



Institute of
Social Studies

**AFTER THE REVOLUTION: THE CHANGING POSITION OF EDUCATED WOMEN
IN PRAGUE**

A Research Paper presented by

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Obtaining the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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The Hague, December 1992

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies; the views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the people at the Institute of Social Studies, both staff and fellow participants who assisted in the completion of this paper. Those deserving special mention are Andras Krahl, Ewa Charkiewicz-Pluta, Renee Pittin and my first supervisor, Peter Waterman.

I am grateful to the individuals outside of the Institute who took the time to suggest and locate resources for me, and those who suffered through various drafts to give constructive criticism.

A very special thanks must be given to the women interviewed for this work, who not only gave me a clear idea of the direction I should follow, but more importantly, inspired me to begin.

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INTRODUCTION

AIM OF STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to explore the ways in which the political changes of late 1989 have affected the position of educated Czech women in urban Prague.

I began this work with several goals. Through the paper's various changes of form, content and approach these ideals have remained the same. First I wanted to start with issues Czech women identified as important in their own lives and then analyze the topics in combination with explanatory statistics, using a Feminist approach, along with interpretations and other tools at my disposal. My reliance on interviews resulted in the various chapter sub-headings and the prominence given to quotations in the main body of the work.

Secondly, I hope this paper is written in a way that is accessible to both the women who participated in the studies and to others, (especially in the Czech Republic), be they policy makers, academics or just interested parties. In order to facilitate this goal, I offer a few definitions of key concepts in the end of this introduction, but resisted constructing a rigid theoretical framework in the earlier part of the paper. Instead I have placed the main theoretical discussion in the Reflections chapter.

Lastly, I view this paper neither as the beginning nor the end of my interest and work in Czechoslovakia, but as one part of a continuing journey of exploration, education and discovery. This accounts for my decision to include ideas for further research and action.

MOTIVATION

In deference to Harding (1987) and Nielson's (1990) vision

of relativism and reflexivity, recognizing the need to locate myself within the work, I will explain how I came to be interested in women in Prague and the factors that have influenced my objectivity.

When I first arrived in Prague in August of 1990 I was fresh out of University with a degree in International Studies and a minor in Women's Studies. I defined myself as a general sort of Feminist with Radical and Socialist sympathies. Czechoslovakia was breaking from forty-five years of Soviet influence. Already nine months past the political events which heralded the end of Communist rule, Czechs and Slovaks were still deciding how to redesign their societies. One tactic was the importation of native English speakers to teach the formerly restricted citizens how to communicate with the Western world. I was among the first wave of naive young Americans and Britons looking for adventure, good works, and career enhancing experience.

I found myself in a country with democratically elected leaders in a castle on a hill and Communist designed social rules and practices still rigidly controlling every day life. A fairy tale mix of hope and expectations tempered the dreary food queues and absurd bureaucratic oppression found at every turn. Soon after my arrival, however changes began to be felt in the loosening of both restrictions and spirits.

The following two years were educational in a very special way. As a teacher for one school year in Prague's most prestigious and competitive gymnasium (secondary school) I had access to the deciphering and explanatory skills of one hundred and fifty young students. As a part-time kindergarten teacher I had the privilege of seeing the famed child care facilities and practices of communal child raising, while meeting young mothers, grandparents and of course, the children. As a young female foreigner I was on the receiving end of an undescribable amount of hospitality, mostly from other women in the form of visits to homes in Prague and cottages in the countryside, endless cups of tea over personal chats in cafes, proud tours of tourist sites, participation in sporting clubs and women's group meetings, underground and classical music performances and evening walks

in the streets of Prague.

It is from these personal interactions that my interest, not only in Czechoslovakia as a country, but in the lives of Czech women took root. I have nurtured my curiosity since leaving in July of 1991 with letters to friends, phone calls, newspapers and finally, two visits.

METHODOLOGY

The results of depth interviews (Berger, 1991) made during the visits, March and June-July of 1992, form the basis of this paper, along with various secondary materials and personal observations.

The point of the interview sessions was not to get a representative sample for the whole of Prague, but to achieve a sense of participant observation and intensity. In all I did twenty-one interviews, with sixteen women in private homes, workplaces and cafes. Eight of the women I knew from my year in residence and the other half were suggested by the first eight or other friends. Ideally I would have liked to interview everyone twice, instead of just the five, but time constraints and the summer holiday season prevented it.

The interviews were structured around a set series of questions in places chosen by the women. Most of the time the questions were enough to elicit substantial responses. The few times they fell flat I tried to focus in on a particular area of a woman's life to draw her into the discussion, asking for example how the future would be different for her daughter or why she wanted to travel. Following suggestions given by Anderson and Jack (1991) in their work on interview technique and analysis, I was open to a certain amount of divergence from the prescribed questions in the search for explanations of emotions and feelings, not just actions or simple facts.

The questions from the first interview sessions (March, 1992) were general in form although resulting in specific answers and focused on naming the changes women are facing: as women,

family members and individuals.

- * What have been the three best/worst changes for women in general?
- * What have been the three best/worst changes for you personally?
- * Has your (family) standard of living increased or decreased?
- * What do you do now in the way of work that you did not do before?
- * What expectations from 1989 have not been met?

The second round was more personal, looking into the ways outside changes have affected internal shifts of position, roles, and goals. These sessions (June-July, 1992) narrowed in on private issues, along with follow-up questions from the last sessions (when possible) about threatened jobs, price increases, children's school examinations, etc.

- * What did you think was expected of you under the old regime?
- * What is expected of you now?
- * What changes in yourself have you been glad to make?
- * What changes in yourself have you wished you didn't have to make?
- * What do you expect for the near future?
- * What do you dream for the future?

I chose not to tape record the interviews, feeling the technical apparatus would detract from the friendly conversational atmosphere I was hoping to create. Instead I took explicit notes in my own shorthand and transcribed them on to the computer the same evening.

My Czech language abilities are limited to basic conversation, and passive understanding. As a result the population of interviewees has a strong bias towards English speakers, with only four actually needing translation. Translation was provided by other interviewees in two cases and

by the son of Milena¹ for her and Sarka's interviews.

The preponderance of well educated, English speakers of Czech ethnicity among the interviewees is not representative of the general population of Prague. Designed as a dual purpose city: educational centre and heavy metal working site, the population is divided between the old categories of "intelligentsia" and "worker", with a diversity of nationalities present. The current occupations and simple biographies of the study participants highlights the intelligentsia leanings of this paper.

BIOGRAPHIES

Libuse a well spoken woman of fifty years of age. A teacher of maths and physics in a Prague gymnasium she is married to a theoretical physics scientist. Their two university aged daughters are both high achievers academically and education holds a place of great respect within the family. Libuse taught herself English from a text book and before 1989 kept forbidden books hidden on a specially made shelf in the back of a wardrobe. One of her daughters was a student of mine and I had tea at their home once or twice before starting this project.

