

merika

Emigration from Central Europe to America 1880-1914

City Museum of Rijeka

The real question is not why so many Europeans emigrated, but why so many stayed at home.

Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930*, Macmillan, Basingstoke & London, 1991.

Rijeka, better known in earlier times as Fiume, became at the beginning of the twentieth century one of the more significant emigration ports. As a result, in 2008 the City Museum of Rijeka mounted an exhibition entitled *Merika, Emigration from Central Europe to America 1880-1914*.

In the hundred year period of the emigrant tide, from 1815 to 1930, fifty millions Europeans participated in the great transoceanic migration. That migration left deep traces on both sides of the Atlantic, on the countries from which they left and on the countries to which they arrived. The extent of that movement became a special phenomenon, displaying evidence of being a planned and carefully organized project, with a specialized infrastructure, having far reaching consequences.

Ervin Dubrović, City Museum of Rijeka, Croatia ■

Days of Central Europe in New York

June 15, 6:30 pm
The Red Scare: A Concert Series by Opera Moderne
Eisler and Bernstein
Performers: Kelvin Chan (Baritone), Elspeth Davis (Mezzo), Vince Vincent (Baritone)
Deutsches Haus, DAAD, Austrian Cultural Forum
Venue: Deutsches Haus at NYU

June 19, 7:30 pm
Promised Lands: The Immigrant Experience and the Artist's Gaze
Ah Amerika! by István Orosz (1984, Kecskemét, Hungary)
Hunky Blues by Péter Forgács (2009, Hungary) - Film credits
Balassi Institute New York - Hungarian Cultural Center
Venue: Anthology Film Archives

June 20, 7:30 pm
Croats Coming to America: A roundtable discussion
Participating: John P. Kraljic, Ervin Dubrović, Marijan Gubić
Consulate General of the Republic of Croatia, Rudar Club
Venue: Rudar Club, Astoria

June 20 - July 10
Croatians in America: Exhibition of photographs by Vladimir Novak
Consulate General of the Republic of Croatia
Venue: Rudar Club, Astoria

June 26 - October 17
Orbis Pictus - Play Well Exhibition
Czech Center New York
Venue: Gallery of the Czech Center New York, Bohemian National Hall

June 27, 7:00 pm
Leaving Czechoslovakia: Exhibit opening
National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Consulate General of the Czech Republic & Consulate General of the Slovak Republic
Venue: Bohemian National Hall

June 28, 2:30 - 3:15 pm and 4:00 - 4:45 pm
Sylvan Winds, wind quintet concert
Farkas, Berezowsky, Tcherepnine, Berlin, Poldowski, Dvořák
Performers: Svijetlana Kabalin, flute; Kathy Halvorson, oboe; Pavel Vinnitsky, clarinet; Erik Holtje, bassoon; Zohar Schondorf, horn
Consulate General of the Republic of Croatia
Venue: Ellis Island Immigration Museum

From Immigrant to Inventor, Michael Pupin Remembered: Film screening
Consulate General of the Republic of Serbia

MERIKA: Emigration from Central Europe to America 1880 - 1914 City Museum of Rijeka

Exhibition at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum
Statue of Liberty National Monument
National Park Service, New York

