bygone ages. In order that this may be affected it will be necessary not to tolerate any weakness; to be strong physically; and above all to beat the enemy in brains. The Bohemian army must not be satisfied with a mere duty, but should do its duty plus revenge for all the wrongs of the past. Falling of individuals will not matter; the more, the more glory.<sup>105</sup>

While poor Mička was supposed to be fighting the Germans to the death, Hrdlička reassured him that the Czechs at home would not be “idle or indifferent” but would “see to it that everything our little army does will receive due publicity and appreciation.”<sup>106</sup>

Another part of the Czechoslovak propaganda operation involved “catching” and “exposing” German and Austrian “spies” working inside the United States. Today the general consensus is that Britain and the United States were successful in propaganda while the Germans

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<sup>103</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mička, 24 September, 1917, box 46, “Mička, Frank, 1913-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>104</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Mička, 15 March, 1918, box 46, “Mička, Frank, 1913-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

and Austrians were not. Although Germany tried to spread propaganda through German-American communities, one scholar has judged that this effort “completely collapsed,” especially after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915.<sup>107</sup> According to Mark Cornwall, Austria-Hungary also “lost control of the battle of ideas.”<sup>108</sup> Charles I, the last emperor of Austria, hated propaganda.<sup>109</sup> The British, on the other hand excelled at presenting the “Teutons” as deceptive schemers. They stressed that the sinking of the *Lusitania* was an unprecedented and underhanded act of barbarity, they constantly informed the American public about German “atrocities” in Belgium, and they rallied Americans against the execution of Edith Cavell, which was supposedly a profound example of how the Germans mistreated women. British intelligence specialized in unearthing German “plots,” like the infamous “Zimmermann Telegram,” and exposing them to the American public.

Czechoslovakian propagandists mimicked and also contributed to this winning British formula. As often as possible they tried to compare themselves to victimized Belgium. “Martyrdom, and especially blood, win sympathies,” wrote Masaryk after the war.<sup>110</sup> Hrdlička and others were always on the hunt for “facts” about German and Austrian atrocities. The execution of Edith Cavell clearly served as a model for propaganda about the imprisonment of Masaryk’s daughter Alice, who was held by authorities from 28 October, 1915 to 20 August, 1916. Masaryk remembered after the war, “the arrest of my daughter Alice was of great service to us in England and America. People argued that when even women were imprisoned the movement must be serious.”<sup>111</sup> Czech agents, and especially Emanuel Voska, fed British intelligence embarrassing information that helped make the Germans and Austrians look fraudulent and conspiring before the American public.

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<sup>107</sup> Trommler, “The Lusitania Effect,” 245.

<sup>108</sup> Mark Cornwall, “Rumour and the Control of Information in Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918,” *History* 77:249 (February, 1992): 50.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>110</sup> Masaryk, *Making of a State*, 92.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 92; See also Unterberger, “Arrest of Alice Masaryk,” 99.

Voska, rather like his German villains, used surreptitious methods to influence American opinion during the period of neutrality. According to one scholar, “It is little known that one of the most important influences in inducing the United States to join the Allies against the Central Powers was the work of Captain Emanuel Voska.”<sup>112</sup> Voska was a wealthy Czech-American adventurer who came to the US in 1894 at the age of nineteen, quickly adapted to his new environment, and became the owner of a quarry and two marble yards.<sup>113</sup> During the period of American neutrality, the British financed his efforts to expose German “agents” working in the United States.<sup>114</sup> According to McNamara, Voska had 84 spies working for him across the United States, including a mail clerk at the Austrian Embassy, a chauffeur to the German ambassador, and a personal maid to the ambassador’s wife.<sup>115</sup> Although usually celebrated as a hero, Voska was essentially doing the same type of work that was supposed to be characteristic of the conniving Germans and Austrians. With such a formidable staff of eavesdroppers willing to betray their bosses, he unearthed plenty of damning material. For example, he stole the briefcase of Dr. Heinrich E. Albert, Commercial Attaché of the German Embassy in the United States and saw to it that its damaging contents got into the hands of British agents.<sup>116</sup> He was largely responsible for the embarrassing recall in 1915 of Austrian Ambassador Dumba, who was accused of trying to provoke labor unrest among immigrants in order to slow down American arms production for Britain and France.<sup>117</sup> Once the United States joined the war in 1917, Voska went to work legitimately for the Committee of Public Information, which made him Director of the Central European Division and the supervisor of around 400 workers.<sup>118</sup> George Creel, head of the CPI, supposedly called Voska, “the greatest secret agent in the war.”<sup>119</sup> While a legal state of war sanctioned Voska’s shady craft

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<sup>112</sup> Joseph S. Roucek, “The Image of the Slav in U.S. History and in Immigration Policy,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 28:1 (January, 1969): 37-38.

<sup>113</sup> McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 76; Unterberger, *United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, 27.

<sup>114</sup> McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 122.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>116</sup> Roucek, “The Image of the Slav,” 38.

<sup>117</sup> McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 122; “The Recall of Ambassador Dumba,” *The American Journal of International Law* 9:4 (October, 1915): 935-939.

<sup>118</sup> Unterberger, *United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, 124.

<sup>119</sup> George Creel, cited in Unterberger, *United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia*, 124.

after April 1917, before this time he was working not for the United States but for Britain, whose sole intention was to manipulate public opinion.

Czech-Americans agreed wholeheartedly with the Committee of Public Information's dire warnings that German and Austrian spies were ubiquitous, and they were enthusiastic about using state power to shut down these "dangerous" opinions. The C.P.I.'s "Spies and Lies" advertisements in popular magazines told Americans, "German agents are everywhere, eager to gather scraps of news about our men, our ships, our munitions."<sup>120</sup> The same advertisement encouraged people to turn over the name of anyone who "belittles our efforts to win the war" directly to the Department of Justice.<sup>121</sup> F. Kopecký, who was almost certainly the same František Kopecký who stole secrets from the mail room at the Austrian Embassy for Voska, wrote to Hrdlička to warn, "German agents here still have secret post connections with Europe and are masters at getting information."<sup>122</sup> Hrdlička absolutely agreed and told Vojta Beneš, "The Austrian government will evidently try to flood this country with its usual lies about Bohemia, which must be counter-acted."<sup>123</sup> Hrdlička was immersed in this type of conspiratorial thinking even before America entered the war. In February, 1917, Ludvík Fisher told him that the financier Jacob Schiff was "working with all his strength" to win "the battle over public opinion" for Austria.<sup>124</sup> This was certainly untrue. While Schiff hoped for a quick end to the horrible war and thoroughly disliked Russia, labeling him a clandestine agent for Austria was absurd. As soon as the U.S. joined the war, Schiff volunteered both his services and his own money to help organize the "Friends of German Democracy," which worked directly for the Committee of Public Information to support American patriotism among German immigrants.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Larson and Mock, *Words that Won the War*, 64.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Letter, Kopecký to Hrdlička, 23 October, 1917, box 38, "Francis Kopecký," Correspondence. On Voska and Kopecký see McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 76.

<sup>123</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to V. Beneš, 30 August, 1917, box 14, "Beneš, Vojta, 1917-18," Correspondence.

<sup>124</sup> Letter, Fisher to Hrdlička, 2 February, 1917, box 23, "FI-FL, 1903-41," Correspondence.

<sup>125</sup> Larson and Mock, *Words that Won the War*, 217; Cyrus Adler, "Jacob Henry Schiff: A Biographical Sketch," *The American Jewish Year Book* 23 (October, 1921-September, 1922): 21-64; Gary Dean Best, "Financing a Foreign War: Jacob H. Schiff and Japan, 1904-05," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 61:4 (June, 1972): 313-324.

The Committee of Public Information was especially worried about the foreign-language press, and Hrdlička was eager to help the government flush out insidious German agents. He dutifully sent Congressman Adolph Sabath “the names and addresses of the German firms that monopolize the subscription business of many of our libraries and periodicals. The matter would surely seem to deserve to be looked into.”<sup>126</sup> From 27 August to 23 September, 1917 the Committee of Public Information unleashed thousands of “four-minute men” to speak on the topic of “Unmasking German Propaganda.”<sup>127</sup> Maybe Hrdlička was responding to these motivational speeches when in the first days of the “unmasking” campaign he wrote a letter to the Department of Justice to inform on the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers, owned by Louis N. Hammerling. Hrdlička wrote:

Since about a year I have heard repeated references by my friends in New York to the nefarious influence exercised on certain Bohemian and other foreign papers by an advertisement trust known as Hammerling’s. This trust is said to control the advertisements for the foreign language papers, and to use its power secretly and insidiously for Germany against this country. Hammerling is described to me as a German Jew from Galicia, very crafty and in connection with the propaganda of the central powers in this country.

I have heard about this from so many reliable sources that I feel justified in calling the matter to your attention. We of Bohemian descent are very jealous of our loyalty to and reputation in this country, and it could easily happen that a subversive agency of this sort might succeed in its machinations so far that a false light would

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<sup>126</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Sabath, 16 May, 1918, box 58, “Sabath, Adolph J., 1917-33,” Correspondence.

<sup>127</sup> Larson and Mock, *Words that Won the War*, 120.

be thrown on our people. To many of the smaller papers published in foreign languages the advertisements mean bread and butter and it is easy to understand how they could be influenced through such means. Surely no such bureau ought to be allowed to operate at the present time without some sort of government participation. The power which it uses for ill purposes might well be utilized for good ones.<sup>128</sup>

Hrdlička was one of many who complained about Hammerling's business practices, and struggling periodicals may have had good reasons to be angry at his American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers. However, during the war, his ethnic antagonists equated Hammerling's harsh, and perhaps unethical, business style with espionage. Hammerling provided small foreign-language papers with advertising from big American companies, and he allegedly took advantage of the gap between what advert lines in tiny newspapers were actually worth compared to what big corporations were willing to pay for them. Acting as a middleman, he purportedly overcharged the companies, underpaid the newspapers, and made a huge profit from the difference.<sup>129</sup>

Whether he played fair or not, the most serious allegation against Hammerling was that he took money from the German and Austrian governments for a nation-wide advertisement and then tried to force his client newspapers, which were dependent on the regular income his advertising provided, to sign a statement supporting the ad. The advertisement in question was "An Appeal to the American People," which ran in April, 1915 and asked the public to stop supporting the manufacture and shipment of weapons to the Allies.<sup>130</sup> It claimed to have the signatures of 450 publishers of foreign language newspapers. One Serbian-language paper charged that when it

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<sup>128</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Chief of Secret Service, 1 September, 1917, box 33, "Hrdlička, Aleš," Correspondence.

<sup>129</sup> See Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and its Control* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1922), 377-411; M. B. B. Biskupski, *The Most Dangerous German Agent in America: The Many Lives of Louis N. Hammerling* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2015), 29-45.

<sup>130</sup> Park, *Immigrant Press*, 390. Biskupski, *Most Dangerous German Agent*, 53-78.

refused to sign, Hammerling withdrew advertising as punishment.<sup>131</sup> Many Czech news editors also refused to sign, and according to one source, “the Bohemian papers had sent letters right away throughout the country to the other Bohemian papers that they should not sign this appeal.”<sup>132</sup> In fact, the anger directed at Hammerling suggests that he was often unable to manipulate humble foreign-language newspapers as easily as Hrdlička and other accusers claimed. Many papers apparently said “no” regardless of the economic consequences. No doubt there were bitter economic and ethnic rivalries within the foreign-language press, but in 1917 these rose to the level of “insidious” acts of “espionage.”

### C. THE INTERWAR PERIOD

In many ways the propaganda fantasy world was doomed to disappoint. In reality, there was always tension both within the Czech-American “diaspora” and between American and European Czechs. Even during the struggle, counter-narratives about how the war was won were already brewing. Although subtle during the war, there was always some competition over who was doing the most for the cause. Throughout the war, Hrdlička expressed disappointment over the lack of enthusiasm among his fellow Czechs in America and in Europe. Just after the war started in 1914, he complained to Čapek, “I am almost beginning to fear that the Czechs are falling behind and missing an opportunity that will never return. There is no general organization, no mass voice, and soon it will be too late to take the bull by the horns.”<sup>133</sup> In 1915, he continued to preach, “there should be a federation of all forces, in all parts of the world, for strength and unity of purpose, with elimination of all chaff, of which there is still plenty, particularly in this country.”<sup>134</sup> Although critical of Czech-Americans, he worried even more about the apathy of Czech nationalists back in the Austrian Empire, and this was perhaps the beginning of a transatlantic rift that widened after the

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<sup>131</sup> Park, *Immigrant Press*, 403-404.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 404.

<sup>133</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 2 October, 1914, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>134</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 2 August, 1915, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

war. He told Čapek, “In regards to conditions in the old country, I must say I am sorely disappointed. Nothing is evident except stagnation and servility.”<sup>135</sup> He complained to Fisher in 1916, “in Bohemia, [there is] silence. And I am starting to worry. What is undeserved will not happen, and if it is not bought with a price it will not be valued. Hundreds of factories and only silence, as if willingly and selfishly in slavery. And now it is just the right moment.”<sup>136</sup>

Despite Hrdlička’s flights of fancy about how Czech-American Legionnaires should fight to the death in France, there was some common sense in his belief that only direct military violence would achieve the goal of Czechoslovakian liberation. Stereotypes about peace-loving Slavs and barbaric Teutons have obscured the huge role that war and conquest, as opposed to cultivated “democratic” propaganda, played in the creation of Czechoslovakia. Indeed, it is ironic that the Czechoslovakian propaganda at first promoted the expansion of the war and then sought to prolong it until Austria fell apart, while German and Austrian propaganda encouraged Americans to avoid war, stop producing so many weapons, and then, once involved in the war, to reach a settlement as soon as possible. Hrdlička told Čapek in 1916, “no one has any use for weakness, and no one will give us what we shall not have earned.”<sup>137</sup> Although proud of his *National Geographic* article in 1917, he felt, “Only acts [sic] will really count.”<sup>138</sup> After the war, Hrdlička’s intuition blossomed into an alternative narrative that emphasized military force and American enthusiasm as the chief causes of victory rather than fancy diplomacy or cultivated propaganda. It was, he argued later, the ferocious Czechoslovak Legion’s conquest of Siberia in 1918 that ensured a positive result for Czechs and Slovaks.<sup>139</sup> Since then, some have agreed with Hrdlička that the possession of an army in the field in a strategic location allowed Masaryk to demand official recognition from France and Britain, which immediately put pressure on the United States. Even from a purely propaganda perspective, the exploits of the Legion were very popular in America and exponentially accelerated

<sup>135</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 19 May, 1915, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>136</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fisher, 16 September, 1916, box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>137</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 8 March, 1916, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>138</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 31 March, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>139</sup> See for example, Kalvoda, “Masaryk in America,” 99.

publicity about Czechs and Slovaks in the press.<sup>140</sup> Many Americans only learned about Czechoslovaks by reading or hearing the thrilling story of the Legion in Russia.

At least in Hrdlička's circle, there was a post-war political battle in 1919 about who had been the most enthusiastic Czech patriot. One of Hrdlička's associates, E. St. Vráz, even felt compelled to defend himself in a long-winded editorial in *Svornost*, an important Czech-language newspaper in Chicago. Vráz claimed that Vojta Beneš, perhaps in league with Ludvík Fisher and Josef Tvrzický, was spreading damaging rumors about him both in Chicago and in Prague. Beneš, he claimed, was accusing him of not participating enthusiastically enough in the nationalist effort during the war. Vráz was obviously worried about his reputation and wanted to vindicate himself publicly. Vráz's account provides at least a glimpse of the internal struggles of the Czech movement. It is impossible to know what personal undercurrents were operative, and no response to Vráz's version is available for now, however Hrdlička faced similar troubles, and his own story, preserved in his correspondence, partially corroborates Vráz's account.

Although there were many subthemes to Vráz's post-war apologia, the most important issue seems to have been his loyalty to Masaryk. Vráz admitted that during the war he had disagreed with Vojta Beneš about Masaryk's program. Beneš reportedly told Vráz, while sitting around his kitchen table in Chicago, that after independence, "parties will disappear, there will be a complete awakening; the war has helped us, there will not be parties, only a united Czech nation."<sup>141</sup> Vráz thought this was unrealistic and even went to so far as to say that Masaryk was "an idealist, a dreamer, and in no way a practical politician."<sup>142</sup> In his post-war version of the story, Vráz admitted that he had once doubted Masaryk, but now, in 1919, he argued that he had made his remarks in 1915, the darkest days of the war, when there were real reasons for doubt. The Central Powers were

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<sup>140</sup> McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 241.

<sup>141</sup> Vráz, "České veřejnost na vysvětlenou," *Svornost*, 4 October, 1919, box 65, "Vraz, E. St., 1917-22," Correspondence.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

winning at that time, and he had wanted the Czechs to make the best of a bad situation by trying to “get self-rule, autonomy, like the Hungarians had.”<sup>143</sup> Now that the war was over, V. Beneš and others were using Vráz’s mid-war reservations as proof that he belonged to “the old school of Palacký,” which meant that he believed Austria-Hungary to be essential for protecting non-German minority interests in Central Europe. Vráz denied this rumor outright: “Lie! In the entire Czech nation there is not one person who could hate Austria more than I.”<sup>144</sup> Vráz went on to write that firstly, he should be allowed to speak his mind freely on all of these topics, and that secondly, the events of the war had eventually convinced him that Masaryk was right and turned him into a solid devotee. He was shocked to learn in 1919 “that the heart of Masaryk is poisoned against me by rumors from the Chicago papers!”<sup>145</sup> In 1915, he had felt that his doubts had been reasonable, but as the war progressed he decided that Masaryk was an astute political player after all, and now in 1919 he told the public: “I renounce my earlier criticisms of Masaryk’s political inability and professorial idealism.”<sup>146</sup>

Hrdlička had similar troubles in 1919 and wrote directly to Masaryk both to complain and to declare his loyalty. He told Masaryk that two Czech-Americans, Charles Pergler and Josef Tvrzický, were “underhandedly spreading rumors” about him.<sup>147</sup> They were saying that during the war Hrdlička had written a letter to the State Department in which he had spoken “disrespectfully” of Masaryk.<sup>148</sup> The situation was so bad that Tvrzický was now telling official representatives from Czechoslovakia to avoid visiting Hrdlička. At one point, a Czech-American named Miss Jaroušková, who worked at Tvrzický’s office, brought two ladies from Czechoslovakia to see Hrdlička. According to Hrdlička’s account, Tvrzický called one of the Czechoslovakian delegates

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Masaryk, 5 November, 1919, box 44, “Masaryk, Thomas G., 1918-30,” Correspondence. On Pergler, see Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 118; on Tvrzický see Vondrášek and Hanzlík, *Krajané v USA*, 14.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

afterward and told her “not to have any further involvement” with Hrdlička.<sup>149</sup> Tvrzický also reprimanded Miss Jaroušková for taking the women to see Hrdlička, who was “the very person who denounced Masaryk in a letter to the State Department,” and then he fired her a few days later.<sup>150</sup> Like Vráz, the fastidious Hrdlička was deeply concerned about his reputation, so he took the trouble to get an official confirmation from the State Department that it never received the disloyal letter.<sup>151</sup> “What really hurts me,” he told the first Czechoslovakian president, “is that you were induced to anger and I had no chance to speak for myself.”<sup>152</sup> Instead, he told Masaryk, “For you, although I do not know you personally, I have had only respect since the very beginning.”<sup>153</sup>

Hrdlička told Masaryk that these attacks on his loyalty were revenge for conflicts that occurred during the war years. In his 1919 account to Masaryk, he wrote, “in order to preserve unity” during the war he had “requested the removal of Mr. Tvrzický from Washington.”<sup>154</sup> Hrdlička’s own correspondence lends credibility to this story. One year before he had in fact written to Ludvík Fisher in Chicago and demanded Tvrzický’s removal. In May 1918, near the end of the war, Tvrzický showed up in Washington with a few friends and tried to open a rival branch of the Czechoslovakian National Alliance without consulting Hrdlička. Hrdlička reminded the leadership that his Bohemian Circle met regularly with important congressmen and included the “best people” of Washington. He complained that the establishment of a rival group, “without any deference to our organization,” would “be a most uncalled for duplication, which cannot but be resented by the pioneer workers of this city, and which if realized will, I fear, sow dissension, something that we can ill-afford at the present time.”<sup>155</sup> Hrdlička was less certain about why Charles Pergler was slandering him, but he told Masaryk that at the end of war, “there were at that time many concerns

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Vráz, 27 November, 1919, box 65, “Vraz, E. St., 1917-22,” Correspondence.

<sup>152</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Masaryk, 5 November, 1919, box 44, “Masaryk, Thomas G., 1918-30,” Correspondence.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fisher, 18.5.1918 box 23, “FI-FL, 1903-41,” Correspondence.

about [Pergler's] possible appointment as [Czechoslovak] ambassador for the United States."<sup>156</sup>

Now he believed that Pergler and Tvrzický were trying to discredit him in Masaryk's eyes. "Over here," he grumbled in resignation, "it is impossible to avoid some king of 'revenge'."<sup>157</sup>

It is possible to put together a little more of the story because Hrdlička wrote about the situation to Vráz, and this correspondence sheds still more light on tensions among Czech nationalists in America and Europe. Hrdlička told Vráz in 1919, "The triumvirate of Beneš, Pergler, and Tvrzický did not find me 'suitable'."<sup>158</sup> These three men "underhandedly accuse me of nothing less than 'renouncing' Masaryk before our [U.S.] State Department."<sup>159</sup> While Hrdlička thought "retribution" was one motive for the attempted purge, he hinted at problems of legitimacy and accountability that troubled the Czechoslovakian National Council more generally.<sup>160</sup> His analysis was insightful:

I always expected that our people would be invited to elect their own representatives, and if not the people then at least its organizations, but no such thing has happened. When Stefánik was here, I advised him emphatically to carry out a truly democratic reorganization, because only thus could we make use of all of our strength, but even his influence was already too small. I continued to give this advice and I still do, but with little success.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Masaryk, 5 November, 1919, box 44, "Masaryk, Thomas G., 1918-30," Correspondence.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Vráz, 27 November, 1919, box 65, "Vraz, E. St., 1917-22," Correspondence.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Kalvoda, "Masaryk in America," 40-41. Kalvoda suggested that Masaryk's revolutionary movement suffered generally from a lack of democratic legitimacy: "The fact that his party was the smallest party in the country and that the other parties were pursuing different policies seemed no obstacle to his plan for organizing a Czech political and military struggle on the side of the Allies" (40). Also: "Masaryk was not concerned to reconcile the self-government of others with autocratic rule by himself; nor did he believe that the peoples' true interests could best be ascertained by consulting their wishes" (41).

<sup>161</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Vráz, 27 November, 1919, box 65, "Vraz, E. St., 1917-22," Correspondence.

He believed that the Czechoslovakian leaders were generally good men, “but they are not elected, and so they can never really rely on general cooperation and trust.”<sup>162</sup> Untied to any electoral responsibility, some of the war-time leaders turned into “usurpers,” who “use all possible weapons and means to elevate themselves.”<sup>163</sup> Once the most ambitious got power, “all who did not fit into the box were silenced, and where this was impossible, they were at least bribed.”<sup>164</sup> For these “parvenus,” he surmised, “the sun never sets. And few of them ever keep the seat that they so ardently worked for.”<sup>165</sup>

It is important to know about the gritty reality behind the Czech propaganda team in the United States and Europe, but it is equally important to understand that Hrdlička remained loyal to Czechoslovakia even when it disappointed him. Both he and Vráz were deeply worried about being labeled as traitors, especially where loyalty to Masaryk was concerned. Hrdlička went on to donate most of his personal fortune to the development of Czechoslovakian physical anthropology in the 1920s. He had important friends in the Czechoslovakian government, such as Gustav Habrman, the Czechoslovakian Minister of Education, who had once been Hrdlička’s roommate in New York City. He traveled to Czechoslovakia in 1922, 1923, and 1927. In 1922, he gave a lecture series at Charles University that was very popular and later published as a short book. For his efforts during the war, he was awarded the Czechoslovakian Revolutionary Medal in 1928. Honorary doctorates in Natural Science from Masaryk University and Charles University came in 1929.<sup>166</sup> In the next crisis of the 1930s, Hrdlička again used his high position and fame to advocate for the new state of Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Petr Kostrhun, “Američtí archeologové a antropologové na Moravě v období mezi světovými válkami,” *Archeologické rozhledy* LXVII (2015): 598.

In spite of this generally positive relationship, contradictory narratives about the 1918 “revolution” continued to develop during the interwar period and perhaps made it more difficult for Czech-Americans to react when the next crisis came in 1938. In 1927, Eduard Beneš, Vojta’s brother and Czechoslovakia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, published his own account of how the war was won. Hrdlička wrote him and tersely thanked him for his three-volume work but immediately launched into an extended critique. Although couched in polite Czech, it is easy to see Hrdlička’s resentment toward Beneš for focusing too much on his own and Masaryk’s diplomatic maneuvers. The historiography of the war, he lectured Beneš, was already “saturated with individuals,” but “it would be a mistake to ascribe to individuals ... the deciding or even leading importance.”<sup>167</sup> Instead, Hrdlička asserted that Czech-American help and the Czechoslovak Legion in Siberia had played the deciding role in winning independence. He reminded Beneš, “if the Allies had won before 1917,” the year the United States joined the struggle, “Czechs would have gained little.”<sup>168</sup> When Russia collapsed in the same year, and manpower and financial reserves began to run out, “the vast numbers across the sea took over [the fight], and at that time all help was golden because the internal disintegration of Austria-Hungary seemed no more than a distant star of hope.”<sup>169</sup> Most importantly, the Czechoslovak Legion conquered Siberia in 1918, “and then the doors began to open to us, Masaryk included.”<sup>170</sup> Yes, there were leaders, “who at the right moment were able to bargain on behalf of the whole,” and “their services are not small,” but “without the help of the Allies and the phenomenon of the Legion, their efforts would have been paralyzed.”<sup>171</sup> Hrdlička patronizingly told Beneš that his book was a good beginning, but now a team of historians should come to America to recover the rest of the story before the first-hand witnesses died out.