Marketa, a thirty-one year old ceramic artist was the most random of my interviewees. She has no connections to any of the others and I met her only for our conversation at the prompting of an other American who was sharing a kiln with her. Unusual for an apparently heterosexual Czech woman of her age she is not married nor divorced and has no children. The day of our conversation she was a bit pressed for time , as she was finishing up the statuettes for the Czech Oscars. A substantial part of our interview was a discussion of women in Czech art and the difficulties of being creative while having responsibilities for

¹ All names have been changed from the original, with the exception of Alena Kroupova.

husband, children and home. She provided a window into an area of society about which I had very little knowledge.

Alena Kroupova, formerly of the Ministry of Social Affairs, now works at the European Centre for Human Rights and has published several papers for the ILO and other organizations on the status of women, children and human rights. She is about fifty years old and is married. Although obviously very busy in her office, she took a great deal of time to answer my questions in an informed and thorough manner. I did not know Alena before I began my research.

Miloslava is a twenty-five year old medical student who would rather be studying music. A friend of friends I met her during my first research visit and stayed with her on the second. Coming to grips with the changes in her country, coming of age and her lesbianism has made the past few years a challenge for Miloslava. Just after the political changes she and her girlfriend travelled to the US working their way around the country. During my stay we had intense conversations about the position of women in Czechoslovakia and the rest of the world. We also discussed Feminism and other topics, as she continued to interpret her reactions to life in the US and other Western countries she has visited.

Barbara is a woman I met briefly before leaving Prague and whom I tried unsuccessfully to interview on my first visit. The second time she visited the flat I stayed at quite a bit and we spent much time together, mostly on group outings. At the age of thirty-six she has her own tourist firm, showing Jewish highlights of the city to foreign visitors. She is loud, direct, sarcastic and very giving. Her Jewishness is being carefully cultivated, rediscovered after growing up in a non-observant household. She is open about loving woman but chafes somewhat under the title of 'lesbian', finding it unnecessary to label herself in such a way.

Eva is a lively, friendly twenty-two year old I met and taught over Christmas break 1990. Since that time Eva has travelled abroad several times with her volleyball team or to do small subsistence jobs like farm work in England. She has one brother, now in the US and her father is a vet. Her mother works in health care. At present she is working as an au pair in Spain, taking some time out from her business studies. Our interview was done in conjunction with a visit to her parent's home outside of Prague.

Vlasta is a biological researcher in her late twenties. A lesbian, she lives part of each week with her partner, Katka and the rest of the time in a village outside of Prague, close to her work. I have known and been friends with both women since October of 1990 and tried to interview them together, but due to scheduling problems talked to them separately. A courageous woman, Vlasta has been a visible part of the Czech Gay and Lesbian movement from its conception.

Katka chose to be interviewed in her office, a graphic design workshop. Although I have known her for two years now I was surprised at her advancement in English and her growing assertiveness. She seems much happier and in control than in the past. At twenty-three she admitted that much of her feelings about the transition period following the events of 1989 are inseparable from her personal coming of age. Almost aggressive in her continuing quest for identity she questioned me closely about Feminism, and the political debate over the usage of certain terminology. Like her partner Vlasta, she continues to be active in Prague's Gay and Lesbian community, holding and enlarging the library for the local Lesbian group.

Anna. This young looking woman in a mini skirt and heels came back to work from lunch, and showed Katka and I her new belt in the middle of our interview. She sat down in nearby to work while listening to the ongoing discussion. At the end she said she was willing to be interviewed, too. Thirty years old, Anna is an

only child with one eight year old daughter . Although trained in technical drawing she works as a secretary. Married to a man twelve years older than herself she seemed alienated from him and his expectations for behaviour in and out of the family home.

Jitka. Born and raised in Prague this young woman is almost twenty years old with one brother. Her father was tunnel maker and is now in business and her is mother an engineer. Jitka has completed some studies in management but at the time of our discussion was preparing to spend a year in England working as an au pair, against the wishes of her family. Working temporarily at the kindergarten Jitka did not really want to do the interview, giving the excuse that she was too young before the revolution to know anything. I coaxed her into talking to me while we sat by the side of the paddle pool watching the children.

Helena called me herself after getting the number from Milena. As Milena's English teacher she had apparently heard a lot about me over the past year and a half and wanted to talk to a native English speaker. Milena had obviously told her my questions in advance, as her answers betrayed a certain amount of careful consideration. Thirty years old, Helena had educated parents and has a degree in Philosophy from Charles University. Besides running the household for her husband and two pre-school children she teaches English and works as a translator for Czech radio.

Sarka is a forty-four year old construction site supervisor. Married for twelve years to a transportation service manager she has a seven year old daughter. Our interviews took place in their small flat in a space used simultaneously as the parlour, dining area, tv room, and child's bedroom. A relaxed woman with a wonderful dry sense of humour Sarka was careful to make sure she understood each question before answering it and seemed to ask me an equal number. Her shy daughter was one of my favourite students and I met Sarka on my last day at the kindergarten.

Milena arranged both interviews .

Lucie is thirty-eight years old, married to a businessman, the mother of two children and a kindergarten teacher in the school attended by her youngest child and headed by Milena. Interviews with her were very quick as she described herself as a content woman in a happy marriage. Having begun work two years ago, after staying at home with her children for twelve years, she did not find the events of 1989 had altered her life to any great extent. I also worked in the same kindergarten and saw Lucie twice a week during my year in Prague.

Milena has been a dear friend and fairy godmother to me since I began to work in the kindergarten she runs as headmistress. During my year in Prague I was a frequent and well fed visitor to her home. Although we have a language problem we never have much difficulty getting the point across. She brought four other women to my research as well as being interviewed twice. Her nineteen year son also acted as translator when necessary, biting his tongue in great self control passing on his mother's words even when he disagreed. Milena, close to forty years of age, has two children in total, the other a girl of eighteen. Her husband is a business man, formerly of the Ministry of Economics. Besides her job at the kindergarten, Milena makes ends meet cleaning an office in the evening and taking on occasional street vendor work. It was not until the last week of my second research visit that I found Milena was actually a Slovak (having been born to Slovak parents in Kosice). At the same time she has a Czech husband and has raised her children in Prague for close to twenty years.

Jirina is a young, vibrant woman who I liked from the beginning. A good friend of the woman I was staying with, she came for dinner one evening and stayed to be interviewed. She is now twenty-nine years old and defected to the US via Austria in 1985, leaving a Czech tourist group mid-trip. Jitka first returned to Czechoslovakia for three weeks in 1991 and was in the midst of

a nine month visit at the time of our interview. Living in the university town of Madison, Wisconsin, Jitka has been exposed to many American social and political trends, including various Feminist interpretations and she was able to critique the situation in Czechoslovakia as both outsider and insider. She has been married twice, once to receive American citizenship and once to bestow it. She has no children.

Maria is a Latin American woman in her early forties. Her husband is also a foreigner and an active Communist. The two met as resident students in Czechoslovakia at an international union office close to twenty years ago and have lived in the country since then, with the exception of a nine month stay in Africa. Maria continues to work in the national health service, but is also considering opening her own practice. As a friend of the family I have known Maria since my first arrival in Prague and I stayed at her house my first research visit.

Although this paper concentrates on Czech women in Prague three of the women included do not fall precisely within these parameters. They are Maria, Jirina and Milena. Lesbians are also over-represented in comparison with the general population. These women provided a vitally important vision of the target group. Following the thinking of the standpoint theory (Nielson, 1990) Maria, Jirina and Milena as participating outsiders and the lesbians as special insiders, were able to describe and critique their positions in ways others could not.