June 28 - September 4, 2012

Author of the Exhibition
Ervin Dubrović

Design of the Exhibition
Klaudija Cetina

Translated by
John P. Kraljic

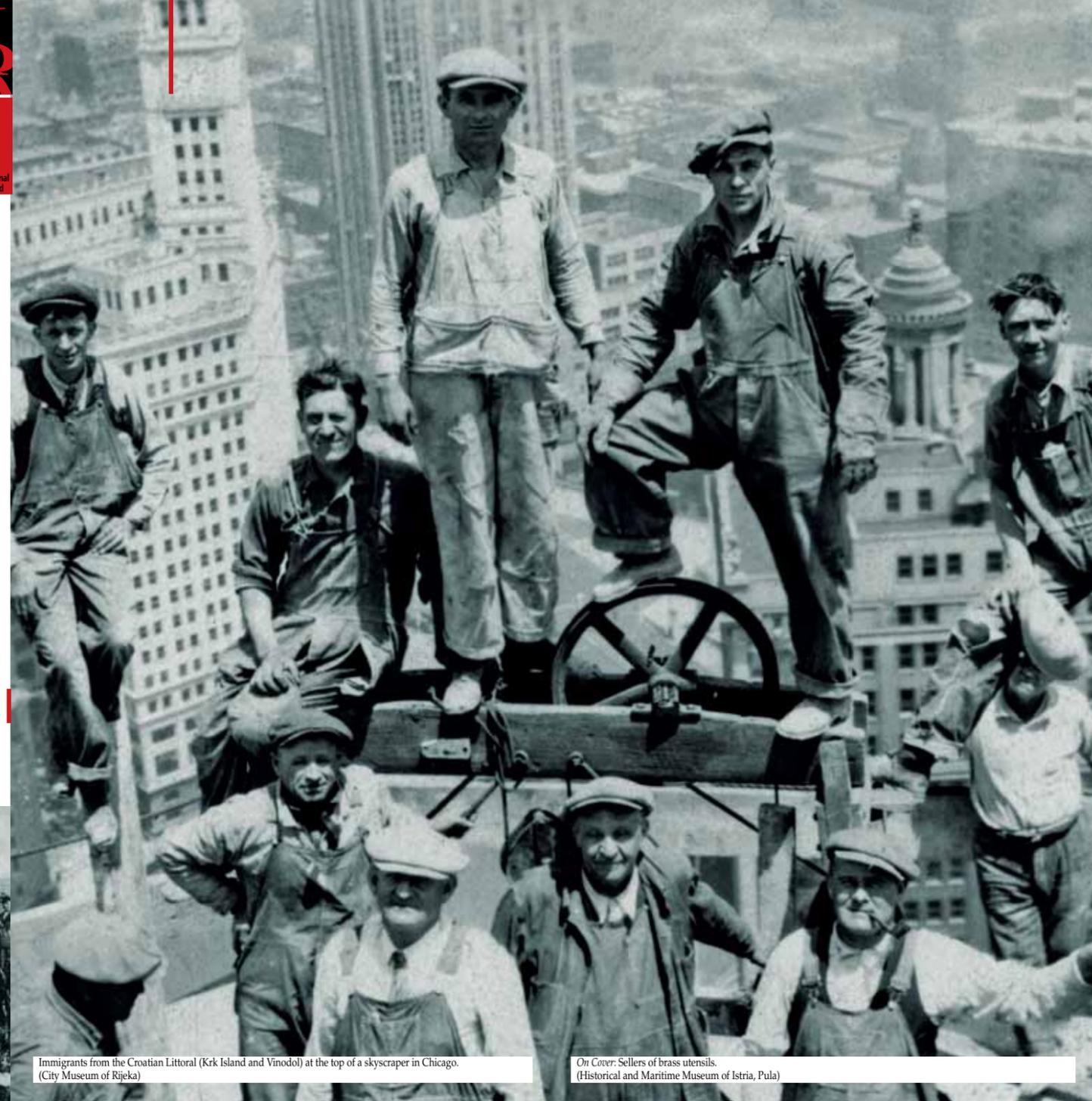
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Jasna Milinković

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Immigrants from the Croatian Littoral (Krk Island and Vinodol) at the top of a skyscraper in Chicago.
(City Museum of Rijeka)

On Cover: Sellers of brass utensils.
(Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria, Pula)

merika

Emigration from Central Europe to America 1880 - 1914



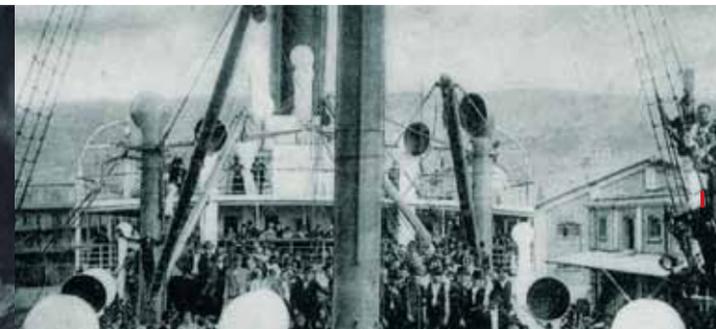
Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island
June 28 - September 4, 2012



When the sea became calm, immigrants for the most part spent their time on deck.
(Claudio Ernè, Trieste)



A kitchen in a poor quarter of Vienna on New Year's Day 1908
(Christian Brandstätter Verlag, Vienna)



An unusual commotion on board of trans-Atlantic vessel prior to departing Rijeka for New York.
(City Museum of Rijeka)



Central Europe -Millions of Emigrants

4,383,000 people emigrated from Central Europe, or, more specifically, Austria-Hungary, in the period between 1871 and 1915.