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<sup>167</sup> Hrdlička to Eduard Beneš, 26 October, 1929, box 14, “Beneš, Edward, 1929-38,” Correspondence.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

## D. WORLD WAR II

In the late 1930s, the renewed Czech-American propaganda effort faced even bigger challenges than in the Great War. One of the key problems was that the short-term success of Czechoslovakian propaganda in 1914-1919 had in the long-term bred skepticism. In fact, “isolationism” in the 1930s drew some of its strength from the public’s realization that World War I propaganda had exaggerated profusely. As several scholars have observed, the cynical manipulation of “facts” and the exaggeration of German “atrocities” in World War I made it especially difficult for Americans to believe frightening reports, this time true, from Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>172</sup> Czech-Americans, who played a big role in stereotyping Germans, stood near the center of this now slightly embarrassing melodrama. Even the propagandists realized in the interwar period that the complicated empirical realities of everyday life did not conform to the comfortable certainty and duality of wartime propaganda. Many of the “facts” disseminated by the Allies turned out to be less than true, and it was no longer possible to write off all of the enemy’s statements simply as “lies.” In 1938, Hrdlička’s friend and fellow nationalist Jaromír Pšenka had to admit, “We ourselves were plenty guilty for stupid conduct with the Germans.”<sup>173</sup>

Another new problem was that by 1938, Hrdlička and others were uncertain that the Czechoslovakian government, now with Eduard Beneš as President, was up to the task of conducting full-scale propaganda in the United States. Hrdlička’s friend Pšenka, who was the editor of *Svornost* in Chicago, believed that Czechoslovakia had neglected Czech Americans and their powerful adopted state during the interwar period. Pšenka claimed that while visiting Czechoslovakia he had pushed the government to establish a press office in America and to publish an “English-language monthly magazine,” but that the authorities ignored him.<sup>174</sup> As Orzoff has

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<sup>172</sup> See Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 8; Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 197; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 23.

<sup>173</sup> Letter, R. Jaromír Pšenka to Hrdlička, 20 March, 1938, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstrated, Czechoslovakia already had a sophisticated propaganda apparatus, but Pšenka saw it as misdirected and useless because, “the Czechoslovakian government spends millions and maybe even tens of millions on propaganda and advertisements everywhere else but where it would be most needed, here in America.”<sup>175</sup> While he was in Prague, Pšenka had offered the government a specific plan for a press bureau in the United States headed by a Czech American. He told the Czechoslovakian government that his plan would cost only 20,000 crowns yearly, “which would be nothing compared with their expenditures on so many useless advertisements elsewhere.”<sup>176</sup> The project went nowhere, and its failure, according to Pšenka, was now crippling propaganda efforts in 1938. Now it was crucial to battle American isolationists and promote the interests of the homeland, and “if there was not so much bureaucratic ‘red tape’ in Czechoslovakia at this critical time, it would be possible to work on this full steam.”<sup>177</sup> Hrdlička agreed with his friend Pšenka but preferred not to dwell on these “past failures,” which “cannot be corrected within a short time.”<sup>178</sup>

Always ready with diplomatic advice, Hrdlička wrote to E. Beneš on at least two occasions in 1938 and 1939 to coach him on his relationship to the United States. His advice illustrates some of the long-running tensions between Czech Americans and Czechoslovakia. In December, 1938 Hrdlička told Beneš he should use upcoming trade talks as an excuse to “personally visit the United States.”<sup>179</sup> During this diplomatic visit Beneš should “deliver personal thanks to the American people for Wilson and all the others [who had helped Czechoslovakia].”<sup>180</sup> For good measure, Beneš should bring a gift for President Roosevelt: “Maybe a picture would be best.”<sup>181</sup> Just after the final demise of Czechoslovakia in March, 1939, Hrdlička had more instructions for Beneš, who was now in exile at the University of Chicago. Beneš should set up an “American Committee of Czechoslovak Citizens and Descendants,” which would select its own leaders. Perhaps due to

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Pšenka, 22 March, 1938, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>179</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to E. Beneš, 11 December, 1938, box 14, “Beneš, Edward, 1929-38,” Correspondence.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

political infighting after the previous war, Hrdlička told Beneš that he should not be a member of the committee but stand “behind it as its great sustainer and leader.”<sup>182</sup> Although the committee would publicly protest the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, it would also carefully avoid the accusation of promoting a foreign interest in the United States. Beneš, advised Hrdlička, should give a radio address:

to all the people of Czech and Slovak descent in this country, urging them in the present crisis to be, above everything, good Americans [sic] – for only thus will they be able to most effectively aid their old country. Such address, reprinted in the press, will make many additional American friends and remove intolerance of a “foreign” group acting for something “foreign” in this country. I have urged this from even before the World War, and cannot accentuate it enough in these fateful times.<sup>183</sup>

Whether or not Beneš paid any attention to him, Hrdlička conducted a personal campaign for Czechoslovakia until his death in 1943, but the archival sources yield little evidence that he was part of a coordinated network of propagandists as he had been in the First World War. This could be for several reasons. First, Hrdlička was already reaching old age, and he retired from the Smithsonian in 1942. He was still active, but as he told Beneš in 1929, many of the Czech-American leaders from the World War were dying off. Second, the demographics of Czech America had changed in other ways as well. Due to immigration restriction beginning in the early 1920s, the flow of fresh arrivals from Europe slowed significantly. By the 1930s, many Czech Americans were citizens born in the United States and, as Hrdlička acknowledged, “sons and

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<sup>182</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to E. Beneš, 21 March, 1939, box 14, “Beneš, Edward, 1929-38,” Correspondence.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

daughters of this country.”<sup>184</sup> Assimilated Czech Americans probably had less interest in the old country. Thirdly, as one of Hrdlička’s friends reasonably noted in 1938, many felt “that they did their duty in the World War and now it is the obligation of the Czechoslovak government to take over work in the interest of the nation.”<sup>185</sup> Fourthly, Hrdlička’s experience suggests that internal rivalries quickly eroded solidarity after the Great War, which was never as solid as it seemed. When Czechoslovakia became a real state and not just an idea, there were offices and budgets to compete for. Some Czech Americans made careers in Czechoslovakian politics, but most, like Hrdlička, preferred the relative security of American citizenship to the uncertainties of a new state. The mystical “blood” union was a powerful belief that motivated people to achieve truly monumental aims during the war, but in the complicated world of everyday life it often failed to bind American Czechs wholeheartedly to the interests of Czechoslovakia.

Although seemingly more alone in the 1930s, Hrdlička still used his reputation to push the agenda of Czechoslovakia in the neutral United States. He was more famous in the 1930s than he had been during the Great War, so he had new opportunities to spread the message. In the late 1930s, he did several interviews with famous newspapers like the *Washington Post*, which gave him opportunities to comment on world affairs. Like many opinion shapers of his time, Hrdlička embraced the radio. In fact, he had always been savvy about the propaganda value of new media technology. Back in 1917 he had wanted to supplement “high-class” propaganda lectures with film. “The pictures nowadays,” he reasoned, “reach everybody, and some arrangement could doubtless be made with some of the leading film companies for including the pictures in their regular repertoire. If first class actors were available something could be done in this direction.”<sup>186</sup> Although his motion picture career never developed, his interest in popular media probably prompted him to try radio in the 1930s. In May 1938 he gave an address over the ABC network that

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<sup>184</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Pšenka, 22 March, 1938, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>185</sup> Letter, Pšenka to Hrdlička, 20 March, 1938, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>186</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Čapek, 15 May, 1917, box 17, “Čapek, Thomas, 1914-1943,” Correspondence.

dealt with the “races of Austria.”<sup>187</sup> In April 1938 he did a brief speech for CBS about Czechoslovakia.<sup>188</sup> In October 1940 he did an interview, sponsored by the Justice Department, called “I’m an American” on NBC.<sup>189</sup> Finally, in September, 1941, he did a speech for CBS, in which he spoke about “The Material Causes Underlying the Present World Troubles.”<sup>190</sup> All of these gave him an opportunity to comment on political events in Central Europe. It is difficult to judge how influential these broadcasts were; however, they indicate that by the end of his career Hrdlička was considered a commentator on world politics of at least some national significance. His radio speeches received at least a few response letters from listeners, most of whom were of Czech heritage.

Although he made much of the martyrdom of peaceful Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, Hrdlička once again found himself attempting to recruit the fearsome warmongering power of the neutral United States on its behalf. As Germany became more volatile in the 1930s, Hrdlička was again preaching the virtues of war, not peace, to neutral America. In the late 1930s he composed an interventionist essay entitled “War and Civilization,” which was essentially an argument for why war was really not such a terrible thing after all.<sup>191</sup> It is unclear if he ever published this piece, but it is certain from his correspondence that he sent copies to Senator William H. King in May, 1939 and to Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes in June, 1941.<sup>192</sup> All four indicated that they received it, and Ickes read it and responded to it, though cautiously. President Roosevelt might have received a copy as well.<sup>193</sup> At the end of a life-long career at the

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<sup>187</sup> The title of the speech is not given, but there are responses from listeners. The talk must have been on 13 April, 1938. The letters are found in box 55, “Radio Talk on Austria, 1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>188</sup> Hrdlička, “Address on Columbia Broadcasting System,” 9 April, 1938, box 55, “Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>189</sup> Hrdlička, “I’m an American!” Radio interview for the National Broadcasting Company, 20 October, 1940, box 55, “Radio Talks: I’m an American Program,” Correspondence.

<sup>190</sup> Hrdlička, “The Material Causes Underlying the Present World Troubles,” 28 September, 1941, box 55, “Radio Broadcast: Meaning of Freedom Program,” Correspondence.

<sup>191</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “War and Civilization” [1939?], box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>192</sup> Letter, William H. King to Hrdlička, 5 October, 1939, box 38, “King, William H., 1919-41;” Letter, Cordell Hull to Hrdlička, 2 June, 1941, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš;” Letter, Harold Ickes to Hrdlička, 2 June, 1941, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>193</sup> David H. Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 118-122.

Smithsonian in Washington, Hrdlička used his access to powerful figures in the government to lobby on behalf of Czechoslovakia and for war if necessary.

“War and Civilization” is a shotgun argument for why war, despite its naysayers, really is a good thing. With the global political situation again souring in the late 1930s, Hrdlička was dismayed to hear “dark expressions” that warfare was detrimental to human civilization.<sup>194</sup> There were many reasons why war could be good. It was eugenic because it kept humans “fit and strong.”<sup>195</sup> He pointed to modern Russia, which was always his favorite eugenic example: “The World War, revolution, a long subsequent struggles, and great famines, took millions of the Russian population and left widespread ruins – yet twenty years hence the country is more educated, virile and generally advanced than it had ever been before.”<sup>196</sup> War trimmed civilization of its less intelligent people because “intellectuality or especially good sense means invariably an advantage in all life struggles, including war.”<sup>197</sup> “The strong and intellectual,” he predicted, would avoid death in battle “more than the weaker ones or the dull.”<sup>198</sup> Then there was the rosy statistical truth that war did not really kill that many people after all; more died in auto accidents than in the world war. Finally, sometimes defensive wars were necessary, “when either honor, or other vital interests,” or “existence” are at stake.<sup>199</sup> Choosing tactfully from Hrdlička’s sweeping menu of arguments for war, Harold Ickes was able to find at least one he agreed with. Yes, Ickes delicately replied six months before Pearl Harbor, war “is preferable to a peace that leads to national destruction.”<sup>200</sup>

Some scholars have portrayed Hrdlička’s message in the Second World War as righteous and prophetic, and this is always tempting for those who lived to see later events. Yet from another

<sup>194</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “War and Civilization,” [1939?], box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. Although he hastily called war “dysgenic” in “War and Civilization,” he did not develop this point, and instead he used the entirety of the essay to argue exactly the opposite.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Letter, Ickes to Hrdlička, 2 June, 1941, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

perspective, Hrdlička's propaganda bore the elitist tone of an obscure foreign concern that was understandably distant from most Americans. He wrote from the position of a scientific authority preaching to his supposedly less informed fellow citizens. In "War and Civilization," which was probably written two years before Pearl Harbor, he claimed that only naïve people believed "dark expressions" about war's overall destructiveness. Only dupes subscribed to pacifist views, which "could readily be used for mischievous propaganda."<sup>201</sup> In fact, most of the human race was too superficial to see through pacifist propaganda: "A large majority of humans are so poorly instructed, so little experienced, and so used to superficial talk and incapable of sound individual reasoning, that they will readily follow anything sufficiently often repeated, given or backed by some public idol."<sup>202</sup> His personal correspondence similarly betrays impatience with apathy and unfamiliarity about matters that he perceived as vital. In March 1938 he told Cordell Hull, "I meet almost daily with misstatements and misunderstandings ... which prove very damaging to that little country and its good people."<sup>203</sup> In October, 1938, he wrote to Senator King and compared the Sudeten crisis to the crucifixion. "Is there no great voice in this country," he asked, to speak out "against the further torture of the little nation which offended only by its progress and inherent love of democracy."<sup>204</sup>

For Hrdlička, there was simply no reason why Americans should see any complexity in the Sudeten Crisis of 1938 when the "facts" were so clear and morally compelling to him. According to Hrdlička, all people needed to know was that the "Sudetenland" was not historically part of Germany and that Germans lived in Czechoslovakia as guests. He told his Czech-American friend Pšenka that it was necessary to write to important American leaders to provide them, "with information as to just what the 'Germans' in Czechoslovakia represent. There is a vast amount of ignorance on this subject. Many think that these are inherent parts of the Germans living in a

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<sup>201</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, "War and Civilization," [1939?], box 33, "Hrdlička, Aleš," Correspondence.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Cordell Hull 23 March, 1938, box 33, "Hrdlička, Aleš," Correspondence.

<sup>204</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to King, 5 October, 1938, box 33, "Hrdlička, Aleš," Correspondence.

territory that once belonged to Germany.”<sup>205</sup> His frustration with the misconception that the Sudetenland had historic political ties to Germany was warranted, but he insisted that that Sudeten Germans did not really belong to Czechoslovakia either. He told a radio audience in 1938 that Czechs and Slovaks were “the native population,” “twin brothers by origin,” and “innately democratic and patriotic.”<sup>206</sup> On the other hand the Sudeten Germans, he instructed Cordell Hull, were “the descendants of miners, artisans, etc. who were invited to Bohemia and Moravia from the 12th century onward.”<sup>207</sup> After that they continued to arrive as “infiltrations,” and in Czechoslovakia they lived “mixed more or less with the native population.”<sup>208</sup> In a radio address he told Americans that the Germans had, “slowly immigrated, especially supported by Austria after 1620.”<sup>209</sup> Further accentuating their “foreign” status, he added that now they were angry because “under Austria they were the privileged elements.”<sup>210</sup> At the very least, these statements raise a lot of questions, but for Hrdlička, they were unambiguous “facts” that should have evoked strong feelings of moral obligation from his fellow Americans.

## E. CONCLUSION

In both world wars, Hrdlička and other Czech nationalists attempted to manipulate elites and the American public to support a relatively obscure foreign cause. These attempts were sometimes secretive and underhanded. Czech Americans sought to manipulate domestic politics on behalf of foreign interests, they lobbied elected politicians to do their bidding, they spied on behalf of Great Britain, they “placed” essays and articles in the press, and they attempted to cooperate with the government to censor rival opinions. Their propaganda was not peaceful. Their message in 1914-1918 was that the war was a moral crusade, which must continue until the other side was

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<sup>205</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Pšenka, 22 March, 1938, box 54, “Pšenka, R. Jaromir, 1916-39,” Correspondence.

<sup>206</sup> Hrdlička, “Address on Columbia Broadcasting System,” 9 April, 1938, box 55, “Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>207</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Cordell Hull 23 March, 1938, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš,” Correspondence.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Hrdlička, “Address on Columbia Broadcasting System,” 9 April, 1938, box 55, “Radio Talk on Czechoslovakia, 1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

completely crushed. In 1938-1943, Hrdlička's message was that Americans should embrace war, which may in fact be eugenically beneficial to human civilization. In both cases, he viewed the vast military power of the United States more as an asset to Czechoslovakians than as a shield to American voters and their interests.

The best propagandists are not cynical; instead, they are far too sincere. They assume that their personal convictions, genuinely and earnestly held, are indisputable truths, and that contrary opinions must be deliberate lies. The aim here is not to make a moral critique of this behavior. As long as the United States has been powerful, foreign interest groups have quite understandably sought to channel its military might to their own benefit. Such interests will inevitably use the most sophisticated, persuasive, and subtle means available to disseminate their views. The Czech nationalists, like most enthusiasts for a cause, believed that their goals were unquestionably true and worthy of sacrifice and bloodshed. Modern historians are not obliged to share their zeal.

## CHAPTER VII: THE MUSEUM OF MAN

“By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adversed to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.” (James Madison, *Federalist Papers*, no. 10)<sup>1</sup>

### A. INTRODUCTION

Today, the Hrdlička Museum of Man in Prague is located at the end of a long hallway in a building that belongs to the Faculty of Science of Charles University. It is comprised of a few moderately sized, plain rooms filled with aging displays, mostly of bones. The museum, which is really a relic of another age, has adjusted its role to a modern situation. Although a very appealing local curiosity, the museum is never likely to be a major Prague attraction. In this respect, it is a far cry from what Hrdlička intended when he founded it in 1929. He expected the museum to be housed in a monumental building, with four great halls, on prime real estate. He hoped it would be the pride of Czechoslovakia. He was unhappy with its progress when he died, and he would still be dissatisfied today. In some ways, the Museum of Man mirrors the rise and fall of the first republic of Czechoslovakia.

### B. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Instead of placing a premium on the participation of individuals as citizens of a neutral state, Czechoslovakia encouraged individuals to pursue their ambitions through shifting and vague factions, which viewed the state as the best means of accessing power and funds for themselves and their particular clique. At the most idealistic level, the dominant nationalist narrative claimed that

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<sup>1</sup> James Madison, “Federalist no. 10,” 1787, “The Federalist Papers,” <https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-top> (accessed 8 September, 2019).

the new state was a just reward for the long oppressed Czech nation.<sup>2</sup> To what degree the “oppression” narrative is true is less important than the lesson it conveyed; that the state was the well-deserved prize for a single victorious faction, not the *res publica* of all its citizens.<sup>3</sup> Even the ideologies of Czechoslovakia’s leaders made it difficult to think in terms of a nationally neutral state. The concept of “humanity” was very important to the first president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, but he believed that an individual’s full humanity could only be realized through national consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Czechoslovakia’s second founding father and president, Edvard Beneš, similarly thought “there is no such thing as common human culture: there are only national cultures.”<sup>5</sup>

Although nationality was the most obvious divider, there were many ways to divvy up the spoils in Czechoslovakia. For example, Peter Bugge and Andrea Orzoff have described factionalism that started at the top. Almost immediately after the beginning of the republic, the president for life, Masaryk, created a powerful political machine known as “the Castle,” which controlled the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and nurtured a cult around the founding president. The only serious competitor for power was a coalition of five political parties, known as the “*pětka*” [the five], whose leaders met privately to coordinate the parliament behind the scenes with minimal democratic fuss. The castle and the *pětka* quickly learned to negotiate and manage their differences. The president handled the country’s foreign policy and propaganda, while the parties divided up the spoils emanating from the center of power. According to Bugge, this political arrangement diverted attention away from the wider civic community by creating “a lack of interest in the general

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<sup>2</sup> There is now an immense amount of English-language analysis of the Czechoslovakian First Republic, perhaps due to the fresh diversity of scholars who have taken up the topic since the revolution in 1989. For succinct summaries of this type of Czech national mythology, see Eagle Glassheim, “National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945,” *Central European History* 33:4 (2000): 466-70; Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11-14; Pieter M. Judson has provided a corresponding revisionist perspective on Austria-Hungary. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Although a very different situation, some inspiration is drawn from Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of the Continent since Independence* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 156: “Politicians and voters alike came to rely on ethnic solidarity. For politicians it was the route to power. They became, in effect, ethnic entrepreneurs. For voters it was their main hope of getting a slice of government bounty. What they wanted was a local representative at the centre of power – an ethnic patron who could capture a share of the spoils and bring in back to their community.”

<sup>4</sup> Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 31-32.

<sup>5</sup> Edvard Beneš, *My War Memories*, cited in Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 52.

political make-up of the state.”<sup>6</sup> According to Bugge, “people spent political energies in the microcosms of the many party organizations, while general democratic integration, i.e. participation or interest in broader political issues, was low.”<sup>7</sup>

From the bottom-up perspective, people came to understand that good connections, not civic utility, were the quickest routes to success in public life. What this amounted to in practice was, as Vojta Beneš, brother of Edvard, remembered, a “terrible striving after sinecures.”<sup>8</sup> Now unburdened by former oppressors, the new state promised to place power and resources in the hands of the “right” people. In fact, even some Czechs resented the political spoils system as unprincipled opportunism. In his correspondence with Hrdlička, Czech anthropologist Jindřich Matiegka thought the political parties “take care that they have their favorites and representatives in the offices, without any consideration of whether they are qualified or not. These people, who do not behave decently, become autocrats in their offices.”<sup>9</sup> Because of this he constantly complained about “large numbers of young people who without much education get into a ministry and a variety of useless offices and waste money in any way they want.”<sup>10</sup> Betka Papánek, a Slovakian-American friend living in Prague, told Hrdlička in 1934: “There is a growing resentment towards the unqualified opportunists who for 15 years have been in leading positions.”<sup>11</sup> While Matiegka was upset about upstarts of all nationalities, he was especially unhappy about Jews who he thought were scrambling shamelessly after government positions.

There were many “microcosms” of interests, but of course national groups stood out in the scramble for positions. According to Orzoff, the new government rewarded about 20,000

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Bugge, “Czech Democracy 1918-1938 – Paragon or Parody?” *Bohemia* 47 (2006/07): 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> Bugge, “Czech Democracy 1918-1938,” 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Vojta Beneš, cited in Orzoff, 194. The original quote, found by Orzoff, is from Ferdinand Peroutka, *Budování Státu* (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1991): 765-66.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 26 January, 1921, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1921-23,” Correspondence. Papers of Aleš Hrdlička, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institute.

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Jindřich Matiegka to Aleš Hrdlička, 30 December, 1919, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20,” Correspondence.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Betka Papánek to Hrdlička, 29 March, 1934, box 52, “Papánek, Jan, 1932-43,” Correspondence.

Legionnaires, who served in as a Czechoslovakian army in World War One, with “positions as bureaucrats and public employees.”<sup>12</sup> Not everyone felt that they were competent.<sup>13</sup> Later on, also according to Orzoff, around 33,000 German speakers lost their jobs in the 1920s due to a new language law.<sup>14</sup> Eagle Glassheim has argued convincingly that the Land Reform Law of 1919, at least as administered by the State Land Office, was “a kind of affirmative action program for Czechs” as it supposedly righted the “political persecution by the former Habsburg Dynasty” by redistributing “German” noble lands.<sup>15</sup> There is some evidence that the newly acquired province of Slovakia became a destination for opportunists. In 1934 the America Institute, a propaganda organ of the Castle, issued an unconvincing circular explaining Slovakian nationalist unrest to Czech-American and Slovak-American readers.<sup>16</sup> Although the Slovakian nationalist disturbances were really nothing to worry about, according to this bulletin, they arose partly because of “some lack of tact on the part of several [Czech] officials in Slovakia.”<sup>17</sup> The writer justified this “lack of tact” with a terribly mishandled analogy; any alleged Czech misconduct in Slovakia was a necessary evil, just like “the ‘carpet bag’ movement in the southern states after the American Civil War.”<sup>18</sup> Anyway, the author continued, there were only 130,000 Czechs in Slovakia, and “Slovaks are being constantly appointed to public positions as they develop to the point of capacity to undertake the responsibility.”<sup>19</sup> In the same year, another Czech author explained that after the war “it proved necessary to send Czech officials to Bratislava,” which “had a very small native intelligentsia.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 85. Pieter M. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 435. 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>15</sup> Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005): 71.

<sup>16</sup> On the America Institute, see Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 158. The letter is: Brackett Lewis to Hrdlička, 6 December, 1934, box 8, “American Institute in Prague, 1931-1936,” Correspondence.

<sup>17</sup> Letter, Brackett Lewis to Hrdlička, 6 December, 1934, box 8, “American Institute in Prague, 1931-1936,” Correspondence.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Emanuel Čapek, “Racial and Social Aspects of the Czechoslovak Census,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 12:36 (April, 1934): 600.

Slovakia, at least according to Emanuel Čapek, desperately needed “teachers from the Czech lands.”<sup>21</sup>

Nationality, not necessarily objective measures of quality, pervaded Czechoslovakian education. From kindergarten to university, educational institutions had begun prioritizing national identity long before the advent of Czechoslovakia. At Charles University, Czech and German professors had decided to go separate ways in 1882.<sup>22</sup> In basic school education, both Czech and German nationalists had promoted parochial national interests for decades. Historian Tara Zahra has shown how Czech nationalists, long before the establishment of Czechoslovakia, argued that children were the property of the nation and rejected liberal beliefs in parental rights, for example, to choose their child’s language of education.<sup>23</sup> With the newly acquired power of the state at its disposal after 1918; however, the government gained the right to compel parents to send their children to Czech schools, and failing that, to close the German schools and fire the teachers.<sup>24</sup> It is true that the government left most German schools untouched, but sometimes it still used its power to the frustration of parents, some of whom were Czechs with cosmopolitan hopes for their children. Zahra has cited the example of Czech writer Josef Čapek, who wanted his daughter to learn German so she could go to a German university someday. When the Ministry of Education closed her German kindergarten in Prague, he wrote a letter to protest.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Marta Filipová, “Peasants on Display: The Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895,” *Journal of Design History* 24:1 (2011): 17.

<sup>23</sup> Tara Zahra, “Reclaiming Children for the Nation: Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1945,” *Central European History* 37:4 (2004): 513. See also: Zahra, “‘Each nation only cares for its own’: Empire, Nation, and Child Welfare Activism in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1918,” *The American Historical Review* 111: 5 (Dec. 2006): 1378-1402; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Zahra, “Reclaiming Children,” 524-26.