KEY CONCEPTS

Position as utilized in the title of this paper is meant to be a category encompassing many points of reference in order to get an overview of the lives of the women interviewed. In other words I am trying to explore and explain both the place and opinions of educated women in Prague. The emphasis here is on "changing" position in line with the transitional period currently being

experienced through out not only Czechoslovakia, but the whole of Central Europe.

Transition in a general sense, as I understand it, means movement from one situation or state of being to another. Women in Prague now find themselves in the midst of a flood of transitions. In November of 1989 forty-five years of Communist rule came to an abrupt end. With a new decade came tremendous changes in all areas of life for all people in Czechoslovakia. No longer can citizens expects the government to provide employment, housing, food and other subsidies. Certain skills, such as passivity and the ability to blend in with the crowd, absolutely necessary under the old regime are worthless or even debilitating now. On a large scale, state leaders are trying to develop new political and economic systems, while rapidly moving towards a division of the country. National level transitions set off chains of personal transitions as women must cope with day-to-day things like more expensive bread, job loss and the closing of local creches.

The political changes have brought much wished for freedoms to Prague, but liberty carries responsibilities as well. Rising crime, shady private businesses and racially motivated violence are part and parcel of the current transitional period. On a personal level women must face changing social norms and re-evaluate or establish their attitudes to a legion of issues, as diverse as commercial profit, beauty and minority rights.

Important to keep in mind while reading this paper is the recognition that the current situation is far from static. Less than three years after major political changes the Czech lands are still in a transitional period and much of what is now being experienced, debated and tested will evolve in a myriad of different forms.

The connections between transition and survival are readily apparent in the Czech situation. In a time of change and/or stress an individual's first strategy must often be one of survival, or simply said, keeping things going. Survival for the

women in this paper at the moment is not a point of life or death. In this context, it is best to make a couple differentiations of the term. The easiest to grasp conceptually is that of maintenance of material standards of living. In comparison with life in many Western countries Czech standards of living are quite low. Basic needs - food, clothing and shelter were assured in the past and while not in grave danger, keeping up old levels of living can be difficult. Housing is cramped and periodic doubling of rent, water, electricity and heating fuel costs are problematic for many women and men alike. The prices of food, transport and consumer goods outpace pay increases and many people, like a number of those interviewed for this paper have taken on additional employment (when they can get it) to make ends meet.

Another form of survival has to do with maintaining a definition of self, or personal identity and place in a transitional society. Women's roles in the past were clearly established by the party-state and firmly reinforced by societal expectations. Whether they agreed or not, women under the past regime knew they were 'supposed' to marry and bear children while working both in the home and at an outside job. Overt sexuality was decried as Western and decadent, and personal relations took on added importance as one area relatively free of government influence. Today expectations are not so clear. Young women must create their own roles and paths as their nation struggles to find its way in the capitalist world. Simultaneously many older women are reluctant to give up or alter old norms. Survival has become important in different ways to both groups in creation and maintenance of behavioral patterns and expectations.

ORGANIZATION OF CONTENTS

In seeking to discover the fashion in which the position of educated women in Prague has modified and continues to change in the transitional period since 1989, I have highlighted the areas and roles women in the survey spoke about most. Chapter

One begins by setting out a history of important events, theories and ideology leading up to the present day situation for educated women in Prague.

Chapters Two and Three establish the fashion in which women in urban Prague viewed themselves 'before', that is previous to the fall of the socialist regime in 1989 and how they see themselves now. The factors of Marriage and Motherhood, Work (wage labour and domestic), Social and Government pressures are all explored.

Chapter Four delves further into the strategies women are creating to deal with their fears and the challenge of new life patterns brought about by the switch to so-called Democratic Capitalist systems. Chapter Five attempts to offer some explanations for material presented earlier, drawing on both Western and Central European thinkers. The final chapter reflects on the content of the paper, offering some concluding interpretations while an appendix points out areas of further study.

Chapter One

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Many issues, events, theories and ideologies have combined to create the current situation of transition for women in Prague. Highlighting a few of the most important begins with a general look at Czechoslovakia prior to the Communist regime, followed by a discussion of fundamental theories and ideas on the "woman question" as debated by the Bolsheviks in the early 1900's.

Influenced by thinkers from the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak Socialist state had a huge impact on women's lives through the implementation of the Bolshevik theories and other Kremlin dictates. Two concepts from that time are considered here, Stalinization and the post Prague Spring "Normalization". They will be addressed before a quick review of recent political and economic changes completes the chapter.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA BEFORE 1945

One striking feature of Czech history is a sense of duality. During the past centuries the Czech lands saw many battles involving great European powers and was often conquered and divided among the victors. In the face of these events, traditions of free thinking, democratic attitude and religious dissent (highlighted by the activities of Jan Hus) came into being. As a result, in the early decades of this century Czechoslovakia was a well developed region with a Western European perspective. At the time of statehood in October of 1918 Prague was the centre of a strong artistic, musical and intellectual community. With a recognized state came both equal rights and the vote for women. A number of political parties participated in the Parliament and elected T.G. Masaryk as the president of the First Republic. In the years between the two world wars Czechoslovakia was among the top ten most developed nations (Cornej, 1992 p40) with both strong agricultural regions

(primarily in Slovakia) and industry supported by a solid natural resource base.

The First Republic was not without problems, however, many of which were linked to the diversity of ethnicities living within the Czechoslovak borders. Besides the obvious Czech and Slovak inhabitants were Poles, Germans and Hungarians. Tensions surfaced prior to the outbreak of World War II, and then the Munich agreement gave Hitler border territories in the Czech lands. Other parts of the republic were soon lost to Poland and Hungary. Slovakia (or what was left of it) declared independence and became a puppet of Hitler's regime. The remaining parts of Bohemia and Moravia were taken by Hitler as a Protectorate.

The independent state of Czechoslovakia became a thing of the past for the duration of the war and Prague was no longer a great cultural and intellectual centre. At the same time Czechs did not forget what it was to be a democratic nation, nor did all the artists, musicians and intellectuals disappear. Some traditions went underground, or retreated into private homes continuing to shape future culture and character of the Czech people.

BOLSHEVIKS

As the Czechs and Slovaks were building their First Republic, the Bolsheviks were creating the revolution which in thirty years time would come to affect all of Central and Eastern Europe. During that tumultuous period, and just after, the 'woman question' came to the attention of Lenin and other theorists. Bolsheviks were resistant, however, to the demands of the 'upper class' Feminists, accusing them of acting in a typical Bourgeois manner, wanting to participate in an already exploitative system.

The basic texts used for forming both official theory and plans of action were Engels' Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State, and Lenin's On the Emancipation of Women. Engels' work put forth the theory that the oppression of women was a part of class based society in conjunction with economic determinants (Molyneux, 1981). In fact the theory sees class

society and class based oppression as the preventive actors in achieving equality between the sexes, not male to female oppression.

Theorizing about the shaping of human behaviour, Marxist thought also refused the idea of biological based traits and instead emphasised social environment and personality as a result of a 'process of activity'. For Marx, part of the path to desired gender equality was the cultivation of the right social climate.