Around 10% of all transoceanic emigrants who left in the period between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Second World War (1815-1940) had been born in Central Europe.

After Great Britain (11.4 million), Italy (9.9 million) and Ireland (7.3 million), this area represented the largest source of emigration (5 million).

More than 3,700,000 emigrants from Austria-Hungary settled in the United States.

Emigration from the European Periphery

The most dramatic year occurred in 1907 when 338,452 immigrants came from the Monarchy, almost a third of those who came to the United States in that year. This number represents the largest migration of persons from one country to another in a one year time frame.

The numbers are indeed dramatic. From a country which at the turn of the century had approximately forty million people (around 10% of the entire population of Europe), over 4 million emigrants left during a period over little more than three decades, of whom 83% went to the United States. ■



The Hungarian-American Line

Massive and systematically organized emigration through the port of Rijeka began with the British Cunard Line, which received a monopoly on the Rijeka-New York route. Rijeka's position with respect to Cunard's route contrasted sharply with that of Trieste where Cunard was placed in a much more disadvantageous position as a result of the domestic carrier Austro-Americana (which in reality came under the control of the great German shipping companies). Cunard regularly dedicated three ships to the Hungarian-American Line. A ship left Rijeka every other Friday, and the trip generally took 18 days, though sometimes it took much longer.

Austro-Americana

The Unione Austriaca di Navigazione had an initial capitalization of 2 million crowns, which rose to 16 million in 1904. Such a large increase in capital resulted from the entry of Austrian banks into the Company, but even more from the investments of North German Lloyd and HAPAG which, according to one source, purchased 5 million crowns worth of stock, assuring them control over the Company and a right of first refusal to purchase more shares should any further stock be issued. When it began to carry emigrants, the Austro-Americana, as it remained commonly known, had a flotilla of 19 ships. The steamship *Gerty* began the Trieste - New York route in June 1904 with stops at Messina, Naples and Palermo, followed by the steamships *Giulia* and *Freda*, in July of the same year. ■



The Port of Rijeka

After the Austro-Hungarian compromise (1867), Rijeka became an important Hungarian port and quickly grew. The shipping traffic through the port increased tremendously once it was connected by rail in 1873 to Vienna and Budapest. The largest transoceanic shipping company based in Rijeka, the Hungarian Sea Navigation Company Adria (established in 1881), ran a merchant route to Brazilian ports and a significant number of emigrants left for South America, where they sheared sheep, worked on farms and prospected for gold. From the end of 1903 until mid-1914, 332,986 emigrants left the port of Rijeka for the United States. During the most intense period of emigration, from 1904 to 1910, between 30,000 and 50,000 persons left via Rijeka on an annual basis.

The Port of Trieste

The main Austrian port of Trieste began its great growth during the 18th century. By the First World War, it became the most important and largest industrial and transportation hub, surpassed only by the capital cities of Vienna and Budapest. With its suburbs, it numbered more than 230,000 people. As early as 1888, two brothers, Isaaco and Giuseppe Morpurgo, leased three steamships from Austrian Lloyd and transported emigrants to Brazil, but their initial successes would be quickly squelched by the authorities. The first Cunard ship to sail between Trieste and New York left on November 10, 1903. ■



America - Fleeing From Poverty

"... I live well. I always work and make a dollar and a half a day ..."

"A dollar and a half a day! I began to quickly calculate in my mind how much time it would take me with that pay to buy a plot of good land and build a nice house. From then on, I began to dream about America. From our house, two already had gone to the 'promised land,' and almost all of the neighboring houses had one of their own in America. Well, if they could have gone to America, why should I stay here in this mud?"

"America - it became for me from now on my life's goal"

Stjepan Lojen, Memoirs of an Emigrant, Zagreb, 1963

Where Did Emigrants from Central Europe Settle?

For the most part, Central European emigrants went to industrial and mining areas and cities such as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Illinois, Cleveland, Ohio and New York.

