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Victor R. Greene: THE SLAVIC COMMUNITY ON STRIKE: IMMIGRANT LABOR IN PENNSYLVANIA ANTHRACITE (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

Dr. Greene deserves much credit for his courage in undertaking such a difficult study. For one, he disproves a myth tenderly cherished by American historians of Anglo-Saxon descent. Second, he has the audacity to deal with a subject almost completely foreign to his own background. Thus, he leaves himself open to the ridicule of "established" historians and the criticism of the Slavs and other East Europeans. However, he acquitted himself commendably

This book is an argument disproving the time-honored false notion that the Polish, Lithuanian, and other East European immigrants to this country were detrimental to the cause of American labor. These new immigrants, rather than supporting strikebreaking and shunning unions, proved to be adamant in their solid support of labor and to be the backbone of the United Mine Workers of America during its organizational phase in the anthracite mining region of Pennsylvania. This alone would make the book worthwhile. For these reasons, a better title would be "The East European Immigrant and the Anthracite Coal Strikes."

This book presents a good study of the unionization of coal workers and one of the steps leading to immigration laws. The author gives ample evidence of some understanding of the people about whom he is writing. It is a good beginning but far from adequate to speak or write definitively about this segment of our population. From all appearances, he is objective and seems to have captured the outstanding characteristics of the East Europeans: frugality, thrift, and allegiance to community. Throughout the work he makes interesting comparisons of the economic circumstances of these newer immigrants and the Anglo-Saxons, emphasizing especially the envy the latter had of the former. His explanation of the transition from individual contracts to collective bargaining in the mining industry is very well portrayed in the story of the strike of 1902.

His style throughout the book is not very sophisticated; rather, it is clear, smooth, and soft-spoken. Much interest is added to the book by the lively descriptions of detailed strike activities and of the characteristics of the Slavs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, or other East Europeans. The last chapter, "Conclusions", summarizes the book logically and conveniently.

After explaining the circumstances, such as the people involved and the situation in the mining industry, Dr. Greene goes into the arguments in defense of his thesis. In his opinion, the often-stated reason for the failure of the coal strikes in 1875 and 1877 is not true. There were not enough East Europeans to influence the case one way or the other. Strikes in the 1800's failed because of union mismanagement of the situations. Two unions were involved in these strikes and neither had a definite plan nor the proper people to lead them. Moreover, the two organizations were in competition with each other. The Knights of Labor and the Amalgamated Association of Miners and Mine Laborers of Pennsylvania competed for membership and leadership of labor. Therefore, it is unfair to accuse the East Europeans of contributing to the failure of these strikes by strike-breaking. Although the East European immigrant mine workers did not join the unions, they were totally in sympathy with the striking miners and cooperated with them just as if they were also members. They did more for the unions than they got credit for.

The reasons why the East Europeans did not join the unions in the beginning was that at first they received shabby treatment by the union leaders and members and despised by the Anglo-Saxon miners. This attitude of the two earlier unions could be one of the reasons for their failure. At the same time, their acceptance by the United Mine Workers and the shrewd approach of John Fahy, the union's organizer, won over the East Europeans. Thus, the new union was able to achieve its success in dealing with the mine operators. The support of these very people was instrumental in the first successful industry wide strike by the United Mine Workers in September 1900.

I have no arguments with the author about such subjects as unions and their organization, but it is difficult for me to agree with him on some of the other matters. First, it is not absolutely true that government policy had nothing to do with the exodus of the Poles from their country. The intrusion of the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian overlords into the private lives of the Poles and their interference with Polish traditions and language was too much even for the docile Slav. It is true that

the principal reason for the Polish immigration around the turn of the century was economic, but it was not the only one. Dr. Greene should have spoken to some of the old timers from Poland and heard them relate how the governments of the three partitioning powers treated the Poles. If he had read more of the literature of the period in the original Polish and understood it more precisely, he would, I am sure, have arrived at another conclusion.

On page 155, Dr. Greene wrote, "A good part of the pro-union propoganda then disseminated among the Slavs was carried on by the Polish National Catholic Church." This is hardly true, because this church was at that time in the process of formation. Perhaps some individuals, like the Rev. Francis Hodur, might have spoken up for unionization on some few occasions, but not many others from that church took leading parts in this movement for unions. Even Hodur himself had too many difficulties at this time with his Roman Catholic authorities and with his own followers to devote enough time and effort to this question.

The author's note on the organization of the Polish National Catholic Church (p. 243, No. 3) is too simplistic. The discontent among Polish Roman Catholics had been building up for some time in the United States. The American Roman Catholic hierarchy completely misunderstood the Polish immigrants. They were reluctant to permit them to establish their own national parishes and they neglected to include the Polish clergy in their policy-making echelon. What happened in Scranton in 1896 was only a manifestation of a deeper disgruntlement. The parishioners of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary church demanded a financial report from the pastor, because there were rumors that he was squandering their church offerings and they wanted to know how their money was used. This insignificant issue then ballooned to something much bigger until the original demands were forgotten. Moreover, the administration of the Diocese of Scranton at that time left much to be desired, what with an Ordinary in his dotage and an auxiliary bishop without executive powers. The Rev. Francis Hodur, having gained a strong following, stepped into the fracas and the momentum of the affair, with no little encouragement on his part, carried him into the leadership of a schismatic movement, which later turned out to be a heretical one. He was excommunicated in the fall of 1898 and from that time on he and his followers went their way to form the St. Stanislaus Polish National Reformed Church of Scarnton, Pennsylvania, which proved to be the first church of what is known today as the Polish National Catholic Church.

There are some technical deficiencies that could be remedied easily in a second edition of the work. There is no bibliography where the author comments on some of his sources. Unhappily, the bibliography is found only in the footnotes, which unfortunately are relegated to the back of the book after the text. Much of the cited source material could be useful for doing work in the field of Slavic-American history, but some of these sources could be questioned.

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