In seeking the best 'process of activity' the dominant family structure was disclaimed as bourgeois by Marx. Lenin, trying to find ways of implementing Marx's ideas, pointed to the kitchen as the centre of household slavery. Lenin's method of rectification was to make women not only economically active on the same level as men, but also to reduce the burden of the household, which would lead to social emancipation and activity in the public sphere.

Aleksandra Kollontai was the main spokesperson for the 'woman question' among the Bolsheviks during the early 1900's. She went further than Lenin and outlined a utopia in which households were not useful to society and would be replaced. Domestic tasks would be reorganized on a large scale with collective laundries, mending shops, household crews, central kitchens, public restaurants and child care institutions. In Kollontai's dream society would share responsibility for its children, slowly shifting from home to state nurseries, schools, and health resorts with free lunches, clothing and shoes.

More radical than her colleagues, Kollontai had to put up with the implementation of the 1918 Family Code, which acted not to end the family as it stood, but to protect it. The code did not remove the responsibility of domestic work from women, although it afforded them more legal rights. Unfortunately means and methods of implementation were sadly lacking.

Universal Labour Conscription came two years later, legally obliging all healthy adults to labour for the state. Kollontai applauded this ruling expecting it to bring an end to patriarchy and forcing awareness onto women, by pushing them into wage

labour. Again the means to remove or reduce the majority of women's domestic responsibilities did not materialize and Soviet women assumed the third burden of paid labour on top of their household and social reproductive duties.

Twenty-eight years later, Czech women would come to find Soviet approaches to the 'woman question' shaping their lives and position in society.

STALINIZATION

In 1946, the still officially independent democracy of Czechoslovakia held national elections putting Edward Benes at the head of the country. The Communist Party had a strong showing, attaining 38% of the vote and influencing an Eastward looking formulation of government.

In 1948, worried about declining popularity in the face of approaching elections, the Communists took power in the form of quick coup, replacing Benes with Klement Gottwald, rewriting the constitution and soon altering political, economic and social structures to fall in line with the wishes of Stalin and other Kremlin leaders. Czechoslovakia became another Stalinist regime.

Almost all businesses, factories, restaurants, pubs, energy production plants, farms and other holdings were collectivized and nationalized. Industry, as part of the Stalinist plan for Central/ Eastern Europe, turned to environmentally disastrous heavy production of capital goods using imported oil, gas and raw materials. As a result light industry was greatly reduced, soon to be reflected in the shortage of consumer goods. In order to fuel the pace of industry with workers, the newly written constitution gave motherhood, marriage and the nuclear family state protection and encouragement. The legal difference between legitimate and illegitimate offspring was removed (Heitlinger, 1979) and women were encouraged to bear more children. Men and women were also given equality, albeit under the law, rather than in practice, in all areas of society.

Cultural changes were as vast and dramatic as the economic

and legal ones. First came the depletion of reading materials. News papers and journals were censored. Radio, cinema and other forms of media became subject to review by special advisory boards. Many Czech, Slovak and foreign works were taken from the shelves of book stores and libraries and replaced by works of Gottwald, Lenin and Stalin, among other politically correct authors.

Politically 'unsound' persons, perhaps up to 130,000 were sent to uranium mines, camps and prisons, working and dying under subhuman standards. The same fate awaited many members of the Catholic Church and other religions, especially officials (Renner, 1989 p23). In this way the Communists prevented opposition.

In the late 1950's, while other Eastern bloc countries were experiencing some liberalization as the Kremlin re-evaluated its opinion of Stalin, politics continued as usual in Czechoslovakia. Klement Gottwald was replaced by Antonin Novotny. Primarily keeping the systems of their predecessors, Novotny's ruling elite also brought in a few new policies. First was to make use of the well tested divide and conquer technique. In this case, the 'scheming, parasitic' intelligentsia was the target of attack by the 'honest mass' of workers. Internal dissension kept citizens from focusing frustrations about the growing environmental problems, falling standard of living and government imposed oppression on the Communist Party or its leaders. The second of the new policies involved the participation of women in the work force. Women as paid labourers were the result of the Equal Status programme. This policy brought changes to the constitution and labour codes to remove impediments to women's access to the labour market. Part of this was the creation of creches and other child care facilities. At the same time the standard of living in the country continued to fall, necessitating two incomes per household. The propaganda supporting women in the workplace clearly illustrated that women were not only entitled to be employed, but also had a duty to be so. The coercive movement of women into wage labour was ironically touted as a programme of "emancipatory feminism".

Unemployment was acceptable only due to disability, pregnancy or care of infants (Kroupova, 1992, #2). In creating Equal Status, the government was responding to the need of industry for workers, not the desire of women for economic independence. As a result women had a measure of equality in the workplace, but still kept all domestic duties of pre-labour market participation.

Janova and Sineau (1992), discussing woman and political power, offer a profile of the ideal woman under Stalinist Socialism as one who:

was a plural woman, simultaneously taking on several functions in society: mother, employee or manager, political activist participating in every level of politics (Party, trade union, Communist Youth movement, etc.). This mythemphasized the dignity, the pride, and the happiness of active women. It must be stressed that the focus was placed on women manual workers: advertisements rarely showed images of women in managerial roles, and key posts almost always appeared to be in the hands of men. (Janova & Sineau, p120-121, 1992)

The ideal woman defined above was the result of certain interpretations of the original Bolsheviks transformed into plans and policies of Socialist governments. Molyneux (1981) explains the apparent discrepancies between thoughts and actions:

the orthodox theory with its focus on maximizing women's role in production, while retaining rather conventional views on motherhood, amounts to a policy which is often directly functional to the developmental goals of such states [and so] it becomes much clearer why the official code and its omissions have continued to be so uniformly reproduced (Molyneux, p12, 1981).

The 'woman question' continued to draw attention, propaganda and effort from Socialist governments, including that of Czechoslovakia from the Bolshevik revolution into the mid 1950's. At that time a change in approach was seen as necessary.

In the late 1950's and 1960's policies and plans in the USSR and Central/Eastern Europe began to show their weaknesses, with women absent from top jobs and power wielding positions in the government. Concurrently the pressures of dealing with home,

wage work, and children began to tell on the women concerned as:

The emancipated woman on the socialist model was torn between the fatigue of intensive and often boring factory work, time wasted in queuing in poorly stocked shops and the drudgery of housework, done by hand because of the lack of household equipment. To this must often be added the distress felt by mothers over leaving their children in State run creches, often overcrowded and without qualified personnel to run them. (Janova & Sineau, p123, 1992)

During this middle period was a lack of real political participation² and equal wage earning opportunities. Government discourse on women dwindled as if equality was a foregone conclusion. Women's groups, supposedly showing the level of emancipation available to Socialist citizens, were allowed only as an extension of the Party. Any organization dealing with the 'woman question' was subordinate to Party heads and as a result did not speak or act against the sociological or economic policies propounded by them (Molyneux, 1979). During this time figures on the declining birth rate and new pro-natal laws were brought to the public's attention. Trying to turn the tide on the reduced number of births, the cult of femininity in the Soviet Union was promoted by government propagandists and found a strong following in all of Eastern Europe.