<sup>25</sup> Zahra, “Reclaiming Children,” 526.

## C. HRDLIČKA, THE IDEALISTIC PATRON

Hrdlička naively entered this factional battleground as a generous patron and an idealistic Czech and Slavic nationalist. Throughout his career, he gave away large amounts of his personal wealth to promote various causes in his homeland. Even before the war, Hrdlička had already set up endowments for the Czech Academy of Science and the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences in Prague.<sup>26</sup> In May 1919, he sent a personal letter, along with money, to President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, “to help educate well one or two promising orphans of one of our soldiers.”<sup>27</sup> In the early 1920s, he created yet another endowment for Charles University.<sup>28</sup> By 1924 these funds were consolidated into two, which were known collectively as the “Hrdlička Funds” and administered by the Czech Academy of Sciences and Charles University.<sup>29</sup> In 1930, he established yet another endowment of 100,000 crowns to support a regional museum and a boys’ school in his home town of Humpolec.<sup>30</sup> He continued to explore other philanthropic projects well into the 1930s.

For Hrdlička, these sums represented a huge personal commitment. He had little chance of earning so much on his own. The money came from his first wife, who died in 1918.<sup>31</sup> It is remarkable that a man who grew up poor was so quick to give away a one-time chance for financial comfort. Czech anthropologist Petr Kostrhun estimates that the “Hrdlička Funds” alone were worth around 1.25 million Czech crowns in the early 1920s, and Hrdlička added to them significantly in

<sup>26</sup> Petr Kostrhun, “Američtí archeologové a antropologové na Moravě v období mezi světovými válkami,” *Archeologické rozhledy* LXVII (2015): 596.

<sup>27</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 6 May, 1919, box 44, “Masaryk, Thomas G., 1918-1930,” Correspondence.

<sup>28</sup> Kostrhun, “Američtí archeologové a antropologové,” 596.

<sup>29</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 12 October, 1924, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1924-28,” Correspondence.

<sup>30</sup> Hrdlička, “Základní List Nadace Hrdličkovy,” in *Kulturní stopou Humpolecka (Hrdličkův jubilejní sborník)*, eds. Jiří Bečvář, et. al. (Pelhřimov: Jihočeské tiskárny, 1969), 47.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Spencer, “Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943: A Chronicle of the Life and Work of an American Physical Anthropologist,” Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1979, 56-75. Hrdlička’s first wife was Marie Strickler. After her mother died, according to Spencer, Marie was left “a small estate consisting of a modest sum of money and property” (59). In his public letter to President Masaryk in 1929, Hrdlička reported, “she was from an old Alpine family and educated in Paris,” and “she and I, by living as frugally as possible, gathered a relatively significant amount of property, which we single mindedly hoped to use someday for ‘something better’.” He always made it clear that his endowments were made in her memory. Although popularly called the “Hrdlička Funds,” the endowment was officially the “Fund of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička and his Wife Marie.”

later years. It is difficult to calculate this amount in modern currency; however, in the 1920s a Czechoslovakian teacher's salary was around 300 crowns per month, or 3,500 crowns per year.<sup>32</sup> To most Czech academics, 1.25 million must have seemed like an incredible reservoir of funding. A receipt from 1924 records that Hrdlička bought \$20,000 in Czechoslovak bonds, City of Prague bonds, and US Treasury Certificates, presumably to add to the Hrdlička Funds.<sup>33</sup> This single transaction was about eight times his annual salary of \$2,400.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the yearly profits from the Hrdlička Funds were usually sufficient to fund an anthropological journal, a fluctuating number of other publications, and a few anthropological expeditions. While these endowments were not stunningly large, they were considerable sums for Hrdlička and most of his colleagues. With no desire for future profit, Hrdlička sacrificed something of himself, expressed in money and its potential, to the general welfare of Czech science. Tragically, he also created a new pool of power and money for Czech academics to fight over.

The rules of the Hrdlička Funds, which reached their final form around 1923-24, reflected the Czech nationalism of their patron. The money was not intended to aid the entire scientific community of Czechoslovakia, but only the Czech, and to a lesser extent, the Slovak and other "Slavic" elements. The rules located administrative power over the funds in Prague, specifically in the hands of professors at the Academy of Sciences and Charles University. Jindřich Matiegka, Hrdlička's most trusted scientific counterpart in Czechoslovakia, ended up playing a leading role. According to the stipulations, the fund was "founded to support Czech progress in physical anthropology and related disciplines."<sup>35</sup> Half of the yearly proceeds were to be used to reward excellent recent publications, to support worthy publication plans, and to fund anthropological

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<sup>32</sup> Kostrhun, "Američtí archeologové a antropologové," 597.

<sup>33</sup> Letter, Ambassador of Czechoslovakia in the United States to Hrdlička, 9 April, 1924, Collection 2011-30.

<sup>34</sup> T. Dale Stewart, "Aleš Hrdlička, 1869-1943," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 56 (1981): 349.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 12 October, 1924, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1924-28," Correspondence.

expeditions. In order to signal that the fund was only for Czechs and Slovaks, it added: “it is possible to reward or support only work written in Czech or Slovak.”<sup>36</sup>

The other half of the yearly dividend had an even more specific purpose. This money was intended to finance a journal dedicated, “first and foremost to Slavic anthropology and anthropological research from Slavic countries.”<sup>37</sup> It would publish its articles only in Czech and Slovakian, with abstracts in French or English, but, pointedly, not German, the second most used language in Czechoslovakia. The rules also spelled out that the primary purpose of the journal was to publish articles by members of Charles University and “other,” though unspecified, “Czech and Slovak universities.”<sup>38</sup> The chief editorship of the journal went to the director of the Anthropological Institute at the Natural Sciences Faculty of Charles University, who happened to be Jindřich Matiegka. This made the Anthropological Institute a powerful center of anthropology in Czechoslovakia, a position that was enhanced a few years later when the director of the institute also became the curator of Hrdlička’s Museum of Man.

In 1929, in celebration of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, Hrdlička decided to advance yet another 1 million crowns in securities for the establishment of a grandiose Museum of Man in Prague. Hrdlička wanted to model the museum on his highly praised anthropological exhibition at the San Diego International Exposition in 1915. In order to launch the project, he wrote a public letter to President Masaryk to explain his magnificent plan. He grandly informed Masaryk that it was time for Czechoslovakian anthropology to take a glorious step forward. He promoted the project as “above all an important addition to anthropology for the good of science, the people, visitors, and for the cultural status of the country.”<sup>39</sup> The museum would be the jewel of the nation, “and no one,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 22 March, 1929, box 44, “Masaryk, Thomas G., 1918-1930,” Correspondence.

not France, not Germany, not England, nor even America has anything comparable.”<sup>40</sup> The only possible comparison was Hrdlička’s exhibition in San Diego. “The next step,” he announced theatrically, “is the building of the Museum of Man” in Prague.<sup>41</sup>

At this point in the letter to Masaryk, Hrdlička badly miscalculated and sowed the seeds for later failure. Although he was donating an impressive amount for the museum, it was not enough to finish the lavish project he envisioned. He insisted that the Czechoslovakian government would have to pay for the building that would house the collections. Hrdlička probably thought he was inspiring the Czechoslovakian state to take up a noble cause, but government officials more likely felt he was telling them how to spend state money. Not only was Hrdlička making demands on the Czechoslovakian budget, but he also nagged the president not to cut corners. After all, “a valuable picture requires a suitable frame and surroundings.”<sup>42</sup> Hrdlička lectured Masaryk that as “the highest representative of Czechoslovakian culture” he should do the job right. Hrdlička did not stop with budgetary meddling; he also described the four great halls he wanted the government to build for the museum. Leaving little to chance, he also told the president exactly who should manage the project. Jindřich Matiegka and Lubor Niederle, two long-time friends of Hrdlička, would be perfect for the job, especially if they listened to Hrdlička’s “advice.”<sup>43</sup> He made yet another personnel recommendation in the letter that would soon aggravate a bitter rivalry involving access to the Hrdlička Funds. He told Masaryk, “In Moravia you have a person (together with his efficient wife) who was created just for this undertaking. He is Suk (Professor V. Suk, University in Brno),” who would work under the “oversight” of Matiegka and Niederle.<sup>44</sup> Unsurprisingly, President Masaryk did not hurry to answer Hrdlička’s demanding public letter.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Hrdlička should have known better, and his information sources, especially Jindřich Matiegka, constantly warned him about the dangers of investing in the choppy waters of Czechoslovakia. After the republic's first year of existence, Matiegka complained, "agitation by the political parties pushes interest in science into the background."<sup>45</sup> He frequently cautioned Hrdlička to be careful, telling him, "you overrate the situation here and you do not understand our people."<sup>46</sup> In 1929, when Hrdlička announced his donation for the Museum of Man, Matiegka liked the idea, yet he immediately worried that it might be too ambitious for Czechoslovakia. "I am always telling you," he warned, that "you judge us too leniently."<sup>47</sup> To some degree, Matiegka foresaw the troubles that the Museum of Man would encounter. He advised Hrdlička not to be naïve about the motivations of people in Czechoslovakia: "the biggest problems here are always particularism and egoism .... Everyone protects himself and does not care about the totality, and there is not much of a united whole here anyway."<sup>48</sup>

Another Czech scholar and competitor for the Hrdlička Funds, Vratislav Růžička, made similar observations. Růžička was the Director of the Institute of General Biology and Experimental Morphology at Charles University and a luminary in Czechoslovakian eugenics. When the Ministry of Education would not pay for Růžička to travel to New York for the Second Annual Eugenics Conference in 1921, Hrdlička wrote a letter to the Czech Consulate to lobby for him. Růžička thanked him for his efforts, but he said that he was not sure if the Ministry ever even received the letter. Hrdlička's efforts were futile anyway because "we here are still very far from mutually supporting each other for an infinity of reasons."<sup>49</sup> Růžička painted an uninviting picture of the Czech scientific community, in which individuals and institutions competed for patronage. He told Hrdlička, "I think that all our scholars could just work in their own fields. [But] Many are jealous of each other's fields. Many slander me only because my institute is the oldest of its type in Europe,

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<sup>45</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 30 December, 1919, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20," Correspondence.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 7 January, 1924, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1924-28," Correspondence.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 12 March, 1929, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35," Correspondence.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Růžička to Hrdlička, 6 December, 1921, box 57, "Růžička, Vladislav, 1921-25," Correspondence.

even in the world – it could be an example for similar institutes in foreign countries.”<sup>50</sup> His exaggerated sense of his own significance and his eagerness to get funding from Hrdlička suggest that he was very much a part of the problem.

A good friend, Betka Papánek gave Hrdlička a similar evaluation in the early 1930s, just as the Museum of Man project was crumbling. Papánek was born in Chicago and presumably a Slovak since she sometimes wrote to Hrdlička in Slovakian. She was married to Ján Papánek, a prominent native Slovakian who worked as a diplomat for Czechoslovakia but eventually defected to the United States after World War II. In the early 1930s the Papáneks were living in Prague, and Betka was having trouble adjusting. Although she had access to the highest social circles in Prague, she felt like an outsider. She explained Prague society as she perceived it:

It seems to me, that there is a vast difference in the character of the ladies here and those in America. It seems like a very harsh judgment, but I have kept my eyes open as well as my ears, but my mouth is shut with determination. In so many instances, I know that the motive for doing a certain thing was just a personal antagonism toward someone else. They haven't outgrown that mean pettiness of spirit that envies everyone that has a little more than they have themselves. We were taught to be glad to see any job well done and to see the other fellow win if he were the better suited.<sup>51</sup>

Although generous in giving away his money, Hrdlička also had some of his own reservations about Czechoslovakia, and there were definite limits to his commitment. In the first year of the republic, somebody in Czechoslovakia, probably Matiegka, was offering him a job.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Betka Papánek to Hrdlička, 16 January, 1933, box 52, “Papánek, Jan, 1932-43,” Correspondence.

Hrdlička's long letter of refusal suggests that he anticipated the potential problems. He feared petty snobbery, for "my hard life struggles have forged my nature so that it does not easily submit to artificialities and even conventions."<sup>52</sup> He repeated several times that he could not accept "something dependent on political changes or favors."<sup>53</sup> Hrdlička had worked his way from poverty and obscurity to international preeminence, and he would "be content to go on in the country of my adoption, which gave me a chance to develop."<sup>54</sup> He was not about to exchange his office in Washington, with its clear view of the Capitol Building, for "anything subordinate, or anything in which there would be little chance of real progress and development."<sup>55</sup>

The person that he chose to entrust with his funds in Czechoslovakia, for better or worse, was Matiegka. Matiegka's own institutional success depended on the rise of Czechoslovakia, and to some extent, on Hrdlička's patronage. Matiegka's father was as a jurist for the high court in Prague, so he had some understanding of Habsburg government institutions and access to a good education. Like Hrdlička, he became a doctor of medicine. In 1897 he took an unpaid position as a professor of anthropology and demography at Charles University, but he supported himself by working as a medical officer in the Health Department of the Kingdom of Bohemia. In 1908 he became a non-tenured professor at Charles University. Several secondary sources claim that he could not have tenure because he was the best anthropologist in Austria-Hungary, and "Vienna" did want to be second to Prague. Whether or not this is true, no one has ever bothered to ask why Matiegka, like other talented intellectuals, simply did not move to Vienna to advance his career. The reason could be that Matiegka did not travel much. He had a much cherished home in his wife's town of Mělník and a flat in Prague, and most of his journeys consisted of the 40 kilometers between these cozy domiciles. Unlike Hrdlička, Matiegka's interests were parochial rather than global.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 14 August, 1919, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20," Correspondence.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> On Jindřich Matiegka, see Jaroslav Brůžek, "Jindřich Matiegka (1862-1941)," *Živa* (5:2016) cxviii-cxix; Vojtěch Fetter, "Život a dílo Jindřicha Matiegky k stoletému výročí jeho narozenin," *Anthropologie* 1:2 (1963): 78-85; Božo

Matiegka shared Hrdlička's interest in digging up grave sites and collecting bones. He seems to have been rather certain that he knew what an "old Slavic" skull should look like, and he hoped to use physical anthropology to describe the history and rise of the Czech nation. He was especially interested in examining the skeletal material of people he considered "historic Czech patriots," such as Jan Žižka, Jan Amos Komenský, and St. Wenceslas.<sup>57</sup> In 1891 he published the results of his early research on skulls in a study called *Crania Bohemica*. Although one might suspect that physical anthropology was the wrong tool for studying cultural and linguistic groups like "Slavs" or "Czechs," many of the techniques that Matiegka employed were real contributions to what today would be considered physical and forensic anthropology.<sup>58</sup> Like Hrdlička, his skill set centered on measuring and comparing bones and body parts; he was less sophisticated when it came to unquantifiable entities like culture.<sup>59</sup>

The establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 eliminated Vienna as a competing intellectual center and at last provided Matiegka with institutional recognition and power, even without relocating. In this year, at the age of 56, he finally became a full professor at Charles University. By the early 1920s he was Hrdlička's most important spokesman in Czechoslovakia and the gatekeeper to Hrdlička's patronage. In 1923, he became the chief editor of the journal *Anthropologie*, which was published with proceeds from the Hrdlička Funds.<sup>60</sup> In 1924 he became the director of his own Institute of Physical Anthropology, a position that the Hrdlička Funds both supported and officially linked to the editorship of *Anthropologie*. In 1929, the Institute of Anthropology also became a key stakeholder in Hrdlička's Museum of Man. Thus by the end of the 1920s, the aging Matiegka had positioned himself at the center of Czech physical anthropology and in reach of significant funding.

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Škerlj and Josef Brožek, "Jindřich Matiegka and the Development of Czech Physical Anthropology," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 10:4 (December, 1952): 515-19.

<sup>57</sup> Škerlj and Brožek, "Jindřich Matiegka," 516.

<sup>58</sup> Fetter, "Život a dílo Jindřicha Matiegky," 79.

<sup>59</sup> Škerlj and Brožek described Matiegka's style of anthropology as "narrow osteometric pursuits and abstract concern with body measurements without an attempt to get at the individuality of the human organism and its relationship to environmental factors, health, and the mode of life," ("Jindřich Matiegka," 517).

<sup>60</sup> Miroslav Prokopec, "O Časopisu Anthropologie od začátku," *Anthropologie* 4:1 (1966): 49-56.

As he approached retirement, the question of his successor came to the fore. This is when everything started to go wrong for the Museum of Man.

#### D. THE MYSTERIOUS DR. SUK

Hrdlička wanted Matiegka's successor to be Vojtěch Schück.<sup>61</sup> He first came into contact with Schück when he began preparing for the San Diego Exposition in 1912. Hrdlička had enough funding to hire several researchers to travel to various parts of the world to take anthropometric measurements and collect artifacts for the exposition, and he was looking for a Czech scholar to go to Africa to study "the Negro child in its native environment."<sup>62</sup> Schück wrote to Hrdlička and asked for the job, but since Hrdlička was in the United States, he relied on Matiegka to interview and evaluate Schück in Prague. From that point on, the older Matiegka assumed the role of Schück's superior, and he did everything he could to ensure that Schück communicated with Hrdlička through him. Hrdlička accepted this arrangement and viewed Matiegka as his spokesman and as Schück's manager.

Matiegka's review and assessment of Schück in 1912 reveals a lot about national relations in the last days of Austria-Hungary, and about the future problems that Hrdlička would face as patron of the Museum of Man in Czechoslovakia. Matiegka did not trust Schück, and he did not represent him fairly to Hrdlička. Schück had a Ph.D. in Natural Science from the University of Zürich. He then studied further at the Anthropological Institute of the University of Bologna. In fact, his education was more specific to anthropology and more cosmopolitan than Matiegka's. However, Matiegka chose to caution Hrdlička that Schück had never been to the tropics, was not "acclimatized," and might get sick in Africa.<sup>63</sup> While it was technically true the Schück had not

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<sup>61</sup> See A. Lorencová, and J. Beneš, "Prof. MUDr. et PhDr. V. SUK DrSc. (1897-1967)," *Anthropologie* 5:3 (1967): 66-69.

<sup>62</sup> Spencer, "Aleš Hrdlička, M.D., 1869 – 1943," 461.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1912, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13," Correspondence.

been to the “tropics,” he had already been much closer to them than Matiegka would ever get.

Matiegka neglected to tell Hrdlička that Schück’s study in Italy afforded him the opportunity to travel through the Italian peninsula, the Dalmatian coast, and the Italian African colonies.<sup>64</sup>

Matiegka’s omission of this important information was certainly not due to a lack of snooping.

When considering Schück for the job, Matiegka spent more energy investigating Schück’s vague national identity than his objective professional qualifications. He told Hrdlička, “to the question of what is his nationality, he said, ‘you know how it was, mother is Czech, father German.’ But he spoke only Czech with me, and he spoke it perfectly.”<sup>65</sup> However, in Bohemia language was not a clear marker of national affiliation, and Matiegka was not entirely satisfied with Schück’s fluent Czech. He decided to probe further. “According to his name,” Matiegka wrote to Hrdlička, “I was uncertain if he might be a Jew. In the address book I found one home in which there lives a former official named Schück, and they have a house in Smíchov (probably the father’s), then there was another Schück who is a lieutenant, and a third who is a merchant (maybe brothers). The first two situations would suggest (probably) the Christian faith.”<sup>66</sup>

After doubting Schück’s Czech national credentials, Matiegka then suggested more authentic Czechs who could do the job better, even though they were much less professionally qualified. “I am amazed,” he wrote to Hrdlička, “that you did not consider offering the job to the pair Štorch – Machulka ... both are Czechs from Prague.”<sup>67</sup> Matiegka especially liked Štorch, who had no higher education but was “acclimatized,” experienced, and spoke fluent Arabic. The pair

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<sup>64</sup> See A. Lorencová, and J. Beneš, “Prof. MUDr. et PhDr. V. SUK DrSc.,” 66.

<sup>65</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1912, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence. On the ambiguity of nationality in Bohemia, see Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69:1 (Spring, 2010): 93-119; Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016); Chad Bryant, “Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939-1946,” *Slavic Review* 61:4 (Winter, 2002): 683-706.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1912, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence. These two are surely Richard Štorch (1877-1927) and Bedřich Machulka (1875-1954), as described in Jiří Martínek and Miloslav Martínek, *Kdo byl Kdo: Naši cestovatelé a geografové* (Praha: Nakladatelství Libri, 1998): 283-285; 428-29.

had been to Ceylon, Madagascar, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Sudan. Their travels were occupied with a mix of hunting and “scientific” collecting, but mostly hunting. As part of his pitch for Štorch and Machulka, Matiegka included a bizarrely unrelated story designed to illustrate their national identity. Štorch and Machulka were traveling in Africa with a “German” (according to Matiegka) named Oberländer, who died along the way. Matiegka thought it was funny that they “buried him and planted a cross with Czech (!) writing [the exclamation point is Matiegka’s],” and took a photo.<sup>68</sup> In the context of this letter to Hrdlička, it is hard to imagine why Matiegka told this “funny” story other than as an efficient way to show that Štorch and Machulka were certainly Czech and Christian, not German or Jewish.

During the first republic, Matiegka continued to mistrust what he considered “foreign elements” in Czechoslovakia. He generally thought that Germans, Hungarians, and Jews were the chief sources of the republic’s troubles. He did not like the anti-Semitic violence that occurred in the early days of the republic, but he did not like the Jews either. In 1920 he complained about the instability of the new state, where inept “20 year olds” made crucial decisions.<sup>69</sup> This instability caused crazy contradictions, such as when the “people vote for Jews and Social Democrats, but then suddenly they go and smash up the Jewish shops ...”.<sup>70</sup> The real source of instability; however, was Czechoslovakia’s “foreign” non-Czech citizens. He told Hrdlička, “today it is clear how much of this ferment is to be blamed on foreign elements, mainly Germans and Hungarians, who want to subdue us again.”<sup>71</sup> He was especially irritated by national minorities who caused trouble for Czechoslovakia by asserting their rights. “The Jews and the Germans,” he complained, “have introduced the [ideas of] equality and concord of all nations. Our Germans are not yet mature enough (*zralí*) for such future ideals, and the Jews, who claw their way into all offices and

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<sup>68</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 2 October, 1912, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence. Whatever he considered his own national identity, Oberländer published a book in Czech. He was a wealthy industrialist who styled himself in print as Filip of Oberlaend [Filip z Oberlaendru] in his self-published 1911 book entitled *Hunting Trips in North America* [*Lovecké Jízdy v severní Americe*]. See Martínek and Martínek, *Kdo byl Kdo*, 316-17.

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 24 September, 1920, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20,” Correspondence.

<sup>70</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 18 November, 1920, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20,” Correspondence.

<sup>71</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 24 September, 1920, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20,” Correspondence.

institutions, show themselves again to be a selfish and destructive element, in no way constructive”<sup>72</sup>

Whatever suspicions Matiegka had about Schück, Hrdlička liked him, respected his academic achievements, and hired him. Hrdlička’s endorsement launched Schück’s career. Hrdlička provided Schück with generous funding, for example in 1913 he sent him “another \$700 dollars” for his trip to Africa.<sup>73</sup> Working for Hrdlička, Schück traveled to South Africa, Zululand, Equatorial Africa, Zanzibar, Mombasa, and Kenya. He measured bodies, took photos, and collected as many artifacts as possible. When the war broke out in 1914, he was arrested in British East Africa, taken to Nairobi, and eventually shipped back to Austria-Hungary and Prague. Although his work in Africa was cut short, his unusual adventure made him a well-respected hero. After the founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918, Matiegka took him on as his assistant at the Anthropological Institute and began to promote his career, or so it seemed.

Nevertheless, there was something degrading and mysteriously tense about Schück’s relationship to the older, better established, and “more Czech” Matiegka. In March 1919, only a few months after the founding of the republic, Schück, whose nationality was ambiguous, decided to identify himself forevermore as Czech. Matiegka wrote to Hrdlička that Schück was thinking of changing his name, “so it is not so grating [*aby nenaráželo*],” and after a visit to the court in 1919, he officially became Dr. Vojtěch Suk, as he is remembered today.<sup>74</sup> Certainly his inner motives for this change remain inscrutable, yet there were obvious benefits to becoming Czech. Most obviously, his boss Matiegka, who suspected all “foreign elements,” thought his old name was too German and Jewish sounding.

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<sup>72</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 18 November, 1920, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20,” Correspondence.

<sup>73</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 4 July, 1913, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1901-13,” Correspondence.

<sup>74</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 7 March, 1920, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1914-20,” Correspondence.

Suk's demeaning subordination to Matiegka is visible in other ways in the early 1920s. Suk had a doctorate in Natural Science and far more international experience than Matiegka, yet both Hrdlička and Matiegka agreed that he could not be a real physical anthropologist without a medical doctorate. Subtle echoes of resentment have persisted in the literature since the time of Matiegka. Božo Škerlj, who studied under Matiegka, blamed Hrdlička, whose

... impact was deleterious, almost disastrous. It was he, an M.D. himself, who obstinately held the view that the physical anthropologist must have a medical degree. Matiegka, who also came to anthropology through medicine, shared this view. Thus V. Suk ... had to get an M.D. in order to be accepted into the fold although he had received his Ph.D. under the eminent anthropologist R. Martin.”<sup>75</sup>

Poor Suk had no time to publish his research from Africa because he was too busy earning an M.D. at Charles University, and at Matiegka's insistence, qualifying as docent at the Anthropological Institute. These relatively parochial achievements required considerable energy from a man with a cosmopolitan past who clearly hoped for an international career in the future. In 1922, Suk prepared a special anthology in celebration of Matiegka's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Displaying an odd discomfort with this project, he wrote to Hrdlička, “it was not an easy task and not entirely pleasant because I [was] his student, then his assistant, and now a docent; and the impression can arise that I have done this out of political ‘byzantinism’.”<sup>76</sup> At this time; however, Matiegka seemed happy with his protégé and told Hrdlička repeatedly that Suk would be his successor in Prague. There are good reasons to suspect his sincerity.

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<sup>75</sup> Škerlj and Brožek, “Jindřich Matiegka,” 517.