Emigrants were left with jobs that not even the most poverty stricken Americans wanted. The new arrivals did not know the language and, for the most part, they came from villages and had no education and generally no skills. Their inability and lack of knowledge only allowed them to have the most difficult jobs - generally at first laboring on large construction projects and in quarries, mines and forests, rather than on the assembly lines of great industrial factories. ■



Vignettes of immigrant life in America have been credibly provided by the immigrants themselves, in their letters to their families. More descriptive, though sometimes less believable, are articles in immigrant newspapers as well as those in the homeland. The latter usually would be opposition newspapers which blamed the government for massive emigration. A rich source also consists of numerous memoirs written about life in America, written by those who made use of the chance they had been provided as well as those who wasted it or had been devoured by great financial crises.

The Unlucky Antonio Glavina in New York

In an April 27, 1934 letter from New York, Antonio wrote with some optimism: "My dear wife, I wanted to let you know that, thank God, I am somewhat well and hope that you are all as well. I sent a little bit of cash" He goes on: "You wrote to me once that I am in the devil's hands, and indeed I was, but thank God I am, still alive."

The Rusyn Family of Andy Warhol

Ondrej Varchola, a Rusyn and Greek Catholic born in Medzilaborce in today's Slovakia, first came to the United States in 1907. But he soon returned home, met Julija Zavacky and married her in 1909. When drafted in 1912, Ondrej decided that he would be better off in America and he fled. Ondrej worked at a construction site and in a coal mine in Forest City near Scranton. They later moved to Pittsburgh. ■



What Did America Give to Central Europe?

Of all the returnees only a small number returned without having achieved their goal of having at least a small amount of savings. The majority of returnees had received enough compensation that they could have a better life and a more prominent status. "All who did return either to stay or only to visit become a distinct group in Croatia. They were different from their neighbors. Everybody respected them, even the authorities." ■

What Did Central Europe Give to America?

Some of the most famous scientists and artists of the twentieth century emigrated to America, such as the physicists Nikola Tesla and Michael Pupin, anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička, composer Arnold Schönberg, film directors Otto Preminger, Fred Zinnemann and Fritz Lang, actor Hedy Lammar, painter and photographer Laszlo Móholy NÁgy, photographer Andre Kertész, architects Richard Neutra and Marcel Breuer, and gallery owner Leo Castelli. ■



The Great Hall of the Immigrant Station at Ellis Island. (National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, New York)



The *Martha Washington*, one of the best known steamships of the Trieste Austro-Americana, regularly sailed on the Trieste-New York route. (Claudio Ernè, Trst)



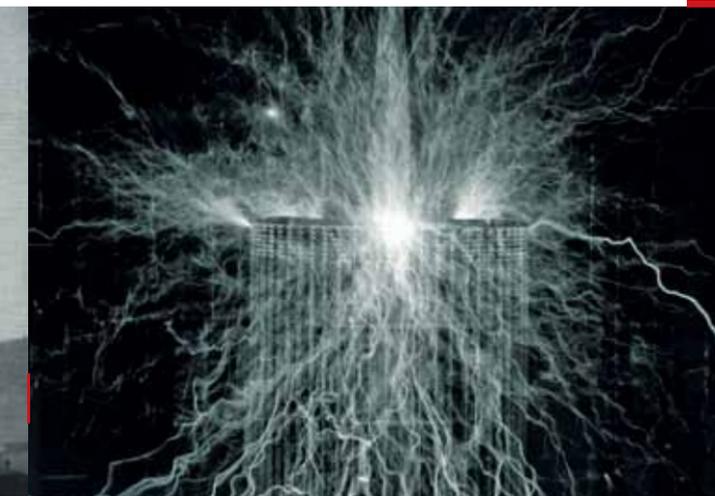
A beautiful passenger ship *Caronia* docked in Rijeka's port, at the Rodolfo Pier from which over 332,986 emigrants left for America in the ten year period between 1904 and 1914. (City Museum of Rijeka)



Workers from the area of Kastav in a quarry in Colorado Springs. (Ivica Nemeč, Kastav)



Usually the best men would leave, during the peak of their working lives. Women, children and elderly would be left behind. (Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb)



An electrical experiment by Nikola Tesla who „brought light“ to America. (Nikola Tesla Museum, Belgrade)