Since the 1960's, the Soviet government's approach to women's social roles has been far narrower and more conservative than the first decades of its history. The notion that gender differences are immutable, biologically rather than socially created, and that woman's "natural" role is wifehood and child-rearing: a concept that would have been looked on as subversively bourgeois by the first Bolshevik generation -- has become a staple of government propaganda (du Plessix Gray, 1989:p54-55).

² Women were present in the varying Soviets in statistically pleasing numbers, but lacked real impact as a recognized group. They were totally outside of the Politburo and other centres of actual rather than symbolic power.

Tasks associated with traditional female realms like cooking, sewing, embroidery and mothering took on new importance and value. This shift in norms was legally supported with longer and better paid maternity leave and financial subsidies for children's clothing, food, etc.

Continuing to encourage reproduction of the labour force and other policies, the Czechoslovak state went on following the Kremlin's lead, until the political climate changed drastically, if only briefly through the events of Prague Spring.

PRAGUE SPRING AND NORMALIZATION

The famous Prague Spring greatly affected Czechoslovak citizens during and far after its occurrence. In late 1967 the heads of state broke into pro and anti Novotny factions due to internal politics and power struggles, leaving lesser officials and the citizenry more freedom of movement and expression. The first example of this loosening of control came as a brutally repressed student demonstration got dramatic and formerly unheard of press coverage. Other sectors of society soon followed the example of the media, slowly testing the boundaries of their new found freedoms.

At the top levels further changes were being supported by the group who came to be known as the 'Reformists'. In January of 1968, Alexander Dubcek took over one half of Novotny's job, as head of the Communist Party. Novotny soon fell completely from power, being replaced March 22, 1968 as President of the country by Dubcek supporter and fellow Reformist, Ludvik Svoboda.

Some reforms were quickly codified into law, under Dubcek's hopeful programme for "Socialism with a Human Face". The first issue to be addressed was the implementation of restrictions on the infamous StB or Secret Police. Next came a loosening of constraints against those who wished to travel abroad or read foreign literature. Press censorship was relaxed and people began to speak and hold spontaneous political discussion in the street. Economic reform was not ignored as workers were

encouraged to form councils and other Democratic groupings. The work week was also reduced to five days combined with a lessening of working hours.

Before the end of May, only two months after changes began to be implemented the governments of other Central/Eastern European countries began voicing their disapproval, which culminated in the joint invasion of Czechoslovakia by the USSR, the GDR, Poland, Bulgaria and a reluctant Hungary during the early morning hours of August 20-21, 1968.

The Czechoslovak army offered no resistance. Normal citizens, however, took to the streets in waves of passive resistance, tearing down sign posts, street demarcations, town maps and removing telephone books. Crowds talked persuasively to invading young soldiers and left sarcastic and comic wall graffiti, often in Russian. Unfortunately it was not enough.

By mid-September Soviet pressure dictated a return to pre-Reformist policy and society, or "Normalization" as the process was called. Soviet troops withdrew from cities, but established bases in the countryside. By January 1969 the Reformists were pushed out of the government. Gustav Husak, formerly also a Reformist, was hand picked by the Kremlin to replace Dubcek. Very few protests were made by the weary and frightened Czechoslovakian public. Among the exceptions are two students who set themselves on fire in the main square of Prague on different days to condemn the process of Normalization. Their names, still respected in Czechoslovakia today are Jan Palach and Jan Zajic.

Purges became common in all areas of society, but none more so than the Communist Party. First 150,000 people resigned by themselves. Another 326,871 were refused renewal of membership (Renner, 1989 p93). Reprisals were harsh for those accused of participating in the heady freedom of Prague Spring or aiding the resistance to the invading troops. 2000 journalists lost their jobs as did 900 of the country's 3500 professors (Renner, 1989 p93). Publishing houses were closed, likewise theatres and other centres of resistance. Those who lost their jobs, not only journalists and professors, but other citizens punished by removal of respectable work were black listed and forced to

accept low paying, manual hard labour jobs.

The years following the crushed Prague Spring were unremarkable except for the degree of despair to be found in the society. People withdrew socially and mentally to the protection of their families and to private activities, giving attention to summer cottages and weekends outside of towns, away from neighbours and workplaces. Behaviour was described as a double circle, the outer ring being politically correct public actions and the much smaller inner circle representing honest, personal, private behaviour.

The government at this time chose a three track policy, first increasing oppression to silence protest, improving the standard of living to give people more to lose and less to complain about and developing Slovakia's industrial base.

In the early 1980's even the small gains in the standard of living were lost as the world oil crisis hit Czechoslovakian heavy industry, making imported inputs overly expensive. Systemic problems became common, especially distribution, while graft, bribery and theft from the work place increased. Renner (1989), in his history of Czechoslovakia following World War Two, also describes a continuation of the 1970's sentiment with "hardening of social interactions" as people drew further into their family circles, suspicious of all outsiders.

Normalization, in all its forms, continued into the mid 1980's, when changes in Kremlin politics had their effects on satellite countries as well as the Soviet Union.

RECENT CHANGES

The coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union during 1985 was felt in Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries. The new style leader introduced the promising terms glastnost and perestroika into the political verbiage, promising a change in methods and results of rule. In Poland, Solidarity gained ground and later, the wall coming down in Berlin only added to the undercurrent of protest in Central Europe. The most visible manifestation in Czechoslovakia came in the form of Charter 77, a group of writers, artists and political

dissidents who wrote open, signed letters to government leaders, protesting policies and actions at great risk to themselves.

The hidden and public dissent in Czechoslovakia came to a head in November of 1989. On the 17th a large group of students in the capital, marking the student resistance to the Nazis on the same date fifty years earlier, came under violent attack from police. The students first tried to escape and when trapped raised their arms above their heads chanting "Our hands are empty, our hands are empty". The police continued to beat the students whose number increased rapidly as word of the event spread around the city. The next day the streets of Prague were full of protesters. Not only members of academic circles, but the artistic community also began to organize public meetings and debate. Canvassing various factories and other workplaces, students and public figures gained the support of the workers to the cause. Although marred by the blood shed on the 17th of November, no one was killed and the transition was peaceful enough, leading to the name "Velvet Revolution" to mark the events of late 1989.

Moving rapidly to oust the communist leaders, elections took place December 29, 1989 when former dissident Vaclav Havel became President of the Czech and Slovak Republic (CSFR). Dramatic changes were soon to follow. The Minister of the Economy, Vaclav Klaus, quickly began a total adjustment of the economic system to move the country towards Capitalism, with policies supporting free trade. Price controls were lifted with food, petrol and transport costs rising over 100% in the first year. Privatization and restitution became key goals.

The social changes were tremendous, and with Communists being castigated, the StB lost power and people slowly began to test out their new freedoms again, speaking publicly, travelling out of the country, changing jobs and participating in many other formerly forbidden activities.

With the new, open society came many benefits across the board for Czechoslovak citizens. Freedom of expression, travel, superior commercial goods are but a few. At the same time the confusion of new government, undefined police responsibilities,

factory closings, loosening border control and many other social factors led to some unexpected and frightening developments.