<sup>76</sup> Letter, Vojtěch Suk to Hrdlička, 23 January, 1922, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

## E. HRDLIČKA'S CZECHOSLOVAKIAN TEAM FALLS APART

It is hard to believe that the “official” histories of Czech anthropology could get this story so wrong. The authorized account is that Jiří Malý succeeded Matiegka at the institute with unanimous approval, while Suk went happily to Moravia to establish modern physical anthropology as a discipline in Brno, and the generous patron Hrdlička watched with approving benevolence as his protégées spent his money wisely to advance Czechoslovakian science. The truth is that Hrdlička detested Malý and wanted Suk to succeed Matiegka, Matiegka and Suk hated each other, and Hrdlička was not happy with the results of his patronage. It is hard to believe that Vojtěch Fetter, who took over the institute when Malý died, could write in 1953 that Hrdlička “very much respected and liked Jiří Malý.”<sup>77</sup> To be fair, Fetter probably did not have access to Hrdlička's and Matiegka's private correspondence, but his statement is almost the complete opposite of the truth.

Although it is difficult to say exactly what went wrong between Suk and Matiegka, several important changes occurred in or around 1923. Many years later, Suk wrote to Hrdlička that 1923 was the year he figured out that he would never get the Prague position after Matiegka.<sup>78</sup> Just around 1923, the Hrdlička Funds were finalized so that they gave primacy to Charles University and its professors in dispensing the funds. Likewise, the journal *Anthropologie* was launched in 1923, and the Hrdlička Funds specified that the director of the Anthropological Institute, Matiegka, and his successors, would be its chief editors. Around 1923, there was suddenly significant loot in Prague to fight over, and as Škerlj and Brožek later noted, “all these activities received an important subsidy from a special fund created by Aleš Hrdlička.”<sup>79</sup>

Suk's private life also changed in 1923, when he left Prague and moved to the university in Brno, where he founded his own institute. When he moved to Brno, he married Marie Leihmová,

<sup>77</sup> Vojtěch Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička světový badatel ve vědě o člověku* (Praha: Orbis, 1954), 15.

<sup>78</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 16 January, 1933, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>79</sup> Škerlj and Brožek, “Jindřich Matiegka,” 517.

now Suková. Although Hrdlička respected Marie Suková, Suk believed that his marriage irritated Matiegka. In 1933 Suk wrote to Hrdlička: “In 1923 I wrote in my diary that I will not get to Prague due to how Matiegka’s family behaved when I told them that I will marry my current wife.”<sup>80</sup> It is impossible to know exactly what all this acrimony was about, but there is evidence that Matiegka really disliked Suk’s wife. In his usually gossipy manner, Matiegka duplicitously told Hrdlička that he personally liked Marie Suková, but “many people criticize her for meddling out of her place, and they consider her an evil soul, who pushes everything to extremes” [*který vše žene do krajnosti*].<sup>81</sup>

Also in 1923, just around the time that Suk left Prague, Matiegka started making plans to send his new assistant, Jiří Malý, to Hrdlička as an apprentice. Malý did not get to the United States until 1929, but Matiegka was already making arrangements in his correspondence with Hrdlička as early as January 1923. Malý was from Matiegka’s town of Mělník, where as a teenager in gymnasium he worked with Matiegka in the local ossuary.<sup>82</sup> After a few years of grooming his new young assistant, Matiegka convinced Malý, who was only nineteen, that he should attend medical school. All the while Matiegka was claiming to support Suk as his successor, but it is hard to avoid the suspicion that maybe he had already changed his mind. Thus in 1923, just when the Anthropology Institute in Prague became a center of power and funding, Suk married and moved away, and Matiegka began cultivating Malý’s career.

Suk, though by no means a failure, became frustrated and embittered in Brno, where he was remote from the sources of funding. He was an ambitious man, but his career horizons were quickly contracting. By 1928 he was still not a full professor at Brno, so he wrote to Hrdlička and asked him to intervene. He claimed that younger and less experienced people had been promoted while he was “purposefully overlooked.”<sup>83</sup> After five years in Brno, he was estranged from the center, and he

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<sup>80</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 16 January, 1933, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>81</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 9 November, 1932, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

<sup>82</sup> Škerlj and Brožek, “Jindřich Matiegka,” 518; Fetter, “Život a dílo Jindřicha Matiegky,” 80.

<sup>83</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 20 January, 1928, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

complained, “if some of my friends in Prague stood behind my just request this would not have happened.”<sup>84</sup> Without a full professorship, he could not get grants, and “this means that anthropology in Brno has been pushed fully into the back room, where the sun never shines”<sup>85</sup> “I do not know what I will do,” he told Hrdlička, “but if I can get out of here I must, because this is a great humiliation for me.”<sup>86</sup> In March Hrdlička wrote to the Minister of Education Milan Hodža on Suk’s behalf. Hrdlička personally vouched for Suk and argued that his promotion was a “priority in the interests of Czech anthropology.”<sup>87</sup> Suk remained unhappy.

Unlike Matiegka, Suk desperately wanted to travel, and he accomplished quite a bit considering his limited means. Before going to Brno, he had already traveled extensively in Africa. Throughout the 1920s, he was hoping that Hrdlička would provide more funding for anthropological research in an exotic part of the world. In 1926, Hrdlička hinted that he might send Suk to Northeastern Asia, but he never came through with funds. In that same year, Suk went to Newfoundland to study Native Americans. He paid his way by working as a doctor for missionaries, and his wife went with him as his assistant. Throughout 1928 he was longing to go to New Guinea. He complained to Hrdlička, “O the eternal problem; we are such a ‘continental’ nation without sea and without money, I would put together an expedition to New Guinea, that would be something.”<sup>88</sup> Later that year he was writing to American missionaries in China, hoping to find some way to fund an expedition. He managed to spend a summer doing research in London in 1928, but otherwise his dreams of further foreign travel remained unfulfilled, and he had to be satisfied with expeditions to Sub Carpathian Ruthenia, Czechoslovakia’s only “exotic” colony.

Now that he was Czech, he increasingly expressed his career frustrations in terms of national bitterness and envy. It was embarrassing for Suk to explain how he and his wife had to

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 22 January, 1928, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

<sup>87</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dr. Milan Hodža, 17 March, 1928, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

<sup>88</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 20 January, 1928, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

work for missionaries in Newfoundland in order to pay for their trip, especially when Hrdlička, who always got funding, thought it was a waste of energy. In a fit of self-pity, he told Hrdlička,

why should the other nations get to be everywhere, why do the Poles undertake great scientific journeys, and other small nations too, and only we do not, and especially when I am here, for I have the abilities and knowledge and experience. I think it is really a shame that in a few years leveling cosmopolitanism will erase all, and only some chosen nations will have beautiful relics.<sup>89</sup>

While in London he realized, “for us there is one defect: We do not have as much money as the English or the Americans.”<sup>90</sup> “When I see the opportunities that the English and Americans have,” he lamented, “I am almost jealous of them.”<sup>91</sup> Finally he asked, “why do all the other nations take everything from us and we end up with nothing?”<sup>92</sup>

In the early 1930s, the team of scholars that Hrdlička imagined as the ideal staff of the Museum of Man disintegrated entirely, as the tensions between Matiegka and Suk erupted publicly. Against Hrdlička’s wishes, in May, 1932 the professors in Prague chose the inexperienced Jiří Malý as Matiegka’s successor at the Anthropological Institute in Prague and rejected the older and more seasoned Suk. Aware that Hrdlička detested Malý, Matiegka insisted that he had championed Suk to the last, but despite his best efforts, so he claimed, the other professors overruled him because, “professor Suk is not liked by the majority of our professors’ board.”<sup>93</sup> The professors’ committee rigged the negotiations with demands that undermined Suk’s superior qualifications. The Prague professors insisted that before they would even consider Suk for Matiegka’s position in Prague, the

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<sup>89</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 20 March, 1928, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

<sup>90</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 11 July, 1928, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1918-29,” Correspondence.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 28 July, 1932, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

university in Brno must hire Malý to fill Suk's place. Suk, who was already irritable and offended, wanted to be hired on his own merits, especially when competing with a far less qualified man who was 20 years younger. Furthermore, the professors in Brno resented being pushed around by Prague. Matiegka blamed this stipulation, which he claimed to oppose, for Suk's rejection. However, in a later publication Matiegka defended the provision as a legitimate means "to ensure that our [Prague's] docents can get a job at our faculty."<sup>94</sup> It is not easy to trust Matiegka's claim that Suk "would have gotten the position after me, even though he was not popular here, if only Brno had satisfied our wishes and taken Malý."<sup>95</sup>

Unlike Matiegka, Hrdlička was not usually a gossip, yet he displayed an uncharacteristic armory of abusive language for Malý, the choice of the Prague professors. He complained to Matiegka, "the changes at the institute have bothered me despite all my other responsibilities. Malý does not fill your footprints physically or otherwise."<sup>96</sup> In 1933 he told his friend, Betka Papánek:

The situation regarding the Anthropological Institute and the two incumbents is serious and causes me anxiety. M. [Malý] is as yet unfit for the position. His whole work in America has shown him to be weak, and his ever broken promises brand him as unreliable. It would be a calamity if he was placed in a position he could not fill. It might jeopardize the development of the whole branch. M. should be given a chance to show what he can do when placed on his own, in Brno or elsewhere. He should earn the place in Prague, and not obtain it through 'protection'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Pamphlet, "Spory p. prof. Dra V. Suka. Obrana prof. Dra J. Matiegky," [The Dispute with Professor Dr. V. Suk. The Defense of Professor Dr. J. Matiegka], 31 March, 1934, printed by author, box 62, "Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938," Correspondence.

<sup>95</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 9 November, 1932, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35," Correspondence.

<sup>96</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 8 December, 1934, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35," Correspondence.

<sup>97</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to B. Papánek, 7 May, 1932, box 52, "Papánek, Jan, 1932-43," Correspondence.

In 1929, Hrdlička took Malý for a summer to Alaska, and he was not impressed. In his report to Matiegka, he wrote, “I expected talent and more, but found only mediocrity.”<sup>98</sup> Hrdlička grumbled that Malý had been useless in Alaska, and in his curt assessment: “Flexibility, independence, initiative, ideas -- only average. Not one spark after four months. He was always glued to my side until I had to run away from him. It is a pity that he avoided the army.”<sup>99</sup> He halfheartedly told Matiegka that he hoped Malý might become a good anthropologist, “but with my personal knowledge of his weak constitution, his poor eyes, his lack of initiative, and together with all of this, his unreliability, it will be difficult to convince me.”<sup>100</sup> According to Hrdlička, Malý had accepted a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to study Slovaks in America, but the inept Malý hid the fact that he was unable to complete the project. When he finally tried to produce something, “he admitted that he will write his report only in Czech and that he cannot do it in English.”<sup>101</sup> When Malý went home, wrote Hrdlička, “my parting words were that if he does not finish some honorable work for the good of us all then he should not come back to me in Washington.”<sup>102</sup> Malý probably never intended to return; his short apprenticeship with Hrdlička gave him an aura of professional authenticity in the closed society of Prague professors, and that was enough for him and Matiegka.<sup>103</sup>

Hrdlička did not just complain about Malý in private correspondence. Although the outgoing letter is missing, Hrdlička obviously wrote directly to the Ministry of Education to block Malý’s appointment at the Anthropological Institute. The ministry responded to Hrdlička indirectly through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which conveyed the blunt news, “the professors’ board of the Natural Sciences Faculty has chosen Dr. Malý and therefore it is not possible to prevent his

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<sup>98</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 16 October, 1929, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 16 October, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

<sup>101</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 8 December, 1934, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

<sup>102</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Matiegka, 16 October, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

<sup>103</sup> Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička*, 15.

appointment.”<sup>104</sup> All was well in Prague, according to this letter, and although “professor Matiegka was at first offended by the rejection of his candidate Suk,” he “has already come to terms with Malý and has stated that he will help in the administration of the institute.”<sup>105</sup> Hrdlička’s strident disapproval was bureaucratically dismissed because, “about the qualifications of Dr. Malý for this post there is said to be no doubt.”<sup>106</sup> For Hrdlička, there was plenty of “doubt,” but he could do nothing to prevent the hapless Malý from controlling the Hrdlička Funds, the journal *Athropologie*, and the Museum of Man. In 1934, Matiegka, who had supposedly supported Suk to the bitter end, happily handed over the institute to his young protégé Malý.

The Prague professors chose Malý in May 1932, and in September Matiegka received an official letter, presented by Suk’s lawyer, which accused him of violating Suk’s rights as the editor of a special edition of *Anthropologie*. Suk and his wife had been preparing a huge jubilee edition of the journal for Matiegka’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, which would contain scores of articles by Czechoslovakian and international scholars, including Hrdlička. In the middle of the process, Matiegka suddenly stopped the presses and sent a letter to all the contributors telling them to demand their manuscripts from Suk and send them instead to Malý, who would be the new editor. It is not clear why Matiegka did this, but he claimed that Suk behaved improperly toward him after losing the position at the Prague Anthropology Institute. Suk, who was already offended and humiliated, felt he had to take legal action because, as his lawyer explained, “the public will think it strange that you [Matiegka] would take away the editorship from your former student who is arranging [the publication] in your honor.”<sup>107</sup> This demoralizing and petty battle resulted in a trial and three rambling, combative, sarcastic, and privately funded publications: Two from Suk, totaling 46 pages, and a 19-page response from Matiegka. Both men kept Hrdlička up to date with letters, copies of

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<sup>104</sup> Letter, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Hrdlička, 31 May, 1932, box 20, “Czechoslovak embassy, 1919-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Letter, Dr. Koukal to Matiegka, 9 September, 1932, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938,” Correspondence.

their vitriolic essays, and newspaper clippings about the brawl. The star staff of the future Museum of Man was gone.

Although the court eventually vindicated Matiegka of any legal infractions, and though both men were prone to drama and exaggeration, it is hard not to sympathize with Suk. Taken as a whole, the hundreds of letters from Matiegka to Hrdlička, composed over several decades, inadvertently confirm some of Suk's accusations. Suk claimed that Matiegka was spreading rumors that he was mentally ill, and in fact, Matiegka frequently made this accusation privately to Hrdlička. Suk believed that Matiegka and other Prague professors were spreading rumors that he was Jewish in order to turn other scholars and the public against him. He claimed he was even receiving anti-Semitic hate mail because of Matiegka's calculated gossip. In 1933 in one of his self-published defenses, he described how he took legal action against a Czech school teacher who wrote him a letter featuring the line: "now you are getting what you deserve you Jew."<sup>108</sup> Suk stood up for himself and against anti-Semitism: "Although I am not a Jew, in my opinion, and in that of all cultured people, it is no shame to be a Jew."<sup>109</sup> As late as 1938, he wrote a personal letter to Hrdlička complaining, "Matiegka and Malý spread it around everywhere that I am seriously mentally ill, that I wrote inappropriate letters to Matiegka's daughter, and that I am a Jew."<sup>110</sup> In fact, his correspondence with Hrdlička demonstrates that Matiegka had really expressed a meddling curiosity about Suk's possible Jewish background since the two first met in 1912.

This controversy put Hrdlička in a difficult position, but in the end he sided with Matiegka and his heir apparent, who were in Prague and close to the financial resources. Hrdlička had always supported Suk, but he was exiled to Brno, and Matiegka, the Prague professors, and the Czechoslovakian government all stood behind Malý. Furthermore, Suk was increasingly angry and

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<sup>108</sup> Pamphlet, "Matiegkův sborník a moje disciplinární záležitost," [Matiegka's Jubilee Edition and my Disciplinary Affair], box 62, "Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938," Correspondence.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Letter, Suk to Hrdlička, 6 May, 1938, box 62, "Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938," Correspondence.

desperate by the end of the 1930s, and Hrdlička came to agree that he might be mentally unbalanced. There is little question that Suk's ambitions were frustrated, mostly by men with smaller horizons, and he responded to this bad situation with increasing anger and obsession. Hrdlička gradually stopped writing to Suk. When he did write, he urged him to make amends with the old Matiegka. In 1934 he told Suk to get on the train, go to Prague, and make peace with his former teacher, "after all," he counseled, "the whole matter is really nothing great"<sup>111</sup> Finally, in 1937, Hrdlička wrote and told Suk, "I have not written to you because I must not [sic] mix in any of the controversies in which you are engaged."<sup>112</sup> Matiegka and Suk both vowed never to speak to each other cordially again, and they seem to have kept their word.

#### F. "RESISTANCE AGAINST THE REPUBLIC AND ITS EXPONENTS"

There were even bigger problems for the Museum of Man. Neither Masaryk nor anyone in the government hurried to answer Hrdlička's 1929 public letter initiating the project, or to suggest any serious plans for building the museum, and by 1933 Hrdlička was growing frustrated. The year 1929 was a particularly inauspicious moment to make a large donation in stocks and bonds, and the value of Hrdlička's investment dropped in tandem with the general global crisis. As the economic scourge made its way to Czechoslovakia in the next few years, the government passed an "Enabling Law" in 1933, giving itself the power to make economic policy by decree, without consulting the parliament. It was not about to spend large sums of money on Hrdlička's elaborate project.

Still, Hrdlička insisted that the money was there. In 1933, he wrote a private letter to Matiegka about the slow progress of the museum. He urged Matiegka not to be shy about asking the government for money, even though times were tough. He claimed that he discussed the museum with the president of the Czechoslovakian Senate, Dr. Soukup, when he was visiting in Washington.

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<sup>111</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Suk, 18 May, 1934, box 62, "Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938," Correspondence.

<sup>112</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Suk, 8 September, 1937, box 62, "Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938," Correspondence.

Supposedly Soukup told Hrdlička in Washington, “despite all the troubles, 7 ½ million crowns were allocated for furnishing the offices of the Chancellor of the President, Šámal.”<sup>113</sup> This single sentence, imbedded in a private letter to Matiegka, soon got Hrdlička into trouble.

Somehow, Přemysl Šámal, the Chancellor of the President of the Republic, found out about Hrdlička’s private comment to Matiegka, and he took it as an accusation that the president’s office was misusing public money. Šámal was a tough attorney who had worked clandestinely with Masaryk to undermine Austria-Hungary during World War I. He was a personal and life-long friend of the president. Šámal also worked closely with Edvard Beneš, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the designated heir to the presidency. After Masaryk’s death, Šámal stayed on as Chancellor for Beneš until 1938, and thus his term of service spanned the entire existence of the First Republic. During this whole period, the Chancellor and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked for the president, and their mutual tasks were to nurture and protect the cult of President Masaryk and to guard the reputation of Czechoslovakia abroad. Šámal’s Chancellery enjoyed its own discretionary budget, control over several newspapers, presses, and societies, and even its own intelligence services, which it used to spy on political opponents.<sup>114</sup> It is not clear how the chancellor found out about Hrdlička’s critical remark to Matiegka, but Hrdlička was surprised and outraged that his private communication ended up in the hands of the state.

Šámal, who did not defer in the slightest to any lofty principles of rights to privacy, treated the matter as a quasi-legal question. Šámal only knew about Hrdlička’s short remark, so he ordered Matiegka to turn over the entire letter. Matiegka refused, or so he claimed, because the letter contained sensitive information about his upcoming legal case with Vojtěch Suk. Šámal also wanted to know who told Hrdlička the rumor about the 7 ½ million crowns supposedly spent on remodeling his offices. Matiegka claimed he did not know who the source of the allegation was,

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<sup>113</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Suk, 19 August, 1933, box 62, “Suk, Vojtech, 1930-1938,” Correspondence.

<sup>114</sup> Bugge, “Czech Democracy 1918-1938,” 19; Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 69-76.

and that Šámal should ask Hrdlička directly. Šámal immediately sent a letter through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Czechoslovakian ambassador in Washington with instructions that it should be handed over personally to Hrdlička for a response.<sup>115</sup>

In his letter to the ambassador, Šámal took Hrdlička to task. He denied that he spent the money on his offices, threatened Hrdlička, shamed him, and demanded that he make amends. Hrdlička's unruly gossiping, he lectured, threatened the stability of the state because "such untrue information spreads resistance against the republic and against its exponents."<sup>116</sup> The rumor was also a severe affront to the chancellor himself because "if I had really chosen to arrange something for myself at such expense it would be a crime, and this is what professor Hrdlička is accusing me of."<sup>117</sup> Although Šámal did not invoke any specific laws, he made it seem as if Hrdlička narrowly avoided criminal prosecution when he wrote, "naturally I do not want to and cannot proceed officially against professor Hrdlička. I would if it were anyone else, but in this case I have respect for his scientific work."<sup>118</sup> It is not clear what Šámal was referring to, but Czechoslovakian jurisprudence created a chilling atmosphere. According to the 1923 Law in Defense of the Republic, insulting or exposing the president or his office to ridicule was illegal and punishable by imprisonment, and the 1933 Enabling Law gave parliament absolute power to make economic and spending decisions.<sup>119</sup> Šámal also attacked Hrdlička's scholarly reputation when he sarcastically claimed to be surprised, "that even a scholar of world renown, who in his own field would not make a conclusion unless it was securely proven, can succumb to the influence, god knows from where, of overheard rumors, and draw incorrect conclusions from them."<sup>120</sup> Šámal obviously did not share Hrdlička's enthusiasm for the Museum of Man, and even though Hrdlička donated 1 million crowns

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<sup>115</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 16 October, 1933, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35," Correspondence; Letter, Matiegka to Přemysl Šámal, 14 October, 1933, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35," Correspondence.

<sup>116</sup> Letter, Přemysl Šámal to F. Veverka, 17 October, 1933, box 20, "Czechoslovak Embassy, 1919-42," Correspondence.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Bugge, "Czech Democracy 1918-1938", 10, 12; Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 65, 177.

<sup>120</sup> Letter, Přemysl Šámal to F. Veverka, 17 October, 1933, box 20, "Czechoslovak Embassy, 1919-42," Correspondence.

and “expects it to be completed,” it still was “not at the forefront” of budgetary priorities “due to the overburdened state treasury.”<sup>121</sup> Šámal insisted that if Hrdlička wanted to repair the damage he must write to Matiegka and tell him that he was mistaken and reveal “from whom he picked up the rumor.”<sup>122</sup> The Washington ambassador forwarded this menacing letter to Hrdlička with the understatement, “it seems that Dr. Šámal was very hurt.”<sup>123</sup>

Even with all of Šámal’s angry bluster, Hrdlička showed no signs of being intimidated. He wrote to the ambassador that his remark to Matiegka was made in a private letter, and his conversation in Washington about Šámal’s offices was also private. He insisted that he had heard the story about Šámal’s offices accurately from a reliable source, whose name he refused to reveal. He was sorry that the chancellor felt offended, and he asked to be forgiven, “if I have any guilt in this matter.”<sup>124</sup> Instead of begging for pardon; however, he implied that Šámal was exaggerating the importance of this affair. When Hrdlička calculated the amount of 7 ½ million crowns in dollars, “and compared it with how much recent renovations at our White House have cost, it seemed insignificant.”<sup>125</sup>

The real issue, he told the ambassador, was that the government was not living up to its commitment, at least as Hrdlička viewed it, to build the glorious Museum of Man. From his perspective, “the Czechoslovakian government, which according to my original understanding promised to help, has done nothing yet, and there is a danger that the finished product will be partial and unsatisfactory.”<sup>126</sup> His remark about Šámal’s offices was only intended to suggest that even in hard times there was still money for important expenditures. The museum should be a priority for Czechoslovakia, and “putting off the project will cost the old country important and necessary

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Letter, F. Veverka to Hrdlička, 12 January, 1934, box 20, “Czechoslovak Embassy, 1919-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>124</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to F. Veverka, 13 January, 1934, box 20, “Czechoslovak Embassy, 1919-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

recognition from the world, which awaits to see how the new republic justifies its liberation.”<sup>127</sup> If the government made excuses and delayed the project, it would “lose originality,” and another country might build a similar museum first. Losing “the first-place position” would be “an intellectual defeat” for Czechoslovakia, and “the damage would be irreparable.”<sup>128</sup>

This hyperbole stemmed from Hrdlička’s sense of personal disappointment, and he told the ambassador, “the undertaking of the museum has been for years one of my foremost life ambitions.”<sup>129</sup> He stubbornly resented any plans to open the museum on a smaller scale on the premises of the Anthropology Institute because “its realization without a suitable free-standing building is not possible.”<sup>130</sup> He and Matiegka were both aging, he lamented, and neither one could finish the museum without the other. Soon one of them would die, and the dream would remain unrealized.

As the museum project was collapsing in the early 1930s and Hrdlička’s resources diminished, he decided to look for smaller-scale philanthropic opportunities, but he quickly ran into similar problems. In November, 1932, he told Betka Papánek that he was finished supporting Czech anthropology, which he imagined he had “fairly well provided for.”<sup>131</sup> Now he wanted to sponsor “the development of national music” by offering a prize of 10,000 crowns, every one or two years, for the best composition.<sup>132</sup> Once again, his plan was founded on a nationalist ideology. He told Papánek, “I abhor jazz and anything related to it and also the so-called modernistic compositions,” but instead he wanted to patronize “melodious compositions which express the Czechoslovakian and the Slavic soul, as has been done by Dvořák, Smetana, and others.”<sup>133</sup> He asked Papánek,

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Hrdlička to B. Papánek, 7 November, 1932, box 52, “Papánek, Jan, 1932-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

whom he considered an accomplished musician, to form a panel of Prague ladies who could judge the compositions.