All types of crime increased, some more than others. Racially motivated attacks against Romanies (Gypsies) and Vietnamese guest workers by unorganized groups and fascist skinheads became not infrequent, even in busy public places. Crime rings also formed or enlarged, controlling money changing, taxis, unlicensed vending and the new influx of drugs. Rape and mugging increased, as did victimization of the ever increasing flow of tourists.

In late 1991 new laws and criminal codes began to take effect. The new government police and assisting army units grew more efficient and private security companies started offering services to hotels, clubs, discos, offices, etc.

Another problem, following the revolution was growing nationalism. Without the coercion of the Communist system, Slovak leaders began to speak out against participation in a Czech and Slovak Federal government and for their own state. At the same time Czech leaders were reluctant to consider compromises suggested by Slovaks. The Slovak nationalist movement grew and in the elections of June 1992, the Slovak voters elected Vladimir Meciar to head their parliament. Meciar blocked the re-election of Vaclav Havel in early July. Meciar and Klaus (the newly elected head of the Czech Parliament) were unable to work out a federalist solution.

Slovak leaders voted for independence on July 17, 1992. Vaclav Havel resigned as president July 21, 1992, leaving the division of Czechoslovakia into two states an almost certainty.

Events and ideas leading up to the current situation in Prague are diverse and influential. Aspects of pre-Socialist Czech culture, with its tendencies to democracy, plus religious and intellectual freedoms form a contrasting background to the imposition of Bolshevik ideas seen through the lens of Stalinism. In its turn, Prague Spring was an attempt to combine traditional freedoms with socialism and set the stage for the downfall of the last regime. The new government, in attempting to create a

Democratic Capitalist state is bringing tremendous change to every area of women's lives. In order to understand the depth of contrast between the existence of women under the old regime and the new, the next section of the paper will explore the ways the women interviewed saw their positions in varied areas of their lives before 1989.

Chapter Two

PAST POSITION

To have children and to go to work and not be too much different from the others.(Helena)

Before 1989 women's position in most areas of Czech life was proscribed, overtly or not, by government policy. Definitive issues mentioned by women during interviews were tied to marriage and motherhood, wage labour and government control. These form the subheadings of the following chapters. Before beginning with marriage and motherhood, however, it is helpful to understand basic divisions of labour both in and outside the home.

Gender based roles in socialist Czechoslovakia, supposedly removed by legislation were in fact strong. Besides holding full time jobs, women in Prague were expected to marry young and bear children. In the conjugal home they had the main responsibility for the physical, emotional and mental care of the children and the interior of the home along with the purchase of food, or processing of garden products, cooking, sewing, etc. Men were responsible for being the main breadwinners along with construction of the holiday cottage, physical upkeep of the flat or house and general "heavy work". Seeing women economically active in traditionally male jobs as street cleaners, tram drivers or scientists was misleading, leaving an outside observer to marvel at the broken down sex roles, but one had to take into account the burden in the home and the unmentioned career glass ceilings. Emancipation meant women could do manual labour jobs like men, but not gain positions of actual authority (Mulholland, 1991).

Czech women in Prague faced three main areas of role creation under the past regime. The following chapter looks in depth at these aspects of women's lives before the period of transformation.

MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

If a woman was married she was expected to have children and to take care of them and to raise them.(Milena)

Men were believed to be incapable [of child care], without the emotional richness. They can't do it, the woman is the only one, the child would be emotionally retarded. It is the only thing they [men] admit they can't do! Very interesting.(Jirina)

Without exception, the Czech women questioned about what was expected of them as women under the old regime mentioned having children. Sometimes the first response was "no expectations", but with further inquiry, it became clear childbearing and raising were simply taken for granted. The respondents meant no expectations beyond motherhood.

I didn't have expectations. I was very young.(Jitka)

I felt no expectations of me, not from family, friends or the government.(Anna)

Before, they [women]couldn't do anything. There were no expectations, no careers, even for men. So, it didn't matter and women got pregnant. (Jirina)

Intricately linked, marriage and motherhood were the unquestionably established path for Czech women in Prague from the end of World War II until 1989.

It is clear what my family wanted from me, to marry and to have a baby.(Katka)

This was all expected of me by my family, finish school, marry, have kids, all the normal things which are done by the majority of our society.(Miloslava)

Under Socialism 85% of all Czech women married at least once in

their lives, beginning at an average age of 21.5 years old for women and 24 years old for men (Castle-Kanerova, 1992, p119). Children were next. In 70-80% of marriages the birth of a child followed in less than nine months (Castle-Kanerova, 1992, Kroupova, 1992), with 55% of children born to women under 25 years of age (Kroupova, 1992, #2). These figures should not be surprising given the fact that family planning services and education were almost non existent as were the means of implementation.

I was expected to be a good mother, this was the first thing. (Lucie)

First was to take care about the family. I mean the children. (Eva)

The availability of abortion illustrates, among other things, the conflict within government planning circles³. Women were expected to have children, preferably, three, but at the same time remain part of the workforce. With very limited (at best) access to contraceptives, abortion ended up being the primary way of avoiding unwanted births. The number of live births in the Czech Republic was almost equal to the number of abortions in the years following 1980. Prague had (and still has) the highest rate of abortion in the nation. (Kroupova, 1992, #2).

Marriage and children provided a way out of overcrowded homes and parental control for many young people. The government allowed young married couples with children to go to the head of the housing waiting list. The authorities also provided interest free loans to newlyweds, one third of which could be cancelled on the birth of the couple's third child (Castle-Kanerova, 1992, p119).

Divorce was (and remains) frequent, especially in the first four years. 30% of marriages in the Czech lands and 51% in Prague

³ Access to abortion changed with government policy on population growth rates. During some periods women had to make appeals before a jury of medical and social professionals. Other times it was enough to go directly to a clinic or a hospital.

end in divorce (Kroupova, 1992, #2). Remarriage was common, as both men and women were under extreme social and economic pressures to be part of a matrimonial union. A second marriage also brought hope of new accommodation, as some divorced couples had no choice but to remain living together until they found other partners.

The roles of mother and wife were not the only components of women's position in Prague, but were by far the most pervading measure of womanhood and good citizenship under the old regime.

WORK

Under socialism we were taught that capitalism means the rich exploits the poor, but socialism means the government exploits the women.(Libuse)

The role of the socialist woman was clear. In the morning take the children to kindergarten, then go to work (working exactly as hard or easy as the men, depends on the job) do the shopping, then go for the children. Because the socialist system was so great you can't buy everything in one shop so then she goes to three or four shops with the kids. Then home to cook, teach the children, sew holes in the socks of the husband and at night be a wonderful lover. This was the average way, work three times more then men, take care of kids, be great in bed, pretty and show him what a hero he is, and don't show an interest in anything else.(Barbara)

Women were not so often high in the job. It wasn't central.(Eva)

In a survey of two thousand Czech women taken in 1991, fulfilment of household responsibilities were recorded as being more important than achieving career goals (Kroupova, 1992, #1). The interviews done for this paper support those findings, even though 90% of women aged twenty-five to fifty are considered economically active in Czechoslovakia (Castle-Kanerova, 1992, p108). Seemingly a paradox, the high level of women workers, uninterested as they may be in careers, are a product of the Socialist system.

As was explained in Chapter 1, various family codes and equal status legislation afforded women the opportunity to work outside the home, and the rising cost of living forced them to accept.

The government wanted emancipated women with equal rights and wanted them to be in important positions. Before everyone had to work, had to have a job.(Milena)

At the same time, full responsibility for children, shopping and household care remained with women.

These demands outside the sphere of wage labour restricted women's career mobility as managers saw little reason to invest training or promotion in workers who would absent themselves from the workplace up to three years at a time for each child and upon returning, were able to claim additional, although unpaid, leave for school holidays and sick children.

Women also had an lower retirement age than men, sixty as compared to sixty-five. Mothers retired earlier, according to the number of children they had. As a result, women with older, independent children, finally free to pursue a career were too close to retirement to move up the proverbial ladder.

In an economy valuing physical labour over mental strain women earned 60-70% as much as men did (Castle-Kanerova, 1992,p108). Women, while present in a wide spectrum of jobs areas were primarily relegated to employment utilizing 'female traits', work involving personal interaction and care giving. Services like teaching, nursing and restaurant work absorbed about 42% of the female work force with 33% in manufacturing and 17% in agriculture (Kroupova, 1991, p10).

The situation is that men want to be stronger and greater, something like this. It is hard for women to participate . It is easier to be a secretary or typist.(Marketa)

Part-time work was not available in most cases or economically viable in others. The result was women working outside the home seven hours on average with an additional five spent on household tasks, including the search for consumables, which took two-thirds more time than in the West. Men, in contrast, worked eight hours on the job and two and a half in the house each week day (Castle-Kanerova, 1992,p110).

The propaganda of the old regime wanted special Socialist emancipation. I agree with emancipation, but not in this socialistic form. It was 'women work like men at their jobs', and at home they can do all

the shopping and homework. (Libuse)

Women's participation in the labour force has been offered as a full or partial solution to women's oppression by some thinkers found in the West, especially Socialist and Marxist Feminists. The Czech example proves that paid labour alone does not necessarily bring about change for the better. One force, discussed in the next section, which can greatly affect women's position for good or bad is government control.

GOVERNMENT CONTROL

[We were expected] To play the part in our optimal socialist state, to work, be blind, be deaf and be dumb. To follow the party rules. What else? (Barbara)

Throughout the interviews women made mention, usually outside of the main question, of the pressure to be 'normal'. Many alluded to stress they felt to join the Communist Party, attend political education sessions or generally modify their behaviour.

I think the government wanted I should be in line. It was first. And not so much thinking, no provocation, no organization with strange people. (Katka)

The Communist, totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia used various means to enforce its wide ranging policies. As James McGregor explains in a study of Czech value structures:

Communist systems have explicitly expanded the domain of the political to include many values that in other political systems are considered to be private (McGregor, 1981, p8).

In this sense the government intervened in almost every aspect of life. Children were born in state hospitals. A new infant citizen would leave the hospital to live in state housing, eat food from state farms and be left during the day at a state run creche. Here the child began to learn the joy of collective behaviour, the value of being normal and the horror of standing out in a crowd. At the age of seven the young citizen began attending state run primary school, continuing the lessons of collective behaviour and starting to study the four 'Rs': reading, writing, arithmetic and Russian. Summers for the young citizen included trips to Communist Pioneer Camps for "Lenin's Grandchildren".

In the old regime, because their was no freedom I had to bring the children up, telling them "Don't say this at school, but know it".(Libuse)

At the age of fourteen the student was placed in trade school or an intellectual gymnasium. Eighteen years of age brought state controlled University entrance exams for the gymnasium attenders. For the others a place working for a state owned agricultural co-operative, restaurant, factory, mine, library, transport system, hotel or block of latrines was guaranteed. Part of the working life of the now adult Socialist citizen was political indoctrination sessions, Party meetings or both.

State holidays were mandatorily celebrated by state workers. Attendance was taken and the enthusiasm of flag waving, singing and chanting was noted. Summer holidays meant visits to relatives or tourist trips to resorts owned by the neighbouring Socialist state.

At the end, following a pension from the state, citizens died in their state owned flats or state owned hospitals and were buried in state cemeteries.

As can be imagined, the state system had a great opportunity to shape citizens, simply by the overwhelming force of its existence. At the same time, each point of interaction could conveniently become a place of pressure. An unruly or overly inquisitive child could be put into trade school, although test scores called for gymnasium. University places could be and were withheld. Housing allocation could be sped up or unaccountably delayed. Job assignment was frequently used as a control or punishment mechanism.⁴ Holidays abroad were rewards for good service, shut mouths and Party dedication.

Obviously the government had many forms of control,

⁴ The father of one interviewee was denied entrance to university after study at a gymnasium and forced to become a train engine driver because his father had spoken out against the Czechoslovak Socialist State.

using information from the ever present StB (secret police) or persons forced to report to the police on family members, neighbours and coworkers. Party members kept close watch on those around them and each other.

I was expected to join the Communist Party.(Lucie)

You were also expected to be a member of the Party.I think I would not have done it, it would have made a big problem.(Eva)

The government policies of the past affected all citizens in psychological and social ways which can not yet be fully understood. The majority of people, no matter what they said in the privacy of their homes, were not active in any form of resistance, nor seriously considered it. Lacking strong religion, self-determination and contact with women outside the Eastern Bloc, the government was the main force in shaping the lives of Czech women in Prague, through promotion of motherhood, wage labour and 'normality'.

In the transitional period indicators of women's position in Prague established by the interviewees remain almost the same as those of the period before. The exception is the shifting of governmental impact to a looser, yet equally important social control. The following chapter will discuss similarities and changes which have come about since 1989.

Chapter Three

PRESENT POSITION

The past is part of your personality.(Milena)

I don't think this society has any proper structure, so there is no proper societal expectations.(Barbara)

Changing political, economic, national and social structures have impacted women in Prague. Since the end of 1989 women have sought to deal with change in various ways. This chapter will explain both constants and alterations in women's positions.

The most prominent feature of situation in Czechoslovakia today is what women repeatedly termed "freedom". Freedom in this case means the ability to make decisions about all areas of their own lives, a function denied under the old regime. Liberty is not without responsibilities however and Czech women in Prague are learning to find a balance between the two. Decision making has taken on new importance as people are no longer led by the government as "a kindergarten teacher leads her class"(Libuse).

Looking at three main role forming categories: Marriage and Motherhood, Work, and the current societal norm of "Woman", both traditional and modern streams of thought are mixed together, creating a complicated and fluid collage of old and new.

MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

The main difference is not [a question of] children or not, but instead, now I needn't be average.(Helena)

[My dream] is to marry and have healthy children. Then I would like it if my husband has a good job and a good place. If I have babies he will probably earn for us. And I want a good job after the children.(Jitka)

Behaviours and norms associated with marriage and motherhood were not swept out with the old regime. At the same time young women are making the old roles more comfortable for themselves, looking to marry later, with more, albeit limited, consideration for their own career possibilities.