This new plan saved Hrdlička money by failing quickly. Papánek, Hrdlička's Slovak-American friend in Prague, was skeptical about the integrity of the elite Czech ladies from the start and immediately warned, "I have no doubt that any number of them would scramble to be a member of such a committee. The majority so openly strive for any distinction."<sup>134</sup> Embarrassed about her failure to create a panel, she wrote to Hrdlička and described the situation. "The idea was liked," she wrote, but "the fact that I was propagating it was perhaps a drawback."<sup>135</sup> Alice Masaryk, the president's daughter, refused outright. Two of the prospective judges, "had a definite composer picked the moment I mentioned the word prize."<sup>136</sup> Instead of a prize designed to reward a specific accomplishment, the Prague ladies seemed to view it as an extra gilded credential for Prague academics. In disgust, Papánek reported, "all seemed to think the only eligible contestants were the few conservatory graduates."<sup>137</sup>

Hrdlička's reaction betrayed his disillusionment, and he told Papánek that from the beginning he "hardly believed in a success."<sup>138</sup> He was aging, and while he hoped to pick up the music venture again someday, he also knew, "my time is getting short for projects of such a nature."<sup>139</sup> Papánek had her own assessment of the failed plan, and it nicely summarizes the nature of Hrdlička's attempts at patronage in Czechoslovakia: "No one seems to think of it ideally, as you do, as I do. Everyone wants the money for himself or someone near to them. No one takes the broad

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<sup>134</sup> B. Papánek to Hrdlička, 16 January, 1933, box 52, "Papánek, Jan, 1932-43," Correspondence.

<sup>135</sup> B. Papánek to Hrdlička, 13 November, 1933, box 52, "Papánek, Jan, 1932-43," Correspondence.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Hrdlička to B. Papánek, 29 November, 1933, box 52, "Papánek, Jan, 1932-43," Correspondence.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

meaning of such a prize, as stimulation to better music.”<sup>140</sup> “Please understand,” she apologized, “it’s the character of the people.”<sup>141</sup>

Perhaps Papánek was too vague. The problem was the behavior of specific people living at a particular time in a particular state, which by its very design did not teach its citizens to value the ideal of a neutral civic identity and the sense of fair play that accompanies it. In its stead there were nations, political parties, professional associations, friends, and family, all seeking to get what they could for as long as possible. While every state has factions, and as James Madison observed, they are probably part of human nature, Czechoslovakia succumbed to them. With a powerful shove from Germany, these are the “microcosms” that tore the young state of Czechoslovakia apart in 1938-39.

Matiegka claimed his strategy was to open the museum at his institute and then hope one day the government would recognize its significance and finish the entire structure. While Matiegka seemed satisfied with this docile approach, Hrdlička considered it “a twisting of the original beautiful plans” if “the museum is opened in the narrow and small spaces of the anthropological institute.”<sup>142</sup> This is exactly what happened. Despite his constant affirmations of support, Matiegka seemed all too content to locate the museum in his institute, where he and his chosen successor Malý literally held the keys. In 1933 he promised to open it to the public as soon as possible; it opened finally in 1937.<sup>143</sup>

Hrdlička had once told President Masaryk that Suk was “created” to run the museum, but the Prague professors, likely led by Matiegka, labeled Suk as a mentally ill Jew and exiled him to Brno because they preferred the inexperienced and hapless Malý, whom Hrdlička loathed. Hrdlička

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<sup>140</sup> B. Papánek to Hrdlička, 13 November, 1933, box 52, “Papánek, Jan, 1932-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to F. Veverka, 13 January, 1934, box 20, “Czechoslovak Embassy, 1919-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>143</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 30 May, 1933, box 44, “Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35,” Correspondence.

dissented, but the Ministry of Education brushed him aside. Eventually, the embittered Suk resigned from his curatorial position at the museum in 1933 out of hatred for Matiegka.<sup>144</sup> Instead of promoting science in Czechoslovakia, Suk and Matiegka spent much of their energy attacking each other in privately published diatribes, which few, or perhaps no one, has ever read or cared about since. Matiegka soon retired and handed over the institute, the journal, and the museum to Malý.

## G. CONCLUSION

This chapter has chronicled the sad diminution of an idealistic and probably naïve man's nationalist dreams. Within just a few years, Matiegka, Malý, and the other Prague professors had managed to pick apart Hrdlička's grand museum plan, channel its resources into their personal bureaucratic fiefdoms, and exclude outcasts like Suk, despite his stellar qualifications. The beleaguered museum finally opened to the public in the cramped confines of the Anthropological Institute in 1937. Not long after, Czechoslovakia disintegrated with the Sudeten Crisis in 1938 and the occupation and dismemberment of 1939. In 1941 the Germans took over Matiegka's institute and renamed it the Institute for Racial Biology.<sup>145</sup> In the same year, Hrdlička decided that he would build the world's biggest and best Museum of Man in the Soviet Union, which he considered the new hope of the Slavic race. Neither Hrdlička nor Matiegka lived to see the end of the war, but Hrdlička would not have liked what happened next. After the war, the museum moved again, this time to the end of the hallway on the ground floor of the Faculty of Science. According to the contemporary museum's website, the display commands a meagre 128 m<sup>2</sup>. It is not entirely clear what happened to the Hrdlička Funds, but the Czech Academy of Sciences took over all remaining assets in 1953.<sup>146</sup> The next four decades of Communist rule preserved the unfinished and old fashioned Museum of Man like a fossil from the first half of the twentieth century.

<sup>144</sup> Letter, Matiegka to Hrdlička, 30 May, 1933, box 44, "Matiegka, Jindřich, 1929-35," Correspondence.

<sup>145</sup> Michal Šimůnek and Uwe Hossfeld, "The Avantgarde of the 'Rasse': Nazi 'Racial Biology' at the German Charles University in Prague, 1940-1945," *Acta universitatis Carolinae* 54:1 (2014): 64.

<sup>146</sup> Kostrhun, "Američtí archeologové a antropologové," 598.

## CHAPTER VIII: THE LAST GREAT RESERVE OF THE WHITE RACE

“At first, patriotism, not yet Communism, led me to have confidence in Lenin, in the Third International.”<sup>1</sup> (Ho Chi Minh, 1960)

### A. INTRODUCTION

As he neared the end of his life, Hrdlička pinned his hopes for the future of humanity on the Soviet Union. Freshly returned from his visit to the Soviet Union in 1939, the seventy-year old scientist wrote longingly to the V.O.K.S. cultural service in Moscow:

I wish I was still in your country, which offers so much of such genuine human interest. There is something vast and wonderful going on there, which deserves the fullest attention of every unbiased sociologist and student of man. There are still various impediments ... but it all works, and there is general progress. This is already felt more or less by the rest of the world, and they are getting envious, as well as a fear of Russia.<sup>2</sup>

By 1941, Hrdlička had also transferred his dream of building a Museum of Man from Prague to Moscow. Attempting to sell the idea to Soviet academics, he bragged about his experience in “preparing a similar ‘museum,’ though on a more modest scale, in 1912-15 for the Panama-California Exposition.”<sup>3</sup> He entirely failed to mention his more recent and grander sponsorship of

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<sup>1</sup> Ho Chi Minh, “My Path to Leninism,” *Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh*, vol. 4 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), Ho Chi Minh Internet Archive, marxists.org.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh/works/1960/04/x01.htm> (accessed 17.12.2018); for a discussion about the well-known tension between nationalism and Communist orthodoxy in Ho Chi Minh’s career and thought, see William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 122-26.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Lydia Kyslova, 23 October, 1939, box 57, “Russian trip, 1939-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscript, Hrdlička, “Physical Anthropology in the Soviet Union,” [1941], box 9, “American Russian Institute, 1938-41,” Correspondence.

the Museum of Man in Prague, which had consumed the bulk of his personal fortune in the 1920s. With the small state of Czechoslovakia now dismembered and ruined, Hrdlička intended to build an even more magnificent museum, with seven vast halls, in Moscow, where it would have more “scientific” and “civic” value “than in any other country.”<sup>4</sup> Apparently writing off his investment in Prague for a loss, Hrdlička now looked to a future in which all Slavs would find strength through unity under the leadership of the massive and powerful Soviet Union.

From the perspective of most post-war historical narratives, Hrdlička loved the Soviet Union for all the “wrong” reasons. Although Communism was supposedly never about race or nation, it was precisely racial ideology that evoked Hrdlička’s devotion to the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Though Hrdlička had plenty to say about race in the Soviet Union, there is no indication that he had any interest in Marxist philosophy. None of his works ever employ any sort of Marxist methodology. Hrdlička was interested in classifying humans according to their measurable physical traits, not according to economic classes. He saw the Soviet Union not as the workers’ paradise but as the Slavic Reich. The Slavs, in his estimation, were the largest, strongest, and fastest growing “strain” of the white race. Under the leadership of Soviet Russia, they would defeat the Germans and commence a new era of high civilization founded on the principles of science. The Soviet Union represented a Slavic racial future, and the Slavs, in Hrdlička’s own memorable words, were “the last great biological reserve of the white race.”<sup>6</sup>

Hrdlička’s racial assessment of the Soviet Union seems at odds with Communist ideology. Communism, it is sometimes asserted, was all about class and never about race or nation. Yet

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> After the war, according to Tony Judt, “... it was a matter of dogma that Communism had no truck with racial or religious prejudice; and once the Soviet cause was attached to the banner of ‘anti-Fascism’, as it was from 1935 until August 1939 and again from June 1941, the Jews of Europe had no greater friend than Josef Stalin himself” (181). Needless to say, Judt questioned the accuracy of this “dogma.” See Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 180-89, 215-17. For similar critiques of post-war “dogma,” see also Norman Davies, *Europe at War, 1939-1945: No Simple Victory* (London: Macmillan, 2006), 13-16; 461-472; Timothy Snyder, *Blood Lands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Penguin Random House, 2010), 66-68.

<sup>6</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka i budoucnosti lidstva* (Praha: Nakladatel B. Kočí, 1924), 77.

recent scholarship suggests that Hrdlička's racial values may not have been entirely out of step with Soviet practices. Since the collapse of the Soviet Block in the 1990s, many scholars have reconsidered the role of "national identities" in the Soviet Union. A few, although with more caution, have taken up the issue of race.<sup>7</sup> It is true that the Soviet Union never developed into what George Fredrickson has classified as an "overtly racial regime," with an "official ideology that is explicitly racist."<sup>8</sup> Yet as Eric Weitz has argued, even though the Soviet state rejected racism, there were moments when it temporarily embraced official policies founded on "racial conceptions of the nation."<sup>9</sup> Whatever the theoretical implications of Marxist-Leninism, it is by no means clear that class always eclipsed race in practice. Although the primary research of this study cannot provide any conclusions about race beliefs in the Soviet Union, Hrdlička's fascinating point of view, described here for the first time ever, introduces a slightly different angle on this already complex discussion.

The border between nation and race in the Soviet Union was murky, and Lenin himself planted the seeds for racializing nationality. Because of his theoretical convictions, Lenin did not endorse any kind of nationalism as the ultimate good, and he prophesied that someday all nationalism would disappear as proletarians around the world united.<sup>10</sup> Nationalism, he believed, was only a temporary phase on the way to communism. For the moment; however, he advised that the Bolsheviks should, for expediency, cooperate with some acceptable nationalist movements. The nationalism of imperialist "oppressor nations" was illegitimate, but good Communists, thought

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<sup>7</sup> Eric D. Weitz, "Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges," *Slavic Review* 61:1 (Spring, 2002): 10.

<sup>8</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 100-101. Fredrickson's designation of an "overtly racist regime," in which the state officially makes race a central public concern and legislates accordingly is useful here. He identifies three such regimes, which include the southern states of the United States ("segregation"), Nazi Germany, and the "Apartheid" regime in South Africa. Other societies, observes Fredrickson, can be highly "racialized," but they are not necessarily "racist regimes."

<sup>9</sup> Weitz, "Racial Politics," 17. See also Amir Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *The American Historical Review* 104:4 (October, 1999): 1114-55.

<sup>10</sup> Francine Hirsch, "Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *The Russian Review* 59:2 (April, 2000): 201-226.

Lenin, should stand behind the nationalism of the “oppressed” nations.<sup>11</sup> Even though the development of national identity was never supposed to be the real aim, Lenin’s ideas perhaps left the impression that some nationalism was justifiable and that some, that of “oppressor nations,” was reprehensible. Did this mean that entire “oppressor nations” might be considered the enemies of socialism?

In later years, Stalin’s Soviet Union took the idea of nation to a level that sometimes approached a racial worldview. The Soviet Union enthusiastically promoted national identities, even to the point of reverence for what Terry Martin has called national “primordialism.”<sup>12</sup> The government’s kindly encouragement of nations caused plenty of unintended strife, as Martin has shown, but eventual integration, not dissension, was the aim. However, the Soviet state’s friendly support for national cultures sometimes turned ugly. In its pursuit of secret enemy agents, the government, and especially the security apparatus, sometimes mirrored popular prejudices about nation and race, for example by targeting people with Jewish heritage or German-sounding names.<sup>13</sup> At times, Soviet institutions adopted lethal policies founded on the assumption that nationalities had “natural” inclinations toward disloyalty. For instance, in the 1930s Soviet intelligence claimed to uncover a massive “Polish” conspiracy, and in 1938-39 this “discovery” culminated in the arrest and summary execution of around 85,000 Poles. According to Timothy Snyder, Poles were “about forty times more likely to die during the Great Terror than Soviet citizens generally.”<sup>14</sup> In an attempt to flush out members of “enemy” nations, like Poles, the NKVD in 1938 terminated the right of citizens to choose their own nationality, which was displayed on the

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<sup>11</sup> V.I. Lenin, “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination,” in *V.I. Lenin: Collected Works*. Vol. 22, December 1915-July 1916, trans. Yuri Sdobnikov, ed. George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 147, “Collected Works of VI Lenin,” <https://archive.org/stream/lenincollectedworks4/lenin-cw-vol-22#page/n4/mode/2up> (accessed 25.1.2019).

<sup>12</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 341. See also Rogers Brubaker, and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’,” *Theory and Society* 29:1 (February, 2000): 25-28; Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53:2 (Summer, 1994): 414-452.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 334, 345.

<sup>14</sup> Snyder, *Blood Lands*, 110.

Soviet internal passport. The purpose was to insure that members of “enemy” nations, again, like Poles, could not hide their “true” identities.<sup>15</sup> By denying that a person could choose his nationality, this policy bore more resemblance to deterministic race beliefs than to orthodox Soviet ideas about human mutability and the influence of environment.

In appraising race beliefs in the Soviet Union, historians have very good reasons for caution. Even though the Soviet state might have, at specific times, committed mass murder for racial motives, the government never officially made race a central policy. Quite the opposite, the Soviets explicitly announced their opposition to Nazi racism, especially in the 1930s. Francine Hirsch has argued that while the Soviets might have flirted with biological racism in the 1920s, they eventually rejected it as antagonistic to Communist orthodoxy. First, biological determinism seemed to contradict the Communist belief that education and environment would one day overcome racial and national identities. Second, the eugenic obsession with racial impurity clearly stymied visions of Marxist universalism, especially in the ethnically diverse Soviet Union. Throughout the 1920s, Soviet intellectuals distanced themselves from overtly determinist ideas and searched for theories that seemed more compatible with their Marxist creed. This partly explains the appeal in the Soviet Union of Lamarckism, and eventually the ideas of Trofim Lysenko.<sup>16</sup> It also explains why the Soviet Union made a point of highlighting the work of Franz Boas, whose critiques of hereditary determinism and racial purity were the strongest available at the time.<sup>17</sup>

However, the Soviet intelligentsia also revered Aleš Hrdlička. Although Hrdlička’s race beliefs generally seem contradictory to Communist orthodoxy, it is also possible to imagine why they might have been alluring to Soviet scholars. Like Soviet intellectuals, Hrdlička ostentatiously

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<sup>15</sup> Snyder, *Blood Lands*, 104. The Soviet passports are much discussed due to their “biological” implications. See also Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 293; Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” 444.

<sup>16</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 238; Loren R. Graham, “Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s,” *The American Historical Review* 82:5 (December, 1977): 1142, 1150-53.

<sup>17</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 265.

rejected Nazi-style racism at every opportunity. Unlike Soviet academics; however, he was not the least interested in Marxist dogma, and he might not even have understood it. Ideology shaped and even distorted Hrdlička's understanding of the Soviet Union, but his was a racial ideology, not revolutionary Bolshevism. For Hrdlička, the Soviet Union represented the long-awaited political empowerment of the Slavs, who were about to step up and rescue the white race.<sup>18</sup>

## B. SOVIET APOLOGIST

There is some evidence that Hrdlička was well respected in the Soviet Union.

Anthropologist Henry Field, who made a professional visit to the Soviet Union immediately after the war in 1945, reported, "on the wall of the Institute of Ethnology, Moscow, hangs, among a few distinguished Russian scientists, a large framed photograph of Hrdlička."<sup>19</sup> Field also claimed that Soviet scientists were preparing to publish a special commemorative book in honor of Hrdlička and Boas.<sup>20</sup> Several years later, anthropologist Vojtěch Fetter expressed pride in the fact that Soviet intellectuals held the Czech Hrdlička in such high esteem. Fetter recalled that in 1946, "a special volume of a journal was published in honor of his [Hrdlička's] memory in the Soviet Union."<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Fetter did not mention any memorial to Boas. Also according to Fetter, the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow took the time in May, 1945, amidst the rubble of the war, to hold a special commemoration to mark the two-year anniversary of Hrdlička's death.

Hrdlička more than repaid the Soviets' admiration. Although modern historians have entirely ignored this part of his life, Hrdlička's contemporaries remembered him as a fan of the Soviet Union. Eulogizing the deceased Hrdlička in 1944, anthropologist Ashley Montagu recalled

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<sup>18</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 77.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Field, "Anthropology in the Soviet Union, 1945," *American Anthropologist* 48:3 (July-September, 1946): 379.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Vojtěch Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička světový badatel ve vědě o člověku* (Praha: Orbis, 1954), 3.

that he had nurtured a “boundless admiration for the achievements of Soviet Russia.”<sup>22</sup> Writing in 1947, Czech author Viktor Palivec painted Hrdlička’s love for the Soviet Union in more ethnic terms. He recalled how Hrdlička’s strong feelings of Slavic solidarity with his Russian brothers overpowered his official allegiances as a United States citizen. While in the Soviet Union, his American passport did not prevent the Russians from accepting Hrdlička with Slavic love as “a Czech, although in the service of the government of the United States.”<sup>23</sup> For his part, Hrdlička felt “really as if in a Slavic family” and enjoyed “kind and really heartfelt and brotherly acceptance ... from the Russians.”<sup>24</sup> Despite Hrdlička’s well known affinity for the Soviet Union, no one has commented on it since 1947.

Although his efforts are forgotten today, Hrdlička invested large amounts of personal energy trying to convince the rest of the world that the Soviet Union was a land of plenty. According to Czech authors Viktor Palivec and Vojtěch Fetter, Hrdlička was deeply impressed by the high living standards he witnessed while traveling in the Soviet Union in 1939. According to Palivec in 1947, “the relative abundance of the inhabitants there, living in clean and spacious homes with large amounts of domestic animals and a well-managed economy” made an unforgettable impression on Hrdlička.<sup>25</sup> In 1954, Fetter reported, “Hrdlička was amazed at the amount of groceries, fruit and vegetables, which were easy to get in this remote polar backwater of the U.S.S.R.”<sup>26</sup> After returning from his trip to Siberia 1939, Hrdlička could not wait to start telling the public about the new Soviet Promised Land. This is exactly what he did in numerous media interviews and lectures in the United States.

In some interviews, he feigned reluctance to speak about the bounty of the Soviet Union for fear that his audience would accuse him of exaggerating. A *Washington Post* headline from October

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<sup>22</sup> M.F. Ashley Montagu, “Aleš Hrdlička,” *American Anthropologist* 46 (1944): 116.

<sup>23</sup> Viktor Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička* (Praha: Orbis, 1947), 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 13, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička*, 16.

1939 announced that the famous scientist was finally breaking his “silence” about his recent trip.<sup>27</sup> According to the *Post*, Hrdlička had previously “refused to tell what he saw” because, as “he explained in a hesitant voice,” he had a “deep fear of being misunderstood.”<sup>28</sup> Soviet science, he frequently insisted, was forging ahead so rapidly that no one in the United States would believe his accounts of it. In 1939 the Science Service reported, “young Soviet scientists ... are conducting so many expeditions that Dr. Hrdlička fears his memory of the number would sound like gross exaggeration.”<sup>29</sup> No other country, claimed Hrdlička, had so many museums dedicated to anthropology as the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

His timidity was almost certainly a ruse. Hrdlička was pointedly determined to convey positive impressions of the Soviet Union, and he had calculated his strategy beforehand. As a professional scientist, he chose to emphasize the Soviet scientific community, which he described as energetic, competent, youthful, and increasingly competitive on a global scale. According to a journalist for the Science Service, Hrdlička praised “the friendliness and hospitality of Russian scientists” and “found official and scientific personnel far more thoughtful ... than is customary in most countries.”<sup>31</sup> As a U.S. citizen, he also wanted to reassure the American public that the Soviet people were friends and allies, not enemies. According to the *Washington Post*, “the huge, undeveloped country reminded [Hrdlička] of the United States, 60 years ago, when he came here from his native Bohemia.”<sup>32</sup> He told the *Post* that most Soviet citizens “feel close to America, where there is no nobility and there is more equality than elsewhere.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “Dr. Hrdlička says Russians Love All Things American,” *The Washington Post*, 24 October, 1939, box 72, “News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40,” News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> “Aleš Hrdlička Sees Russians Becoming One Physical Type,” Science Service, 22 August, 1939, box 72, News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *The Washington Post*, 24 October, 1939, box 72, “News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40,” News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Hrdlička's intention, clearly stated in his personal correspondence, was to counteract what he believed was misinformation and ignorance about the Soviet Union. In 1941 he wrote to the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Dmitry Chuvakhin, to warn that "mischievous agencies" were spreading rumors that the Soviet Union was an enemy of the United States. These untruths found fertile soil thanks to "ignorance and the old bias."<sup>34</sup> American mistrust for the Soviet Union, he told Ambassador Konstantin Umansky, resulted from "lack of information."<sup>35</sup> He complained in 1941 to Edward C. Carter, Chairman of the Russian War Relief organization, that there was "so much bias against everything Russian, that men are actually afraid to say or do anything in favor of that people."<sup>36</sup> Always quick to advise the Soviet diplomats on how to do their jobs better, he suggested that the new ambassador Maxim Litvinov should hold a special press conference "to counteract" harmful misinformation about the Soviet Union.<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, Hrdlička planned to take matters into his own hands. In 1942 he told Marion H. Post, also of Russian War Relief, that he planned to use an upcoming speech on the state of Soviet anthropology "to counteract wherever possible the unfortunate bias against the Russian people which still exists to harmful extent among many."<sup>38</sup> If only Americans were better informed about the splendid "accomplishments of the Soviet people," Hrdlička thought, "they would see much clearer."<sup>39</sup> Hrdlička saw it as his mission to save Americans from their ignorance about the Soviet Union.

In his quest to publicize the wonders of the Soviet Union, Hrdlička was conducting a calculated publicity campaign, which he coordinated with the Soviet embassy. Especially in the late 1930s, he kept up a cozy relationship with embassy officials. The embassy regularly sent him Soviet newspapers. Because he liked to read Russian, he specifically requested papers and journals in the original language rather than English versions intended for international audiences. "The

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<sup>34</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Dmitry Stepanovich Chuvakhin, 24 January, 1942, box 60, "Soviet Embassy, 1942-43," Correspondence.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Konstantin Oumansky [Umansky], 31 January, 1940, box 60, "Soviet Embassy, 1942-43," Correspondence.

<sup>36</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Edward C. Carter, 25 August, 1941, box 57, "Russian war relief, 1941-43," Correspondence.

<sup>37</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Chuvakhin, 24 January, 1942, box 60, "Soviet Embassy, 1942-43," Correspondence.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Marion H. Post, 1 May, 1942, box 57, "Russian war relief, 1941-43," Correspondence.

<sup>39</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 31 January, 1940, box 60, "Soviet Embassy, 1935-41," Correspondence.

reading of these papers,” he told an embassy official, “is a genuine solace to me in these nightmare times.”<sup>40</sup> However, he used the information for more than personal pleasure reading, and he often asked the embassy for literature for propaganda purposes. In 1939, he asked Ambassador Umansky to send him “pretty slides about the care given to Soviet children,” which he wanted to use in a public talk.<sup>41</sup> In yet another letter, he reminisced about the special “house of rest” for scientific visitors, where he had stayed when in Moscow. He asked the embassy to send more information about this service, so he could present it at a meeting of the American Philosophical Society of the National Academy.<sup>42</sup> In February, 1941, he thanked the embassy for information detailing the rapid progress of medicine in the Soviet Union, which he wanted to present in an address to the Washington Academy of Medicine. “You may be confident,” he assured his friends at the embassy, “that I will endeavor to do justice to the subject.”<sup>43</sup> Reporting back about one of his informational speeches, he claimed that his audience “could hardly believe when I told them that the USSR is sending out this summer 3,000 geological expeditions.”<sup>44</sup> Hrdlička wanted the embassy officials to know that he was a reliable public advocate of the Soviet Union.

The earnestness of Hrdlička’s convictions about the Soviet Union dulled his usually sharp attention to detail and made him naïve. To be fair, the Soviet Union was a big country, and perhaps he really saw peasants somewhere in Siberia, living in material bliss, in the summer of 1939. Whatever he may have seen, there were also many things occurring in the Soviet Union, precisely during the time of his tour and just before it, which he apparently did not notice. Modern historian Sheila Fitzpatrick describes material conditions that differ significantly from Hrdlička’s memories of the bountiful Soviet Union:

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<sup>40</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 18 June, 1940, box 60, “Soviet Embassy, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>41</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 29 November, 1939, box 60, “Soviet Embassy, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 31 January, 1940, box 60, “Soviet Embassy, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 12 February, 1941, box 60, “Soviet Embassy, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>44</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 18 June, 1940, box 60, “Soviet Embassy, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

The 1930s was a decade of enormous privation and hardship for the Soviet people, much worse than the 1920s. Famine hit all the major grain growing regions in 1932-33, and in addition bad harvests caused major disruptions in the food supply in 1936 and 1939. Towns were swamped with new arrivals from the villages, housing was drastically overcrowded, and the rationing system was close to collapse. For the greater part of the urban population, life revolved around the endless struggle to get the basics necessary for survival – food clothing, shelter.”<sup>45</sup>

Not only were Soviet citizens largely deprived of basic material necessities, but hundreds of thousands were murdered just before Hrdlička’s tour. According to Snyder, the Great Terror claimed the lives of 681,692 Soviet citizens in 1937 and 1938.<sup>46</sup> Again, in fairness, the killings were secretive and most of the world knew little about them. Yet Hrdlička was an anthropologist who spoke Russian and claimed to have a special interest in Soviet demography. Ironically, he was obsessed with rapid population growth in the Soviet Union, which he attributed to the exceptional fertility of the Slavic people. Mesmerized by the wonder of Slavic baby making, Hrdlička failed to detect the sudden, recent and violent loss of nearly 700,000 people, only one year before his visit. There are no reasons to think that Hrdlička was deliberately dishonest; it is much more likely that wishful thinking distorted the accuracy of his observations and subsequent reporting.

Even Hrdlička, a whole-hearted fan, experienced suspicious pettiness and bureaucratic bullying while travelling in the Soviet Union. Just after returning home in September, 1939, Hrdlička wrote to Harriet Moore, a director at the American Russian Institute, to lodge a complaint. “In all my travels of 50 years,” he griped, “I never saw such examinations of baggage, both on entry

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<sup>45</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41.

<sup>46</sup> Snyder, *Blood Lands*, 104.

and on leaving the country.”<sup>47</sup> When he boarded a steamer in London, the Soviet Intourist organization confiscated his passport, and this upset him, but he was even angrier about the fact that officials kept it until the ship reached Leningrad. Even then, Intourist kept his passport until Leningrad officials came aboard the steamer and examined it for themselves. After this ordeal, customs officials examined him and his baggage another five times before allowing him to enter the country. Once checked in, there was another dispute about whether the parameters of his visa really allowed him access to sites that he intended to visit professionally, even though he had worked out everything in advance with the friendly embassy officials in Washington, who knew him personally. To get the necessary permission, he had to waste time and spend his own money visiting several offices in Leningrad. He told Moore that this was “primitive and should be corrected.”<sup>48</sup>

Still, Hrdlička was no angry customer, and he was sure that the problems at the border were minor ones. Once the customs process was improved, it would be clear to all that the “Soviet country is indeed well worth a visit of every educated man and woman.”<sup>49</sup> In the end, Hrdlička did not mind being harassed at the border: “I took it all charitably and smilingly, but I saw others grow both angry and suffer.”<sup>50</sup> His love for Russia made him willing to accept paranoid authoritarian practices with a smile. In fact, many years earlier, before the Bolshevik Revolution, he had overlooked the shortcomings of Czarist Russia with exactly the same cheery attitude. Back in 1912, after a trip to old Russia, he had also taken the trouble to write a letter of complaint. He was so serious about it that he took the letter to a notary in Washington and had it certified as a sworn statement. In this official letter, he complained to Fedor T. Shiriaiev, the editor of a paper in Irkutsk, about the terrible conditions on the Trans-Siberian railroad. On his journey to Irkutsk, he discovered that the trains were extremely overcrowded, filthy, and painfully slow. All this discomfort, he concluded, was “due to faulty management” and likely “to result in much

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<sup>47</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Harriet L. Moore, 5 September, 1939, box 9, “American Russian Institute, 1938-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

unnecessary suffering.”<sup>51</sup> Yet he lodged his complaints with kindly intent, as “one of the best friends of the Russians.”<sup>52</sup> He was most concerned that bad experiences such as his might “prejudice the foreign traveler against the Russian trains in general, which is unjust.”<sup>53</sup> He only intended to help, lest “the detractors of Russia, of whom there are many, would have any grounds for criticism.”<sup>54</sup> Even his bitterest criticisms of Russia came with sweetness; it is no wonder his praise was unbounded.

For Hrdlička, Russian national interests legitimized all manner of Soviet aggression. For American fans of the Soviet Union, such as Communists, the 1939 non-aggression pact with Germany, the plunder of Poland, and the invasion of Finland were sources of discomfort. Communists in the United States, after basking in the relative popularity of the Popular Front’s “fight against fascism,” now had to stomach Soviet cooperation with Nazi Germany and the embarrassing party line from Moscow that fascism was really just “a matter of taste.”<sup>55</sup> Hrdlička, unencumbered by Marxist ideology, had no need to square Soviet priorities, which he considered “Russian” anyway, with superficial political slogans. Like American Communists, he briefly worried that the Soviets might “assist the Germans,” but he immediately dismissed this thought and concluded, “Russia is working for itself alone.”<sup>56</sup> Ignoring Polish claims to sovereignty, he wrote in support of the conquest of Poland in 1939, “I cannot blame Russia for trying to get back its own.”<sup>57</sup> He reassured a friend that the Soviet Union was not helping Germany by quoting Stalin’s famous statement that Russia would not “pull chestnuts out of the fire for anyone.”<sup>58</sup> Hrdlička had traveled in the Soviet Union just a few weeks before the mutual destruction of Poland, and he had noticed an abundance of Russian national pride but absolutely no love for Germany. Instead he observed, “the

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<sup>51</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Fedor T. Shiriaiev, 31 October, 1912, box 59, “Shiriaiev, M. Fedor, 1912-15,” Correspondence.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 45.

<sup>56</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Jan Kabelík, 18 September, 1939, box 57, “Russian trip, 1939-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Frederick William Wile, 2 October, 1939, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš, 1939-40,” Correspondence; See also Isserman, *Which Side Were You On*, 29.

foremost slogan there is ‘Russia for the Russians.’”<sup>59</sup> It is significant that his ears heard this cry, but he never remembered anyone saying, “workers of the world unite.” Neither the rise of the global proletariat nor the Great Terror interested him, so he did not notice them. On the other hand, Russian nationalism reassured him.

Hrdlička also brushed aside any criticisms of the Soviet dictatorship as unworthy of the slightest contemplation. In a 1939 interview with *The Washington Post*, a reporter asked him about Stalin and the secret police, but, according to the *Post*, he “shook his head in annoyance” and insisted, “I know nothing about those things.”<sup>60</sup> Before journeying to the Soviet Union, he had heard that the secret police would follow him, but “all the time I was in Moscow I saw just one policeman.”<sup>61</sup> He nonchalantly admitted that Stalin was a dictator, but he believed that authoritarian government was a small price to pay for progress. In November, 1939, he told Ambassador Umansky, “I knew Russia before the World War, [so] it was easy to appreciate the present conditions, many of which are to a great credit of the present leaders of the Soviet peoples”<sup>62</sup> Just around the time of the 1938 Munich Agreement, he told Frederick William Wile that the Soviets “may have their dictator, and a lot of faults, but they are the only great unit that strives to advance by work, and not by the madness of piracy.”<sup>63</sup> A dictator Stalin may be, but at least he was not a “pirate,” like Europe’s other tyrants.

When challenged on this issue, he stood his ground. In a private letter, attorney George Edward Sullivan, who was responding to a 1938 interview of Hrdlička in *The Washington Herald*, tried to call out Hrdlička for being too tolerant of Stalin. “It has recently become fashionable,” scolded Sullivan, “not to include the Soviet Union in any survey of dictatorships or world

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> *The Washington Post*, 24 October, 1939, box 72, “News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40,” News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Oumansky, 29 November, 1939, box 60, “Soviet Embassy, 1935-41,” Correspondence.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Wile, 2 October, 1939, box 33, “Hrdlička, Aleš, 1939-40,” Correspondence

horrors.”<sup>64</sup> How could Hrdlička call the Soviet Union a democracy, and why did he single out Hitler and Mussolini but make “no mention of Stalin as a dictator.”<sup>65</sup> Hrdlička’s self-assured response was that the Soviet dictatorship was morally superior and more industrious than those of Germany and Italy:

I am quite neutral in all these matters, as far at least as it is possible under present conditions. But I see a very material difference between the men and the systems you mention. On one hand there is rapacity, violence, piracy upon free people; on the other side none of this, only a directed forceful emancipation of own people, with a protection of interests and boundaries of their country. I have just returned from the farther most Russian Asiatic possessions. We found everywhere order, peace, cleanliness and astonishing progress in education of all the inhabitants. If this is true of the whole of Siberia and Russia, then there has been wrought there, within the last ten or fifteen years, a marvelous advance in civilization. How could one condemn this?<sup>66</sup>

Sullivan refused to give up and wrote back to Hrdlička to tell him that he was deceived by propaganda, for “it is well known, of course, that tourists are shown portions of Soviet Russia as being models of order, peace, cleanliness and progress in education.”<sup>67</sup>

There might be some truth to Sullivan’s skeptical rejoinder. The following year Hrdlička traveled more extensively in the Soviet Union, and there are reasons to suspect that his visit was choreographed somewhat in the way that Sullivan had suggested. Hrdlička was not an average

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<sup>64</sup> Letter, George E. Sullivan to Hrdlička, 30 August, 1938, box 58, “SU-SW, 1924-38,” Correspondence.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Sullivan, 2 September, 1938, box 58, “SU-SW, 1924-38,” Correspondence. Although Hrdlička’s most important visit to the Soviet Union was in 1939, he was in the Aleutian and Commander Islands in 1938, and this probably explains his reference to “the farthestmost Russian Asiatic possessions” in this letter, dated 1938.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, Sullivan to Hrdlička, 6 September, 1938, box 58, “SU-SW, 1924-38,” Correspondence.

tourist while in the Soviet Union, which is one of the reasons he was so infuriated by gruff treatment at the border crossing in Leningrad. After all, he had personal contacts with important officials at the Soviet embassy in Washington, who had preapproved his visa specifications. He was a world-famous scientist, and he had been officially accepted among the ranks of the Russian scientific establishment for decades.<sup>68</sup> This meant that in the Soviet Union he rated among the most valued intelligentsia. Even in the worst of times, and especially in the 1930s, the academic elite (if not arrested or murdered) in the Soviet Union enjoyed conspicuously abundant food rations and other privileges, which were far more generous than the general population received.<sup>69</sup> Apparently this is the community that hosted Hrdlička. Delighted with how well he was treated in Leningrad, Hrdlička wrote to a friend in Britain: “A few days after my advent they gave me a formal reception, with all sorts of things to eat and five different classes of wine.”<sup>70</sup> For Hrdlička, there really was plenty of good food, but few historians today would agree that his situation resembled that of an ordinary Soviet citizen.

Unfortunately, Hrdlička was unable to indulge in these luxuries because he had suffered a small stroke on the way to Europe and had to keep a strict diet. His hosts in the Soviet Union were deeply concerned about his health, and according to Hrdlička they “insisted” that he should be examined “by their foremost specialist in such conditions as mine.”<sup>71</sup> Writing to a Czech friend, he explained how he was recovering “under the guidance of the foremost specialist in Leningrad.”<sup>72</sup> He admitted that Soviet medicine still lagged behind the western countries, but “the newest establishments,” to which he had privileged admission, “are excellent with all modern furnishings and improvements.”<sup>73</sup> If Hrdlička had stopped in Magnitogorsk on his way to the outer reaches of Siberia, he would have discovered a hospital made of wooden barracks, which was often lacking

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<sup>68</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to D. A. Bartashov, 3 May, 1913, box 13, “Bartashov, A., 1912-36,” Correspondence. Hrdlička was elected a member of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society.

<sup>69</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 95.

<sup>70</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to H. P. Himsworth, 23 August, 1939, box 57, “Russian trip, 1939-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to V. Myslivec, 23 August, 1939, box 57, “Russian trip, 1939-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>73</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to H. P. Himsworth, 23 August, 1939, box 57, “Russian trip, 1939-40,” Correspondence.

heat, water, waste removal, and staff.<sup>74</sup> Of course, even in this rough frontier city, there was exclusive healthcare available to foreigners and elites like Hrdlička.<sup>75</sup> After spending a few weeks with the pampered Soviet intelligentsia, with its best doctors fawning over him, it is no wonder that he came home with happy memories to share with the American press.

Arguably, some kind of ideological commitment skewed Hrdlička's assessment of the Soviet Union, but it was racial ideology, not Communist doctrine, that deluded him. Whenever questioned about dictatorship or the secret police in the Soviet Union, Hrdlička always insisted, as he did with *The Washington Post*, "I am not a political man. I have no interest or knowledge of politics ... I know nothing of politics."<sup>76</sup> Significantly, Montagu remembered in 1944 that while Hrdlička had been an outspoken supporter of the Soviet Union, he had also "claimed to belong to no political party."<sup>77</sup> In truth, Hrdlička had very outspoken "political" views, at least about international affairs, but he probably sincerely viewed himself as unpolitical. When talking about the Soviet Union, the *Washington Herald* claimed in 1938, "Dr. Hrdlička spoke as a scientist and not as a political observer."<sup>78</sup> This description aptly captures Hrdlička's habitual tone. He was convinced that his views arose from unquestionable biological truths, and these simple facts of nature were always superior to mere politics. In Hrdlička's assessment, the Russian Slavs were a matter-of-fact biological unit, not a socialist experiment.

Partly due to his job and partly out of a desire to escape being labeled, Hrdlička usually avoided identifying with "leftist" causes. When asked to publicly support various political agendas, he typically declined, claiming that his government position required neutrality. In 1939, Robert L. Paddock of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy asked Hrdlička to sign a public letter to

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<sup>74</sup> Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 140.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> "Dictators to Destroy Selves, Says Hrdlička," *The Washington Herald*, 30 August, 1938, box 72, "News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40," News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953.

<sup>77</sup> Montagu, "Aleš Hrdlička," 116.

<sup>78</sup> "Dictators to Destroy Selves, Says Hrdlička," *The Washington Herald*, 30 August, 1938, box 72, "News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40," News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953.

petition President Roosevelt to lift the arms embargo against republican Spain. Hrdlička was sympathetic to this largely left-wing cause, yet he refused to sign because of his “position with the government.”<sup>79</sup>

He was especially concerned about avoiding the tag of being a Bolshevik revolutionary. In 1917, he had urged a Czech colleague to change the title of an article named “Call to Revolution” [*Revoluční vyzvá*] because it sounded “subversive to Americans.”<sup>80</sup> “This title,” he suggested, was “damaging because no one here understands it correctly. And now it is essential to avoid anything that would cast us in a bad light.”<sup>81</sup> In 1920 he thought it was important to rebut charges that the new Czechoslovakian republic was slipping into revolutionary Bolshevism by pointing out that “while its socialist parties are strong they are no bolshevists. There is not a single ‘soviet’ in the whole new republic.”<sup>82</sup> In 1923 he wrote to Peter Ružek, a manager at the Masarykova Akademie Práce [Masaryk Labor Academy] in Czechoslovakia with similar advice. The very name of the academy was a barrier to “establishing the best relations in ... this country.”<sup>83</sup> The reason was:

“*Práce*” in English is translated “labor,” and labor in the minds of everyone in the United States is associated with socialism, and that socialism not of the most moderate variety, but rather the radical kind. Such socialism has created here in general a bad impression, and we are having considerable difficulty in explaining that your academy is an institution of applied science, rather than one testing some Bolshevik experiments and tendencies. Please do not regard

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<sup>79</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Robert L. Paddock, 16 January, 1939, box 52, “PACAK-PELANT, 1917-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>80</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Engelbert Švehla, 26 March, 1917, box 61, “Šu[v]ehla, Engelbert, 1917,” Correspondence.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Svante August Arrhenius, 6 June, 1920, box 6, “ARN-AY, 1916-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>83</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Peter Ružek, 8 February, 1921, box 44, “Masarykova Akademie Práce, 1920-29,” Correspondence.

this matter lightly, for America should and may be of great assistance to your academy.<sup>84</sup>

In 1942, J. J. Zmrhal, president of the Czechoslovak National Alliance of America, wrote to Hrdlička to ask about the Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, which had asked him to join its congress. He wanted to know if this organization “was founded by followers of the Communist movement.”<sup>85</sup> He had seen Hrdlička’s name listed as one of its sponsors. Hrdlička, now retired, had decided, after some indecision, to allow the organization to use his name. Hrdlička reported that the Committee was of a “non-political nature,” and he told Zmrhal, “their use of my name was allowed only on this basis.”<sup>86</sup> He then added, “should I ever learn anything of the nature you suggest I would ask at once that my name be withdrawn.”<sup>87</sup>

His love for the Soviet Union sometimes allied him with people who were truly dedicated to Communism, but it is inaccurate to make inferences about his political ideology based on these acquaintances. He was, as it turns out, wrong about the Committee to Protect the Foreign Born, which really was a Communist “front” organization. However Hrdlička’s correspondence shows that he did not know that Communists were the real organizers behind the Committee, and he clearly did not support it for any “communist” reasons.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, the “guilt by association” argument, based on Hrdlička’s naïve connections to American Communists, is easily counterbalanced by his far more numerous contacts in the U.S. government, including the F.B.I. According to none other than J. Edgar Hoover, Hrdlička was “a real friend of the Federal Bureau of

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Hrdlička’s inner feelings about “mild” socialism, if he had any, remain inscrutable, but he clearly did not want to identify with “Bolshevik” socialism.

<sup>85</sup> Letter, J.J. Zmrhal to Hrdlička, 25 March, 1942, box 20, “Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1930-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>86</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to J.J. Zmrhal, 30 March, 1942, box 20, “Czechoslovak National Council of America, 1930-43,” Correspondence.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Investigation,” which he helped with forensic expertise.<sup>89</sup> When viewed proportionally, Hrdlička’s circle of contacts contained far more anti-Bolshevik crusaders than fellow travelers. Although concerned about his job and reputation, Hrdlička never formulated any serious intellectual hostility to mild socialism, but it is also clear from reading his work that he never employed even the faintest touch of Marxist analysis, and it is really a question if he even understood it, or cared to. For Hrdlička, skull size and brain weight made the world go round, not the means of production.

Hrdlička sometimes treated politics as an unimportant side show that interfered with his scientific pursuits, and his political views seem to defy any predictable orientation. In American politics, Hrdlička did not care much for Roosevelt’s New Deal, at least at the beginning. He told his Czech-American friend Frank Mička, “there is nothing new around these parts except the New Deal, which I think some, particularly a good many in the government service, would now like to exchange for something older.”<sup>90</sup> He was grumpy in 1933 because austerity measures meant that he would be unable to spend the summer collecting more skeletons in Alaska. He told Mička, “I will have to be home over the summer,” because “all of our fieldwork and even all our publications were forcibly stopped.”<sup>91</sup> On a more philosophical level, Hrdlička seemed to feel that the New Deal was one part of a more general global slide toward barbarity in the 1930s. In one letter from April, 1933 he equated the New Deal with Nazism, both of which represented a general “reversion to medieval barbarism.”<sup>92</sup> After complaining about the Nazi regime, he explained further, “we are being subjected just now by our own government to similar calamities. You probably read something of this in your papers, though the details, still worse, have not yet been made known. And it is only the beginning of the ‘New Deal’.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, cited in Douglas H. Ubelaker, “Aleš Hrdlička’s Role in the History of Forensic Anthropology,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 44:4 (July, 1999): 729.

<sup>90</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to František Mička, 29 January, 1933, box 46, “Mička, Frank, 1913-40,” Correspondence.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Hal Downey, 26 April, 1933, box 20, “DOZ-DZ, 1904-42,” Correspondence.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

### C. THE SOVIET UNION AND THE SLAVS

For Hrdlička, mere politics were irrelevant to the biological truth that Russians were Slavs, whatever regime they may live under, and that the Slavs were destined for racial greatness. Hrdlička set forth his scientific wisdom about the Slavs in various formats. In 1919, he penned a short piece called “The Races of Russia.” In 1942, the year before he died, he published *The Peoples of the Soviet Union*. Tellingly, *Peoples of the Soviet Union* is almost identical to “The Races of Russia.” This is because according to Hrdlička’s organic conception of Russians, little had changed in those two decades but the name of the state, which was incidental compared to the biological continuity of Slavic development. In 1924 he published *O původu a vývoji člověka i budoucnosti lidstva* [*On the Origin of the Human and the Future of Humanity*], which was a printed version of popular lectures he had given in Prague in 1922. In these lectures, he attached the new Czechoslovakia, regardless of its large German, Hungarian, and other populations, to the glorious future world of Slavdom. He also published an essay entitled “The Slavs” in 1918. He discussed the topic in other venues as well, such as speeches, newspaper interviews, and correspondence.

All of these writings, composed over a span of almost three decades, are remarkably consistent in their outlook. In each of them, Hrdlička portrayed the Slavs as a virile biological unit of the white race. To make this argument, it was firstly very important for him to assert that the Slavs were a distinct biological group that originated in Europe and not Asia, as some hypothesized. Second, he wanted to show that historical mixing with yellow-browns, such as the Mongols, had resulted in a net whitening, not yellowing, of the Slavic people. Thirdly, he needed to explain that the outward expansion of the Slavs to Asia had not compromised their whiteness, but instead had made Asia whiter. Finally, he wanted to show that the Slavs, not the “Nordics,” were the most vital and eugenically sound segment of the white race. Whether the Soviet Union was a dictatorship, a

democracy, or the workers' paradise made little difference to Hrdlička. Hrdlička saw the Soviet Union as a Russian and Slavic racial empire with a bright (and white) future.

Hrdlička argued that Slavs were both "European whites" and at the same time a distinct category of whites, and there was some tension between these two assertions. In Hrdlička's own words, the Slavs "were derived from the same source as the rest of the European population," so "it cannot be expected that they would show any radical differences."<sup>94</sup> If they were so similar to other white Europeans, then what made them distinctly Slavs? The obvious answer is language, but for Hrdlička this was "hardly satisfying;" as a physical anthropologist he needed to believe that some kind of bodily traits united the Slavs biologically.<sup>95</sup> Like the first President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Hrdlička believed that not only "speech," but also "blood" united the Slavic people.<sup>96</sup> Slavs were more than just a linguistic grouping, he insisted, and there really was a "general physical and mental Slav type."<sup>97</sup> Although he never really displayed any evidence to support this claim, he was satisfied with the declaration that "European whites" were comprised of four subracial "strains:" "the Nordic, the Alpine, the Mediterranean, and the Slav."<sup>98</sup> The implication of this taxonomy was that Slavs were both white but also racially distinct.

The whiteness of Slavs came under attack mainly in a controversy over their origins, and in this battle, language was also of little use from Hrdlička's racial point of view. For those most zealously committed to racial categorization, language was no indicator of physical race. Madison Grant, for example, knew that dark-skinned Persians and Indians spoke "Aryan" languages, but for him this was no proof of racial affinity. He simply believed that white Aryans from Europe had conquered India centuries ago and left behind their languages. Therefore, "the little swarthy native"

<sup>94</sup> Hrdlička, "The Slavs," *The Bohemian Review* 2:1 (January, 1918): 183; Manuscript, "The Slavs," [1919], box 138, "Slavs," European Ethnic History, 1908-38. Subsequent citations will refer to the published version, although this research was first based on the manuscript. There is little difference except in the degree of legibility.

<sup>95</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 67-68.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914 – 1918* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 215, 380.

<sup>97</sup> Hrdlička, "The Slavs," 182.

<sup>98</sup> Hrdlička, "The Slavs," 180.

of Asia speaks "... the tongue of his long forgotten Nordic conquerors," but "without the slightest claim to blood kinship."<sup>99</sup> Slavs, like Persians, could be Indo-European speakers in non-European bodies. Some scholars argued that the Slavs were originally migrants from Asia who had borrowed their languages from the more advanced Indo-European family. In fact, the 1911 *Dictionary of Races and Peoples* described the Slavs as "truly Aryan" in language but "physically, and perhaps temperamentally," more "Asiatic."<sup>100</sup> The fact that Slavs spoke Indo-European languages did not necessarily make them white and European in a racial sense. In truth, Hrdlička had no physical evidence that the Slavs originated in Europe. Instead, the best he could do was to fall back on cultural arguments: "their languages, their myths, and traditions, their sedentary habits and devotion to agriculture are all European."<sup>101</sup>

The argument over Slavic origins clearly had racial significance and is crucial to understanding Hrdlička's views. The assertion that the Slavs originated in Asia implied that they were not fully white and therefore inferior. Long before World War II, many understood this dispute as part of a more general racial struggle between Germans and Slavs, in which the Germans supposedly "accused" the Slavs of being "Asian." In 1919, Paul R. Radosavljevic, author of *Who are the Slavs*, denounced what he considered the "German" idea that the Slavic people originated in Asia. Instead, Radosavljevic, who often cited Hrdlička, demanded that it was ignorant to believe that "the Russians and other Slavic tribes are an Asiatic race," and that no one should falsely accuse the Slavs of being "semi-oriental."<sup>102</sup> Slavs were not Asian at all, but instead belonged "to the great old Aryan or Indo-European family of the white race," and Russia contained "the largest white

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<sup>99</sup> Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* ([1916] New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 70.

<sup>100</sup> *Dictionary of Races or Peoples, Reports of the Immigration Commission, 61st Congress, Document No. 662* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 128.

<sup>101</sup> Hrdlička, "The Slavs," 180.

<sup>102</sup> Paul R. Radosavljevic, *Who are the Slavs? A Contribution to Race Psychology* (Boston: The Gorman Press, 1919), 128, 135.

population of any single state on Earth.”<sup>103</sup> Because Europe was their primal homeland, the Slavs came “from the pure North European race (*homo europaens*).”<sup>104</sup>

After World War II, Hrdlička was revered in Czechoslovakia for his heroic role in this epic intellectual battle over racial origins. Hrdlička had proclaimed, “there have been suggestions, even by serious men of science, that it [the Slav ‘strain’] may have originated in Asia; but they remained mere hypotheses. There are no Slavs or any Slavic type in Asia”<sup>105</sup> In 1946, Viktor Palivec recalled that Hrdlička had placed the homeland of the Slavic people between the northern Carpathians and the Baltic Sea. Since then, boasted Palivec, other scientific authorities had “checked and certified” Hrdlička’s idea, therefore advancing it to the realm of unquestionable truth.<sup>106</sup> The significance of this, according to Palivec, was that it was now “impossible to agree with the ideas of some, especially German scholars, that maybe [the Slavs] came to Europe from Asia, from the Far East.”<sup>107</sup> Metod Nečas, a post-war author cited by Palivec, agreed with this conclusion: “The coming of our predecessors from the steppe land of the Far East is a German fantasy, in central Europe we are the indigenous inhabitants.”<sup>108</sup> With such pronouncements, with the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia, and with the expulsion of nearly 3 million Sudeten Germans after World War II, the question was definitively “solved” by the victors and largely forgotten. However, the racial origin of the Slavs was once a pressing issue. Since the 1940s until now, no one has discussed Hrdlička’s role in this racially charged debate.

Hrdlička not only claimed that the Slavs were white and from Europe, but he also discerned their presence in Europe for well over 2,000 years, long before any Slavic writing existed. He claimed that Slavdom was already in full bloom in Europe by the time of Darius and Herodotus. In

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 84, 87.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>105</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 180.

<sup>106</sup> Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička*, 26.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička*, 27; See Metod Nečas, *My před dvěma tisíci lety* (Nakladatel Karel Jelínek, 1946).

*Races of Russia*, he identified the Slavs as one unit among the people known to the ancient Greeks as the “Scythians.” According to Hrdlička, the Greeks used the term “Scythians” indiscriminately to describe a spectrum of peoples they encountered in the Black Sea region, without any reference to “racial identity.”<sup>109</sup> The Scythians, thought Hrdlička, were a racially diverse conglomerate, and some of these people, he admitted, were really migrants from Asia. However, the population of “Scythians” living west of the Dnieper were “from the earliest of times ... of European extraction,” and “this stock could in the main have been no other than Slav.”<sup>110</sup> This group, undoubtedly Slavs, emerged from an even earlier prehistoric European population, and definitely not from Asia. “Like the rest of Europeans,” claimed Hrdlička, “the Slavs have originated from the more homogeneous Neolithic population of that continent,” and “they carried some of the more important physical characteristics of their stone-age forefathers ... well into the historic period.”<sup>111</sup> The starting place for the Slavs, thought Hrdlička, was in the Vistula river region, where they already existed as early as 1,000 B.C., roughly 500 years before Herodotus mentioned the Scythians. Ostensibly, some kind of skeletal remains provided evidence for Hrdlička’s narrative; how he knew that Slavic tongues inhabited 3,000 year-old “European” crania is a mystery. Confident in his convictions, Hrdlička told an audience in Prague, “the Slavs are a group originally from Europe,” and this fact “cannot be denied even by those who prefer to think they are a secondary branch from Asia.”<sup>112</sup>

Hrdlička claimed to know a great deal about the attributes of the primal Slavs, which were timeless and therefore relevant to modern Slavs. If left to themselves in their primordial homeland, the original Slavs were peace-loving and democratic people, traits that Hrdlička took for innate and enduring. Unlike their neighbors, the Slavs did not “readily submit to authority” and instead mistrusted centralized government.<sup>113</sup> In fact, Slavs were relatively “late” in developing more sophisticated political systems, and for many years they “did not create any greater units or political

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<sup>109</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “The Races of Russia,” [1919], box 138, “Russian,” European Ethnic History, 1908-38.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 180.

<sup>112</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 68.

<sup>113</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 186.

tribes, but only ‘*rody*,’ – great families or clans.”<sup>114</sup> Unlike the bellicose Germans, the Slavs “remained backward in matters of warfare” because they were originally “a people of the interior, who had little contact with distant nations, [which were] more advanced in material progress and warfare.”<sup>115</sup> In contrast to other Europeans, the Slav nobility in the Middle Ages remained lean and functional, and while they had kings, they were usually not really Slavic in origin. Although seemingly behind in political development, the Slavs were really ahead of their time. Even while suffering under the rule of alien monarchs, “their cherished ideal of power” had always been “the national assembly rather than the nobility or king.”<sup>116</sup> The Slavs, thought Hrdlička, had always been “essentially democratic” since “the earliest known times.”<sup>117</sup> Instead of conquest and domination, the Slavs were dedicated to higher pursuits. The essence of “Slavdom,” Hrdlička told an audience in Prague, “is not about material power, political supremacy over others, military glory, nor about industrial conquest, but about securing its own holdings and existence and then about the blossoming of the soul and enlightenment.”<sup>118</sup>

The aboriginal Slavs learned all their good behavior from nature, not from imported and artificial ideas like Christianity. In his sparse description of early Slavic religious sentiment, Hrdlička’s thoughts are reminiscent of prevalent Nazi ideas as outlined recently by Johann Chapoutot.<sup>119</sup> “The Slav,” claimed Hrdlička, “is naturally pious.”<sup>120</sup> This was not the same as Christian piety; instead it referred to “the ideal component of faith,” which “finds no happiness in materialism” and “is and will remain a part of Slav nature.”<sup>121</sup> Before the arrival Christianity, the Slavs created a “high class” and “inspiring naturalistic religion” of their own.<sup>122</sup> They had a thunder god and numerous “poetically conceived” other deities and spirits, all oriented around “the air,

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<sup>114</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 73.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 186.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 77.

<sup>119</sup> Johann Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood: Thinking and Acting as a Nazi*, trans. Miranda Richmond Mouillot. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 64-71.

<sup>120</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 186.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

groves, lakes, and rivers.”<sup>123</sup> This philosophical and ethical alternative to Christianity apparently did a fine job of teaching the Slavs to behave themselves.

To the obvious objection that the Slavic world of the twentieth century was overwhelmingly Christian, Hrdlička had a ready response. The Slavs were forced to accept the Christian religion “under non-Slav influences.”<sup>124</sup> Of all the Slavs, only the Poles “voluntarily accepted Catholicism,” but this served their national needs because it was “closely identified with their state institutions.”<sup>125</sup> The Russians and the Southern Slavs grudgingly accepted the Greek Church, but only on their own terms. They were only interested in the “beauty of the ceremonial” but not at all in “dogma.”<sup>126</sup> The Roman Church, thought Hrdlička, “was imposed ... by force” on the Czechs.<sup>127</sup> However, the Czechs were “more culturally advanced” than most Slavs and “strove against [the Church’s] failings” by starting the Hussite “reformation” that rocked Europe in the 15th century.<sup>128</sup> “Today,” wrote Hrdlička, “the tenets of dogma have lost much of their power among the Slavs.”<sup>129</sup> The Slavs no longer needed official Christianity because the best aspects of religion were already encoded in their nature. Christianity had been a foreign imposition, but Slavs carried within themselves their noble, prehistoric religiosity, and “to this day there are traces” of their pre-Christian piety.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Henry Adolphus Miller, writing in 1914, had a similar perspective: “The Poles think that their love for the church is piety, while in reality they are good Catholics because their religion is Poland, and Catholicism is a Polish protest against Orthodox Russia and Protestant Prussia.” Miller, “Nationalism in Bohemia and Poland,” *The North American Review* 200:709 (December, 1914): 884-84. See chapter 1.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

#### D. THE SOVIET ROAD TO WHITENESS

Even if the Slavs were “indigenous” to Europe, everyone knew non-Slavic peoples, including invaders from the steppes of Asia, had also settled within their domains and mixed, and this raised questions about the white racial status of the Slavs in general and the Russians in particular. Hrdlička, like Soviet intellectuals, was especially sensitive about German charges that racial mixing undermined the quality of the Soviet Union’s population.<sup>131</sup> He worried that the existence of non-Slavic and non-White elements would be “utilized by the enemies of Russia.”<sup>132</sup> The Germans, the natural archenemy of the Slavs, were the quickest to magnify all the “faults” of the Slavs. This was especially problematic because the rest of the world, due of course to German scheming, “learned of the Slav almost only through the German.”<sup>133</sup> For example, the Germans invented the Asian origins theory. They also cooked up “the pernicious notion of the Slavs being less capable of self-government than others.”<sup>134</sup> Hrdlička employed various strategic arguments to diffuse the charge that inauspicious racial mixing had prevented the Slavs from keeping pace with the rest of Europe.

First, Hrdlička conceded that Russia was not as developed as Western Europe, but the reason, he insisted, was “not inherent or racial, but geographic and circumstantial.”<sup>135</sup> Russian development was slowed, he theorized, because the Russians were preoccupied with blocking and absorbing the yellow menace, which distracted them from other pursuits. Russia, felt Hrdlička, had always “formed the buffer between the rest of Europe and Asia,” and served “as the principle check on the Turk.”<sup>136</sup> In the 1920s he informed a Czech audience, “Russia through all these centuries has long formed a defensive block, on which all these blows have hit; and thus for all this time has

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<sup>131</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 216-231.

<sup>132</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1942), 12.

<sup>133</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 185.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 29.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

defended the rest of Europe as its shield, but it has itself suffered terribly, as it has remained culturally backward.”<sup>137</sup> Although confrontation with Asians had stunted the Russians culturally, the heroic era of fending off the yellow peril was finally over, so that now they were beginning to develop properly, and this proved that there was nothing innately wrong with them. Since the establishment of the Soviet Union, “the great progress of the country” had proven decisively “that there was no inherent inferiority.”<sup>138</sup>

Second, Hrdlička maintained that non-white groups living within Russia really had almost no influence on the racial quality of the white Slavs. Instead, Slavic racial characteristics were so dominant that they quickly erased those of the others. Non-white enclaves in Russia simply left little or no racial imprint. The Lapps and Samoyeds were the most “Mongol-like,” but they were no real threat because “their numbers are insignificant,” and because “the present-day Lapps are much intermixed with the northern Whites.”<sup>139</sup> Both the Huns and the Khazars went away without mixing much and “left little mark on the population.”<sup>140</sup> Similarly, the “hordes” of Turks and Tatars “did not colonize or mix readily except through captives, and although remnants of them and mixtures were left, they made no very great impression” on the local population.<sup>141</sup> In other cases, the Slavs absorbed all the yellow-brown interlopers and practically turned them into whites and Slavs. The Russians, claimed Hrdlička, “have always been free mixers,” and “regular intermarriages among the white and other groups are common ... and there is a natural steady progress toward a general blood union.”<sup>142</sup> The “blood union” he had in mind was a white one.

Third, as it turns out, many of the non-Slavic and non-white people living in the Russian and Soviet zone of influence were really white after all, and some of them even turned easily into

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<sup>137</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 74.

<sup>138</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 29.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

perfect Slavs. Although Hrdlička described the “original” Finns as racially “intermediate,” he saw modern Finns as whites due to centuries of mixture with Scandinavians and Russians. Most of the people in the Caucasus region were already “originally” white, for “both the Armenians and the Georgians are ancient white units.”<sup>143</sup> Not only were they white, but they had long ago become Slavs as well. Many Romanians, despite their language, “were originally Slavs and preserve the same type.”<sup>144</sup> The Soviet Jews were both white and Slavs because “physically many of the Russian Jews of today resemble to a considerable extent the Russians themselves”<sup>145</sup> Hrdlička happily reported in a letter to Winfield W. Scott in 1939: “the Russians, though more or less admixed in different parts of their territory, are white people, closely related to the western Europeans. Where they have been in prolonged contact with Turkish or Tatar tribes, they have become somewhat admixed with these, but the great bulk of the people are pure whites”<sup>146</sup> All these mixtures left some traces, “but accepting in limited localities they were in no cases sufficient to obscure the general physical and mental Slav type of the population.”<sup>147</sup>

The Slavs were an unstoppable assimilation machine, except when it came to the Germans and the Hungarians. In these cases, the situation was usually the opposite. The Germans and Hungarians, although both white, could not assimilate with the Slavs and often absorbed them instead. Especially in relation to the Germans, “the Slavs themselves suffered a great absorption.”<sup>148</sup> In Western Europe, the Slavs lost significant territory, “and sometimes their enemies interpret this as a mark of inferiority in comparison with the German element. This is not so.”<sup>149</sup> Hrdlička viewed pockets of Germans in Slavic lands as recent, “foreign,” and indigestible immigrants, who were eager to exploit the Slavs. In Russia, claimed Hrdlička, “these colonies received special privileges,

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>146</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Winfield W. Scott, 27 September, 1939, box 57, “SC, 1924-1943,” Correspondence.

<sup>147</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 182.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 71.

were practically self-governing, and fused little with the Russians.”<sup>150</sup> They always viewed Russia as “a desirable ‘manure’ for the field of the German stock.”<sup>151</sup>

Not only did Hrdlička feel obliged to minimize the racial influence of non-white pockets in the Western parts of the Russian empire, but he was also concerned about the racial consequences of the Slavic march to the Pacific. During their migration across Central Asia to the Pacific Ocean, the Russians had inevitably mixed with non-white populations, and Asiatic Russia (and Soviet Union) raised more doubts about Slavic whiteness that had to be explained. According to Hirsch, Soviet leaders praised the merits of racial mixing in order to neutralize Nazi charges of impurity and inferiority.<sup>152</sup> Hrdlička agreed, but for his own reasons; he believed that racial mixing in the Soviet Union made its inhabitants whiter. He never considered the possibility that yellow-brown features might prove more resilient and gradually darken the Soviet profile. This was truly a much more generous understanding of racial mixing than Nazi ideologues would probably accept, yet it still relied on the assumption that “successful” racial mixing meant a whiter Soviet Union.

Hrdlička wanted to demonstrate that the Soviet empire, including its Asian territories, was overwhelmingly white and Slavic, and that racial mixing would make it more so. To start, he claimed, “the bulk of the people in Siberia and other Asiatic parts of the Soviet Union today are Russian.”<sup>153</sup> Yes, these Russians had mixed with indigenous people as they encountered them over the centuries. However, this process of amalgamation was easy because many of the people they met in Central Asia were in reality already white, even if they were of slightly different “strains” from the Slavs. For example, the Tajiks were, according to Hrdlička, “peoples of predominantly White but non-Russian origin,” and the Turkmen “are to be counted with the Asiatic Whites.”<sup>154</sup> “Mongoloid features” were common in the Asian provinces, yet “in Azerbaidjan [sic], Uzbekistan,

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<sup>150</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 21.

<sup>151</sup> Manuscript, Hrdlička, “The Races of Russia,” [1919], box 138, “Russian,” European Ethnic History, 1908-38.

<sup>152</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 263-66.

<sup>153</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 22.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

and the Tatar republics (Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan), there are individuals whom it would be hard to class as other than whites.”<sup>155</sup> Hrdlička was so aggressive about uncovering Asia’s hidden white people that he even detected a significant component of whiteness in the Koreans.<sup>156</sup> Besides all these white and near-white people in the Russian Empire, there were some pure yellow-browns, but fortunately they were only about ten percent of the population, and anyway, they mixed well with whites. In his 1942 treatise on the people of the Soviet Union, Hrdlička made a point of noting that the complete absence of blacks, whom he believed to be much less compatible with whites.<sup>157</sup> Hrdlička never imagined that the yellow-browns might outbreed the whites; instead, “even what remains of the Yellow-brown stocks is rapidly being diluted by White admixture.”<sup>158</sup>

In their desire to emphasize the transformative power of the environment over racial determinism, Soviet scholars argued that more equal social conditions would result in less physical differentiation between their peoples. Hrdlička also offered a few interesting thoughts about how Soviet citizenship made people physically more similar. The Soviet environment facilitated physiological congruence because, “in the army, in the physical culture parades, and in the Pioneer groups, where all dress alike, the differences are still further subdued and it becomes difficult in cases even for an expert to be sure of what confronts him.”<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, the fact that “all the peoples in the Union have equal status guaranteed by the Constitution” also promoted mixing and eventual physical homogeneity.<sup>160</sup> Aside from these few lines; however, Hrdlička’s entire point, in all his writings on the subject, was that efficacious racial fusion was possible because the physical components were already biologically compatible. Most people in Soviet territory were already white, yellow-browns quickly turned into whites through interbreeding, and there were no blacks to stand in the way of progress. In fact, Hrdlička applied exactly the same racial values to the United

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>156</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 2. See chapter 4.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 2.

States. There he was equally optimistic about the rapid merger of all kinds of white immigrants, but he viewed blacks as the single most dangerous barrier to racial amalgamation. Of course, the United States Constitution also made African Americans, at least theoretically, equal citizens, but Hrdlička never suggested that this could someday obfuscate their physical differentiation from whites. In Hrdlička's reckoning, the Soviet Union, not the United States, represented the fastest growing branch of the white race. The reason for this was that there was no real obstacle to white amalgamation.

Finally, the Slavic colonization of Asia raised another uncomfortable issue often associated with racism. Was the Soviet Union an empire? Soviet apologists preferred to see themselves as "anti-imperialist," yet they had to explain what sometimes looked like imperialist domination of much of Asia and a multitude of diverse people. Hrdlička was quick to point out that Slavs, unlike the Germans, never conquered other peoples with violence. The Slavic march to the Pacific was not conquest but a "spreading out" and "essentially a natural one," which was "radically at variance with the more or less predatory and ephemeral invasions of the Goths, Huns, or Teutons."<sup>161</sup> In his Prague lectures, he claimed, "the Slavs penetrate peacefully, as peasants taking empty fields and building their homes there."<sup>162</sup> Unlike cruel Germanization, Slavic colonization was a benign matter. Most people were happy to mix with the kindly Slavs. As the Slavs innocuously wandered into new zones, "they encountered a few diverse previous inhabitants [and] these elements were to a large extent mixed and willingly Slavicized, and their blood gradually became more or less Slavic in origin, especially in the Balkans, in Bohemia, and in Russia."<sup>163</sup> After all, the essence of Slavdom had never been about "supremacy over others" or "military glory."<sup>164</sup> The future belonged to the Slavs not because they were good at warfare, but because they were friendly, peaceful, and fertile.

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<sup>161</sup> Hrdlička, "The Slavs," 182.

<sup>162</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 71.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 77.

## E. SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

It has always been tempting to interpret the absolute defeat of Nazi Germany as a definitive victory for “human rights” and a final burial for racism. Yet there were many people who drew the “wrong” lesson from World War II. For some, it proved the racial superiority of the Slavs. As odd as it may seem, Hrdlička, Stalin, and Hitler all eventually concluded that World War II demonstrated Slavic superiority in the great biological struggle for survival. Well before the war, in 1928, Hrdlička told the *New York American* that the Nordic “strain” of the white race was “wearing out.”<sup>165</sup> Fortunately, there were other “fresh, energy-full” groups of whites “looming on the horizon.”<sup>166</sup> Indeed, reflected Hrdlička, “the torch may in fact have already passed to the hands of the main of these,” Russia, which was “a new world giant.”<sup>167</sup> In 1941 Stalin, whether he viewed himself as a Slav or not, arrived at a similar verdict.<sup>168</sup> Amir Weiner records Stalin informing a Polish audience that the Slavs were “... a young race which hasn’t yet been worn out .... The Germans are strong, but the Slavs will defeat them.”<sup>169</sup> In the end, Hitler himself came around to this way of thinking. In order to demonstrate the Nazis’ fatalistic commitment to the rigid logic of biological struggle, Johann Chapoutot cites a comment that Hitler made to Albert Speer in the final days of the Third Reich: “The [German] people has turned out to be the weakest, and the future belongs to the strongest people, the Eastern people, and to it alone.”<sup>170</sup>

There were others who learned this racial lesson from the war, like Viktor Palivec, a Czech author who had attended Hrdlička’s lectures in Prague in the early 1920s and considered him a prophet. According to Palivec in 1947, Hrdlička had long ago determined that the Slavs were “the greatest unit of the white race, and they still have not had their day; they have not yet achieved their

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<sup>165</sup> “Famous Scientist Flouts ‘Nordic Superiority’ Boast,” *New York American*, 13 August, 1928, box 72, “News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1928-37,” News Clippings and Printed Material, 1893-1953. Clearly, Hrdlička really believed there was such a thing as a “Nordic” racial type.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Hrdlička would have considered Stalin a Slav.

<sup>169</sup> Weiner, “Nature, Nurture, and Memory,” 1143.

<sup>170</sup> Chapoutot, *The Law of Blood*, 415.

summit’.”<sup>171</sup> Although Hrdlička died in 1943, he “foresaw” that “the end of the Second World War would mean also the great and victorious rise of liberated Slavdom, with the Russian people, its biggest component, at the vanguard. [This will be] the arrival of the Slavic age, the league of Slavic nations.”<sup>172</sup> At least for those who seriously viewed the world through the template of racial struggle, World War II did not debunk the myth of race; it proved the biological superiority of the Slavs, a fresh stock of whites. According to the pure logic of racial competition, there had never been any guarantee that the next millennium would necessarily be a German one. Everyone who accepted these rules, including, apparently, Hitler, seemed to understand this.

While the Nordics were wearing out, Hrdlička thought the Slavs were unspoiled by the vices of modernity and sturdy enough to lead the white race. True, most of their states, including Russia, were less developed than Germany and the rest of Western Europe, yet Hrdlička turned this apparent misfortune into a eugenic advantage. Hrdlička estimated that eighty percent of Russians were still peasants, but this was good because it preserved their natural vitality, and “physically and maybe even mentally their level has not seriously declined.”<sup>173</sup> “From an anthropological standpoint,” he observed, “the Russian stock is well developed, virile, resistant, and full of potential force. It may truly be said to be a great human reserve of the European population.”<sup>174</sup> In 1919 Hrdlička described the Russians as a “physically strong and prolific stock,” which was “freer from degenerative conditions than perhaps any other larger European group.”<sup>175</sup> Certainly, the backwardness of Eastern Europe was not good for the Slavs, “but it seems that, except maybe in a few individuals, it never led to degeneration, and that a healthy core remained, so that there is a real

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<sup>171</sup> Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička*, 27.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 77.

<sup>174</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 28-29.

<sup>175</sup> Hrdlička, Manuscript, “The Races of Russia,” [1919], box 138, “Russian,” European Ethnic History, 1908-38.

hope for repair.”<sup>176</sup> Reflecting on his visit to the Soviet Union to the Science Service, he claimed: “I saw few malformed people.”<sup>177</sup>

Many Slavic states still had very high death rates due to underdevelopment, but this was really a eugenic blessing. A large quantity of death, which would be preventable in more developed states, helped the Slavs to stay fit and shed their weaklings more quickly. In “The Slavs,” he described the death rate in Slavic regions as “artificially high,” but he also thought this made the Slavs more resilient “by eliminating most of the weaker.”<sup>178</sup> In the 1920s, he told an audience in Czechoslovakia that high mortality rates among Slavs led to “the removal of a higher percentage of the weaker ones than in other nations. This is to some extent natural self-cleansing.”<sup>179</sup> This made the Slavs extra strong just at a time, “when in the majority of white nations medical science is able to save a great number of below-average children and adults.”<sup>180</sup> Although on average the death rates were high, individual Slavs, especially in Russia and the Balkans, sometimes, at least according to Hrdlička, lived unusually long lives of well over 100 years. These wonders of longevity, mused Hrdlička, were probably “a physiological expression of the relatively high grade of soundness of the race.”<sup>181</sup>

He had to admit that fortuitous rates of needless death had not pruned the Czechs as well as most Slavs. Like Western Europeans, the Czechs enjoyed better hygiene and modern medicine but also suffered from the emasculating horrors of industrial development; they were “drained out by factories and tiring and tense modern life.”<sup>182</sup> Czechs living in the highly developed regions of Bohemia and Moravia were simply “not so fresh and original as other branches of the Slavs.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 74.

<sup>177</sup> “Aleš Hrdlička Sees Russians Becoming One Physical Type,” Science Service, 22 August, 1939, box 72, News Clippings on or by Hrdlička, 1938-40.

<sup>178</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 185.

<sup>179</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 76.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 184.

<sup>182</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 76.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 78.

There was, however, still plenty of hope for Czechoslovakia, especially “in Moravia and parts of Slovakia,” which were less industrialized, and where “the core of the people is still youthful, preserved, and full of strength.”<sup>184</sup> Aside from the urbanized Czechs, however, “from a physical point of view the Slavs as a whole are in good shape, even better than many other nations.”<sup>185</sup>

Hrdlička pinned most of his hopes on the still backward Slavs of the Soviet Union, especially during World War II. Old Russia, he observed in 1942, had suffered from widespread famines, poor communications, and inadequate “hygiene and medical care.”<sup>186</sup> These deficiencies were really blessings in disguise because “only the stronger and more resistant could survive under such disadvantages, but those who did survive constituted a stronger people of a higher biological value. It was thus that they were able to survive the First World War, the revolutions, and the interventionist and civil wars that followed, and the great famine that developed during these years; and it was thus that they still found strength to drive out all invaders, from a great state.”<sup>187</sup> Hrdlička was apparently oblivious to the artificially induced starvation of the 1930s, and he dated all great famines in Russia before 1923, the first year of the Soviet Union, which had made “a striking development” toward solving these problems.<sup>188</sup> Yet it was in fact the lethal failures of the old regime that made Russians such a fine breed that they could now “stem the attack of the greatest and most destructive military machine of all times.”<sup>189</sup> In Hrdlička’s rather illogical line of thought, a good occasional famine had helped to weed out the weaklings and make the population smart and virile, but at the same time it was a good thing (or not?) that the Soviet Union had shrewdly put an end to the “good old days” of mass starvation.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>186</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 26.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

While an abundance of preventable deaths kept the Slavs lean and tough, their backwardness also made them wondrously fertile. Again, this was especially true for Russians and Balkan Slavs. Hrdlička felt this was due to the “relatively well preserved physical status of the people, and the simple and often hard rural life of the vast majority.”<sup>190</sup> Urbanized Slavs, like Czechs, tended to have lower birth rates, and this observation seems to point toward an environmental explanation for fertility rates. However, Hrdlička stubbornly insisted that Slavic fecundity, regardless of the urbanized Czech exception, reflected more than pre-industrial lifestyles because “there seems to be something in the Slav constitution which favors a high birthrate.”<sup>191</sup> Hrdlička, who sired no children, often meditated on the mystery of Slavic fertility, which he venerated as “a gift of nature which if properly safeguarded and preserved, would lead to far reaching consequences in the future.”<sup>192</sup>

Hrdlička saw the miracle of Slavic fertility as the antidote to what Lothrop Stoddard had called “the rising tide of color.” Many feared that the backward, impoverished, and dark-skinned people of the world would eventually outbreed white people and overtake them. According to Hrdlička, white people had no reason to worry because ardent Slavic reproduction would save the day. Slavs, he wrote, “may truly be said to be a great human reserve of the European population.”<sup>193</sup> Although urbanized whites in the West tended to reproduce more slowly, the Slavs had “higher growth than among other branches of the white race.”<sup>194</sup> The Slavs would be the future of the white world because, “in numbers the Slavs are today the biggest unit of the White race, and they still have not had their ‘day,’ they have not yet reached their peak.”<sup>195</sup> The political situation in World War II accented the motif of Russian Slavs helping to save the world, and Hrdlička took the opportunity in 1942 to highlight the racial aspect of this idea:

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<sup>190</sup> Hrdlička, “The Slavs,” 183.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 28-29.

<sup>194</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 75-76.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 75.

The Russian Slavs, taken collectively, number today over 140 millions, and they are increasing yearly, by the excess of births over deaths, by approximately 1.5 percent. This rate of increase is greater than that of any other people in Europe except some of the Balkan branches of Slavs, and with the mass of the people belonging to the rural and worker population, cannot be expected to become much reduced in the near future. Such a rate of increase of this strong and able stock means a growing biological momentum. This insures that Russia must in future be expected to exercise important world influence, both anthropological and general.<sup>196</sup>

The white Slavs would outbreed yellow-browns and blacks, who were the two racial threats in the world. Hrdlička was not the only one who viewed the Slavs this way. In 1920, Joseph Goričar of the American Slav Society sent Hrdlička a brochure advertising the “First American Slav Congress” to be held that year. This pamphlet instructed its readers: “It should never be forgotten that the Slav race is the promising junior in the great Caucasian family. Its full and great contribution to world civilization is yet to come. The unhampered development of Slavdom is a world necessity for the sake of maintaining equilibrium between the white race and the awakening forces of Asia.”<sup>197</sup> When Bishop John William Hamilton worriedly asked Hrdlička in 1930 if “colored” people would eventually outnumber whites, Hrdlička pointed out that some whites, like Russians and Balkan Slavs, “increase at least as fast as the yellow-brown or other dark races.”<sup>198</sup> These statements reveal the thought system that induced Hrdlička to tell an audience of Czechs in

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<sup>196</sup> Hrdlička, *Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 29.

<sup>197</sup> “First American Slav Congress,” 1920, box 25, “GIL-GOO, 1899-1942,” Correspondence.

<sup>198</sup> Letter, Hrdlička to Bishop John William Hamilton, 5 May, 1930, box 28, “HAA-HAR, 1897-1943,” Correspondence.

1923, “the Slavs have reasonable hope for the future. They are as a whole the last great biological reserve of the white race.”<sup>199</sup>

## F. CONCLUSION

Hrdlička’s views of the Soviet Union, ignored entirely in English-language literature since the 1940s until now, defy most post-war historical narratives. His admiration for the Soviet Union, though unnoticed by modern scholars, was enthusiastic to the point of naiveté. Yet there is no indication that it arose from any sympathy with communism. Quite the opposite, all the evidence suggests that Hrdlička considered himself unpolitical, shied away from “leftist” politics, and had no intellectual interest in Marxist analysis at all. To state it in an abrupt way: Hrdlička loved the Soviet Union because he was, for lack of a better term, a “racist.” Strangely, Hrdlička’s adoration for the Soviet Union stemmed from an understanding of the world that was just as fundamentally racial as that of the Nazis. The discussion about race within the Soviet Union itself is complicated and must be left to specialists in the field. Nonetheless, Hrdlička’s perspective provides a surprising example of how the Soviet enterprise, often viewed as the antidote to racism, could also appeal to disciples of race. It was race, not communism, that led Hrdlička to the Soviet Union.

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<sup>199</sup> Hrdlička, *O původu a vývoji člověka*, 77.

## CONCLUSION

It is now essential to summarize some of the more important new discoveries about Hrdlička's racial worldview. For starters, Hrdlička was deeply devoted to Czech nationalism, a reality that has remained underappreciated by scholars for decades, but which is crucial to understanding his ideas. Throughout his life, he urged the United States to use its citizens' lives and wealth to defend Czech national interests, which in his mind were unquestionably honorable causes. In two world wars, he enthusiastically spread propaganda for the Czech national mission, even when it seemed out of line with U.S. foreign policy. In the 1920s, he sacrificed a significant fortune to support anthropology in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s. At home in the United States, he kept close to other Czech immigrants and proudly used the language on a regular basis. Hrdlička never settled on a concrete definition of race, but his race beliefs unfolded extemporaneously from his commitment to Czech identity.

His religious devotion to Czech national identity shaped his racial map of the world. This is why he rejected the exclusivist Nordic view of the white race and instead insisted that all European immigrants, like Czechs, were authentic white people. In fact, he even claimed that the Slavs, not the Nordics, were the most eugenically fit white people in the world. But what about the Soviet Union, with its vast Asian conquests? Of course the Soviet Union was white, answered Hrdlička. Not only were the Slavs in the Soviet Union white, but they were "the last great biological reserve of the white race." After all, the yellow-brown people living in Soviet territory were racially close to whites and would easily be whitened. Even Koreans, some of whom belonged to the Soviet Union, and who were on the "right" side of World War II, seemed at least a little white to Hrdlička. Just across the water; however, there were the Japanese, who were the long-time adversaries of Russia. Predictably, the Japanese were the one group of yellow-browns that could not breed well with whites. Blacks, the race that was the least compatible with whites according to Hrdlička, were

seldom seen in the Soviet and Slavic zones of the world, and therefore they did not contaminate Slavic whiteness. Predictably, at the center of this racial topography were Czechs, the most developed group in the white and Slavic world. As such, Czech-Americans were white Americans.

Hrdlička's faith in Czech nationalism provides consistency (of a sort) in his racial landscape of Central Europe. He wanted to see Czechs and Germans as white people and physically similar. This depiction helped him deny alleged claims of German superiority over Slavs. However, at the same time, Hrdlička also wanted Czechs and Germans to remain physically distinct because he believed the two groups were locked in a desperate, thousand-year racial struggle. This helped him argue against the legitimacy of old Austria-Hungary. There is still another complexity. Hrdlička wanted Czechs and Slovaks to have their own state together. His argument for this was that these two linguistic groups were physically related, and sometimes he even called them a race. Finally, he felt that Czechs and Slovaks were both part of the larger group of Slavs, which he saw as a big biological family. Although he was himself a Central European polyglot, he always insisted that none of these differences had anything to do with language; they had to be physical. In fact, he believed that language often masked an individual's "real" racial identity.

The results of this study also make it very difficult to continue to see Hrdlička's race beliefs as "equalitarian." It is true that he hated the Nordic-style racism of the Nazis. However, he explicitly believed in racial hierarchy, which he openly used to justify the conquest and even extermination of lesser races. Sadly, he went to great lengths to argue for the utter inferiority of the black race. On an even more subtle level, Hrdlička's vision of Czechoslovakia was inherently inequalitarian. Hrdlička clearly believed that the new state of Czechoslovakia justly belonged, almost as an act of revenge, to the previously "oppressed" Czechs and Slovaks. Throughout the existence of Czechoslovakia, he characterized Germans as a foreign and parasitic "race" of privileged oppressors. In a state in which the second largest linguist group was German (not

Slovak), how could such a foundation myth ever promote civil equality, or, by the way, long-term stability?

Hrdlička's racial ideas seem to be part of a bigger intellectual project of building a revolutionary moral system free from Christian "fairy tales" and founded solely on modern science. In this new morality, science became an oracle not for questioning hypotheses but for issuing pseudo-religious truth statements. Using their newly acquired priestly authority, scientists like Hrdlička, along with their highly literate fan club, told the world that race and racial competition were "natural laws." It is popular today to make fun of race beliefs as uneducated pseudoscience. However, such name calling distracts from the stark reality that many people who believed in race considered themselves the progressive and "scientific" smart set, and many of them really were. Although racial science eventually drowned in irreconcilable contradictions, it once had an immense capacity to explain the world, even if it never quite escaped the mysticism it claimed to abandon.

Hrdlička acted out his race beliefs, especially during World War I, and they had revolutionary consequences for the world. He worked hard as a propagandist to destroy old Austria Hungary and promote Czechoslovakia. He did this because he considered the Austrian Empire artificial. In his worldview, there was no room for a state that stifled the "natural" and insuppressible longings of its imprisoned "nations." In 1918, he got the world he wanted, but it lasted only twenty years. In 1938, naturalistic racial arguments very similar to Hrdlička's were used to undermine the Czechoslovakian state.

In fact, racial identity as Hrdlička envisioned it was intrinsically unstable right from the beginning. No one was better equipped than Hrdlička to find the physical distinctions between races, and he spent his life looking for them. Instead, after years of measuring, his conceptualization

of racial categories, according to his own admission, never advanced beyond the speculations of the eighteenth century. Instead of making race lines more clear, Hrdlička's own research often revealed ambiguity and inconsistency. His racial vision of the world demanded clear physical boundaries, but much of the population, in reality, remained uncomfortably "amphibian." Dealing with the in-between people turned out to be a major difficulty in the twentieth century. Courts and administrators had no definitive, "scientific" way to tell who was white, black, German, Czech, or Jewish. Instead, they turned to scientists like Hrdlička, who issued verdicts reminiscent of astrological prognostications. Inevitably, this new "scientific" way of understanding human variation unleashed lawless instability upon the world.

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## ABSTRACT: „DIE RASSISCHE WELT VON ALEŠ HRDLIČKA“

Der tschechisch-amerikanische Wissenschaftler Aleš Hrdlička (1869-1943) war von 1910 bis 1941 Kurator für physische Anthropologie an der Smithsonian Institution und einer der Gründungsväter der amerikanischen physischen Anthropologie. Er kam schon mit 13 Jahren in die USA, wuchs in ärmsten Verhältnissen auf, und erreichte schließlich eine der höchsten Positionen im wissenschaftlichen Establishment Amerikas. Er war der Gründer des renommierten *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* und ein wichtiger Mitbegründer der tschechoslowakischen Zeitschrift *Anthropologie*. Sein Spezialgebiet als Anthropologe war die Anthropometrie, die genaue Vermessung der menschlichen Körpermerkmale. Als einer der führenden Anthropologen Amerikas spielte er eine einflussreiche Rolle bei der Entwicklung rassistischer Ideen in den Vereinigten Staaten. Die vorliegende Dissertation präsentiert eine innovative Interpretation Hrdličkas auf der Grundlage von Originalrecherchen in bisher nicht untersuchten Primärquellen.

Auch wenn Aleš Hrdlička kein „bekannter“ Name ist, ist es fast unmöglich, über Rassenwissenschaften in den Vereinigten Staaten zu schreiben, ohne ihn zu erwähnen. Obwohl es seit 1979 keine Monographien über Hrdlička mehr gegeben hat (damals erschien eine Dissertation), existieren zahlreiche wichtige Bücher in erstklassigen Verlagen, die sich ausführlich mit ihm befassen. Unter ihnen sind: Charles Mann, *1491* (Vintage Books, 2011; dt. *Amerika vor Kolumbus*, 2016); Lee Baker, *From Savage to Negro* (Berkeley, 1998); Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race* (University of Vermont Press, 2008); Orin Starn, *Ishi's Brain* (Norton, 2004); und zuletzt Samuel Redman, *Bone Rooms* (Harvard, 2016). In tschechischer Sprache existiert keine ernsthafte wissenschaftliche Forschung über Hrdlička, die auf einer kritischen Analyse der Primärquellen beruht. Allerdings gibt es einige kurze und bewundernde Biografien, zum Beispiel Viktor Palivec, *Kdo je Aleš Hrdlička* (1947) und Vojtěch Fetter, *Dr. Aleš Hrdlička světový badatel ve vědě o člověku* (1954). Die vorliegende Dissertation stellt neue Erkenntnisse vor, die auf einer völlig neuen Untersuchung erstmals verwendeter Quellen beruhen und die von Wissenschaftlern auf diesem Gebiet nicht ignoriert werden können.

Die zentrale Frage der vorliegenden Dissertation lautet: Was meinte Hrdlička mit „Rasse“? Dieses Problem ist komplizierter, als es scheint, weil Rasse ein dehnbares Konzept ist, dessen Bedeutung an bestimmte historische und kulturelle Kontexte gebunden ist. „Rasse“ bedeutet verschiedene Dinge an verschiedenen Orten und zu verschiedenen Zeiten. Sogar Hrdlička selbst, ein weltbekannter Spezialist, hatte es schwer, in seinen

Hunderten von Veröffentlichungen zu erklären, wie viele Rassen es gibt und wie man sie voneinander unterscheidet. Zum Teil aufgrund seines eigenen Mangels an begrifflicher Klarheit gibt es heute wenig wissenschaftlichen Konsens über Hrdličkyas rassische Ansichten. Diese Studie untersucht die intellektuellen Ursprünge von Hrdličkyas Rassenüberzeugungen und die darin enthaltenen Widersprüche, und sie zeigt, wie er sie in der Praxis anwandte. Als Hauptthese wird argumentiert, dass Hrdličkyas rassisches Weltbild eng mit seinem tschechischen Nationalismus verbunden war.

Um eine Antwort auf diese zentrale Frage zu finden, erforderte dieses Projekt eine Neuuntersuchung des Hrdlička-Nachlasses, der in den Anthropology Archives der Smithsonian Institution in Suitland, Maryland, etwas außerhalb von Washington, DC, aufbewahrt wird. Obwohl der Hrdlička-Nachlass Anthropologen und Historikern gut bekannt ist, hat bis jetzt noch niemand die große Menge tschechischsprachiger Manuskripte und Dokumente in diesem Archiv kritisch untersucht. Dies ist die erste veröffentlichte Studie, die sich dieses umfangreichen Materials in tschechischer Sprache bedient. Infolgedessen bietet es eine wesentliche Neuinterpretation Hrdličkyas und seiner Ideen, indem es seinem tschechischen Nationalismus gebührende Beachtung schenkt.

Das erste Kapitel untersucht die intellektuellen Ursprünge von Hrdličkyas rassischem Weltbild. Obwohl Hrdličkyas rassische Ansichten heute von der modernen Wissenschaft allgemein verworfen werden, war er nicht „rückständig“. Sie entstanden vielmehr aus einem intellektuellen Projekt, das den altmodischen „christlichen Aberglauben“ durch ein neues moralisches Credo ersetzte, das ausschließlich auf den Naturwissenschaften basieren sollte. Darüber hinaus war Hrdlička kein „Pseudowissenschaftler“; er wurde international als eine der führenden wissenschaftlichen Autoritäten anerkannt. Für ihn, wie auch für viele andere, hatte „Rasse“ gerade deshalb Aussagekraft, weil sie so „wissenschaftlich“ und von religiösem Irrglauben befreit wirkte. Dennoch geriet „Rasse“ als intellektuelles System oder „Paradigma“ zunehmend in Widerspruch zu den empirischen Daten. Um das Paradigma zu retten und die ihm innewohnenden Inkongruenzen auszugleichen, musste Hrdlička einige Zugeständnisse in seinem System machen. Ironischerweise erwies sich die Rassenwissenschaft trotz ihrer Ansprüche letztlich als überraschend „religiös“.

Das zweite Kapitel setzt dieses Thema fort, indem es Hrdličkyas Engagement für die Eugenik untersucht. Einige Gelehrte haben behauptet, Hrdlička sei ein Gegner der Eugenik gewesen; doch auch wenn er eindeutig Vorbehalte äußerte, war er letztlich ihr Anhänger. Als tschechischer Nationalist verachtete Hrdlička allerdings

jene Art von Eugenik, die die Überlegenheit der „nordischen Rasse“ und der „Arier“ hervorhob. Dennoch war seine Ablehnung der nordischen Eugenik keine Bestätigung der Rassengleichheit; er glaubte zum Beispiel eindeutig, dass Verbindungen schwarz-weißer Paare dysgenisch waren. Darüber hinaus zögerte er nicht, „slawische“ Eugenik, insbesondere in der Tschechoslowakei, zu unterstützen. Auf einer tieferen Ebene argumentiert dieses Kapitel, dass Eugenik eine scheinbar wissenschaftliche moralische Struktur darstellt, durch die Hrdlička sich selbst und die Welt um ihn herum beurteilte. Letztendlich glaubte er, dass Eugenik die Wissenschaft und Wissenschaftler befähigen würde, den Menschen, zumindest unter den „höheren Rassen“, zur Perfektion zu führen.

Das dritte Kapitel befasst sich mit einem entscheidenden und wiederkehrenden Thema dieser Dissertation: Mit der Mehrdeutigkeit von rassischen (und nationalen) Identitäten. Hrdlička glaubte (mehr oder weniger), dass es drei große Rassen gebe: weiß, „gelbbraun“ (seine Terminologie) und schwarz; und dass man sie durch messbare physische Merkmale voneinander unterscheiden könne. Tatsächlich wandten sich die verschiedensten Amerikaner, von einfachen Bürgern bis hin zu berühmten Beamten, an Hrdlička in der Hoffnung, dass er ihnen mittels dieser Wissenschaft helfen könne, rassenneutrale Personen in festgelegte Kategorien einzuordnen. Hrdlička gab zwar stets ein Urteil ab, erklärte aber nie genau, wie er dazu gekommen war. Eine sorgfältige Lektüre der Primärquellen führt zur fast sicheren Schlussfolgerung, dass er es deshalb nie erklärte, weil er es nicht wirklich wusste. Hrdlička, der sein Leben damit verbrachte, Menschen zu vermessen, um die physischen Unterschiede zwischen den Rassen zu entdecken, fand niemals eine systematische Methode, um die einzelnen Rassen voneinander zu unterscheiden.

Obwohl einige Gelehrte Hrdlička als Verfechter der Rassengleichheit dargestellt haben, zeigen die Quellen genau das Gegenteil. Das vierte Kapitel befasst sich erneut mit seiner Konzeption von drei Hauptrassen, diesmal jedoch aus vertikaler anstatt aus horizontaler Perspektive. Hrdlička glaubte eindeutig, dass die Weißen den Schwarzen und den Gelbbraunen überlegen seien. Zwar hatte er eine großzügige Auffassung der weißen Rasse, zu der er beispielsweise Juden, Nordafrikaner und viele Völker in Asien zählte, doch argumentierte er auch nachdrücklich, dass die Schwarzen in der Hierarchie ganz unten stünden. Weil er glaubte, dass die Weißen den Gelbbraunen und den Schwarzen überlegen seien, war es ihm sehr wichtig, zu argumentieren, dass die Tschechen im Speziellen und die Slawen im Allgemeinen zur weißen Rasse gehörten. Er war äußerst beleidigt über die seiner Meinung nach „deutsche“ Theorie, dass die Slawen eine asiatische Rasse seien.

Das fünfte Kapitel kehrt zum Thema der Ambivalenz zurück, jedoch mit einer überraschenden Wendung. Was unterschied denn Tschechen und Slowaken von Deutschen und Ungarn? Die meisten Leute würden sagen, es sei die Sprache; doch Hrdlička bestand darauf, dass es physische Unterschiede geben müsse. Tatsächlich, so fühlte er, verdeckte die Sprache oft die „wahre“ Identität eines Individuums. Trotz seiner ehrgeizigen Behauptung, Tschechen und Deutsche seien physisch unterscheidbare Gruppen, lieferte er keine Beweise aus der physischen Anthropologie, um dies zu unterstützen. Dieser Mangel an empirischer Bestätigung hinderte ihn nicht daran, sich Tschechen und Slowaken als in einem tausendjährigen Rassenkampf mit ihren deutschen Nachbarn verstrickt vorzustellen. Er machte auch das rassische Argument, dass Tschechen und Slowaken in ihrem eigenen tschechoslowakischen Staat zusammengehören, das multinationale Österreich-Ungarn jedoch ein künstlicher Greuel sei, weil es die Rassenidentitäten nicht respektiere. Die Kapitel fünf, sechs und sieben befassen sich ausführlich mit Hrdličkas Verbindungen zu Mitteleuropa und sind stark von der revisionistischen Geschichtsschreibung inspiriert, wie sie Gelehrte wie Pieter Judson und Tara Zahra vertreten.

Das sechste Kapitel dokumentiert, wie Hrdlička seine Rassenüberzeugungen in die Praxis umsetzte und dazu beitrug, die Welt zu verändern. Während des Ersten Weltkrieges versuchten Befürworter der tschechischen Sache, die Amerikaner auch während ihrer langen Neutralitätsperiode (1914-1917) dazu zu bringen, Österreich-Ungarn zu zerschlagen zu helfen und einen unabhängigen tschechoslowakischen Staat zu unterstützen. Hrdlička setzte sich hinter den Kulissen für bestimmte mächtige Politiker ein, um die amerikanische Außenpolitik neu zu gestalten. Er beteiligte sich auch an einer umfassenden und manchmal unterschwelligen Propagandakampagne, um die öffentliche Meinung zu beeinflussen. Auch im Zweiten Weltkrieg versuchte er, die amerikanische Öffentlichkeit dazu zu bringen, die Sache der Tschechoslowakei mit der gleichen moralischen Überzeugung zu betrachten, die er selbst darüber empfand. Entgegen dem traditionellen Stereotyp friedlicher Slawen, die sich gegen militante "Teutonen" verteidigten, war die tschechoslowakische Propaganda für den Krieg. In beiden Kriegen war das Ziel, die immense militärische Stärke der USA für die nationalen Interessen der Tschechen einzusetzen.

Mit der Gründung der Tschechoslowakei bekam Hrdlička 1918 in Mitteleuropa das, was er wollte. Das siebte Kapitel beschreibt Hrdličkas philanthropische Bemühungen, die Disziplin der physischen Anthropologie in der neuen Republik zu unterstützen. Der größte Teil dieses Kapitels besteht aus bisher unbekannten Informationen

über Hrdlička. In den Vereinigten Staaten gibt es (bis jetzt) nichts in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur über Hrdličkas Mäzenatentum in Europa, und den meisten Amerikanern ist unbekannt, dass Hrdlička fast sein gesamtes Vermögen der Förderung der anthropologischen Wissenschaft in der Tschechoslowakei widmete. In der Tschechischen Republik wird Hrdlička heute als patriotischer Held angesehen, der die Entwicklung der Anthropologie im neuen Land auf kluge und glückliche Weise leitete. Eine seiner wichtigsten Leistungen war das Hrdlička-Museum des Menschen, das sich noch heute in Prag befindet. Die wahre Geschichte war jedoch nicht so glücklich; rund um das Museum und die sogenannten „Hrdlička-Fonds“ gab es Kontroversen, an die sich allerdings heute kaum noch jemand erinnert. Hrdlička war sicherlich ein idealistischer Gönner, aber seine philanthropischen Investitionen schufen einen Geld-Fundus, um den viele tschechoslowakische Wissenschaftler kämpften. Zwei der führenden tschechischen Anthropologen, Jindřich Matiegka und sein Student Vojtěch Suk, gerieten über die Kontrolle dieser Ressourcen in Konflikt; nach mehreren Gerichtsverfahren und einer Flut antisemitischer Verspottungen (gegen Suk) schworen sie, niemals mehr miteinander zu sprechen. In der Zwischenzeit wurde die Kontrolle über das Museum an Jiří Malý übergeben, den Hrdlička verachtete. Das Museum selbst wurde nicht so, wie es sich Hrdlička vorgestellt hatte, und er war frustriert, dass die tschechoslowakische Regierung sich weigerte, seine Stiftung zu unterstützen. Hrdličkas Enttäuschung über die Realisierung seines geliebten Museums war so groß, dass er mit dem tschechoslowakischen Staat in Konflikt geriet. In den späten 1930er Jahren, als die Tschechoslowakei unterging, entschied Hrdlička, dass die Zukunft seines Traummuseums nicht in Prag, sondern in Moskau sei.

Das achte Kapitel schließlich beschreibt Hrdličkas sehr eigenartige rassische Interpretation der Sowjetunion. Dieses Material ist nicht nur eine völlig neue Entdeckung, sondern bietet auch eine seltene (oder vielleicht selten wahrgenommene) Perspektive der Sowjetunion. In den späten 1930er Jahren wurde Hrdlička ganz öffentlich zum fanatischen Anhänger der Sowjetunion, aber nicht, weil er für den Kommunismus war. Tatsächlich deuten alle Beweise darauf hin, dass es Hrdlička unbedingt vermeiden wollte, als linker Radikaler eingestuft zu werden, und dass er kein Interesse an marxistischer Analyse (und auch wenig Verständnis dafür) hatte. Stattdessen sah Hrdlička die Sowjetunion ausschließlich aus rassischer Perspektive. Für Hrdlička war sie ein mächtiges Reich von eugenisch gesunden slawischen Weißen. In einem Vortrag in Prag im Jahr 1922 bezeichnete er die Slawen als „das letzte große biologische Reservat der weißen Rasse“. In den 1930er Jahren argumentierte er öffentlich, dass nicht die nordischen Völker, sondern die Slawen die am besten angepasste Gruppe der Weißen seien, und dass die Sowjetunion sie zum Sieg über Nazideutschland führen würde.

Hrdlička war kein komplizierter Intellektueller, aber seine rassische Perspektive war eine revolutionäre Erklärung dafür, wie Menschen in Gruppen organisiert werden sollten, und sie hatte einen tiefgreifenden Einfluss auf die Welt. Er und einige Gleichgesinnte schlugen vor, dass die rassische Identität die „wissenschaftlichste“, „natürlichste“ und daher authentischste Grundlage für menschliche Gemeinschaften sei. Diese Ideen bedrohten jedoch die traditionellen Staaten. Laut Hrdlička müssen unechte Staaten, die gegen die rassistischen „Naturgesetze“ verstoßen, zerstört und ihre Grenzen neu gezogen werden. Um die Welt nach diesen Grundsätzen neu zu gestalten, half Hrdlička mit, den traditionellen Staat Österreich-Ungarn zu demontieren und 1918 durch die Tschechoslowakei zu ersetzen; einen neuen Staat, der eher seinem Rassen-Naturalismus entsprach. Nur zwanzig Jahre später förderte ein sehr ähnliches Argument, das diesmal von Leuten vorgebracht wurde, die behaupteten, einer „besseren“ Rassengruppe anzugehören, die Zerstörung der Tschechoslowakei.