Marriage is also expected, but not as strong [as before]. Maybe I'll marry later. Not first career then family, but I feel more free to marry later, I have more possibilities for my job.(Eva)

I expect to [marry] at about 23 or 24. I want to be married when I can have a baby. I see no reason to be married before that.(Jitka)

Older age at marriage seems to be the greatest difference for young unmarried heterosexual women, as division of work within the household or shared responsibility for child care was not mentioned at all.

In the different camp on this issue the lesbian women I talked with in the survey felt able to maintain themselves and their lifestyles without having to be married, as might have been necessary in the past. The reactions of their families varies, but the increase in overall societal freedom relieves some of the pressure to act as a 'normal' woman, with husband and children.

Personally, it seems I can be what I am. I can say to my colleagues I live with a woman and love her. (Katka)

Older women, already married are concerned about changes within family relations, as new outside interests draw members attention away from shared hobbies to individual activities. Otherwise there was nothing mentioned in the interviews about alterations in intra-household responsibilities, such as child care or house work.

Older women will be stuck with what level they got before, from the old system. Women who are mothers now can't make the switch. (Jirina)

My husband expects me to be nice, [a] good mother, [a] good cook, to fulfil his wishes. (Anna)

In general, traditional marriage and the mothering of children are still the roles young Czech women and girls in Prague say they expect to fulfil, even as they continue to put them further off in the future. Some consideration is being given to being more established than in the past, with flats, jobs, and travel experience first, but gender divided roles are accepted without apparent question by the heterosexual women in the survey. Lesbian women in contrast are moving in new directions, establishing alternate forms of family and household responsibility. Both lesbians and the young women who are delaying marriage for self fulfilment go against the 'ideal' female role. This role will be addressed at the end of this chapter, but first work, both inside and out of the home will be discussed.

WORK

There are two pressures, one to stay at home, but also to get more money.(Libuse)

Big choices.(Eva)

Women have jobs where people are working with people. They are being nice, polite, making the environment pleasant, helping tourists to relax and businessmen make deals.(Jirina)

Attitudes towards work have greatly changed, not only from before 1989, but since the political changes began as well. In 1990 people had a great fear of unemployment, as before it was a horrible punishment, a removal of identity for crimes against the state. Now Czechs realize it is at least possible to find an other job of equal or greater value and life does not come to an end without employment. In a changing work environment Czech women often look to the West for examples of how to deal with entering the work field, careers, and balancing double burdens. The results so far have been varied. With their own interpretations, some Czech women, thinking in a 'traditional' fashion, find the phenomena of women staying home permanently with the children as a return to normal, pre-Socialist times and Western ways, cleanly solving the problem of the double burden.

Now there are some changes and a woman in a prosperous society has more time for the household. Two jobs will go to one. Not having to work, the woman has to stay with the children. Before, she had one year with them, now six years. Society or her husband will take care of her.(Jirina)

Women now are not made to work so much. They have more possibilities to stay at home.(Libuse)

Beginning in 1990 many well educated women preferred women to stay at home to care for the children and not compete with the men. Many women with only secondary school educations appreciated the idea of staying home, expecting the same style of life as their peers in the West. It is a fairy tale. I was surprised that such a group, not small, want to stay

home.(Alena)

From one view point, staying at home qualifies as a survival strategy. It reduces the work load Czech women have come to accept by half, allowing a woman more free time and less hassle. Loss of economic power does not seem to be considered a major factor in this technique.

In actual fact staying home remains a dream for the majority of those who might actually choose it, as the state of the economy necessitates holding onto a job, and two pay checks per family for a decent standard of living.

Other women see part-time work as a privilege Western women have monopolized far too long. Still others are eagerly planning their entry or advancement in various fields. Although excited and in some cases a bit overwhelmed, Czech women in Prague are looking over their possibilities.

If I feel like I want to make my own firm I can. If I want to work for others and help them I can. If I want to publish I can. I can do all jobs and change each day if I want. I can make money in lots of ways.(Katka)

I have a wider choice in my way of career or job. Also within school, a choice of specialization. I can work in a bank, travel agency, as a translator, in finance, whatever.(Eva)

The main thing in my life right now is that I am freelance, working for myself. I don't have to be afraid of oppression, the kind which came, not due to bad work, but because I'm different from the majority of the other workers.(Barbara)

I feel very good to make the decisions about time in the job or to have the idea to make my own firm.(Anna)

The optimism of the preceding quotes is in part due to the youth and educational levels of the speakers. Older women in the survey, mothers with young children and the unskilled workers not represented here have a different outlook.

I am able to keep my job, but I don't welcome the task. In general I must be a little bit ruthless, do the things you wouldn't do if there was some other way. If I lost my job I wouldn't find anything better. Say school closes at four pm and the work finishes at six pm. Women are responsible for the children, so the company will fire them more than men. (Sarka)

A second constraint is a history of Communist Party membership. Anti-communism is a strong underlying emotion in all areas of Czech society and 'cleaning sweeps' push former members out of government and public sector jobs.

New people fired previous directors [Communist] of kindergartens. It hasn't happened to me yet, but it will happen soon. Now I have a fear of the future, the older you are the harder it is to find work. New jobs are just for teachers under thirty years of age. (Milena)

Economic necessity is the controlling factor in a number of women's decisions to continue with wage labour, regardless of their personal preferences. On the other side, careers are being looked at in a new light as young women come to realize that they are only held back by their own short comings or family responsibilities, instead of Party manipulation as was the case in the past. Older women and mothers are in a more precarious position as employers seek the most profitable labourers instead of filling quotas or accepting workers assigned to them. The role of mother is now hampering some women's access to employment, as it is seen as a woman's primary activity and responsibility, over and above paid work.

Motherhood falls squarely within the respectable limits of the 'ideal' Czech woman in Prague. Other 'natural' traits which result in the feminization or high concentration of women in some forms of employment come together in the following section to create a social standard of "Woman".

WOMAN

Women are more humane and democratic than men. We aren't so strong.(Alena)

In the comics women are either housewives or in bed, but nothing in between. And they are always dumb.(Jirina)

Trying to make sense of a rapidly changing social environment some Czech women refer in a specific way to the 'innate' features of Woman. Although not directly asked, a number of the women interviewed included observations about the natural abilities and weakness of women. The nature/culture divide⁵ of feminist theory fame is evident, as Woman, although not pictured as 'wild' is classified as more emotionally attuned and sensitive leading to agreeable interactions with people. Woman is also weaker in a physical and endurance fashion resulting in the male domination of specific social, political and economic spheres. In the unquestioned role of wife and mother Woman by necessity is most involved with private life inside the family home or local community.

Primary schools are often only women. It is not good for boys creativity, character, courage, etc. When you have only women there are not good feelings in the staff. Women are quiet, passive, just listening, not acting.(Libuse)

This dominance is aided by the feeling that women are naturally responsible for children and the household, resulting in the assumption that women are too busy with families to participate

⁵ This theory explains how women have been assigned roles due to their supposed close link with Nature, being more emotional, wild, unpredictable also less capable of intellectual and culture pursuits than men. Tied to this is the assignment of women to the private, domestic sphere and men to the public sphere. Brown & Jordova (1981) and Jaggar (1983) provide overviews of the theory.

fully in public life.

Its only natural for women to carry the burden. Look at the animal world. You would never see a lioness push her babies away from the food, but the lion eats until he is satiated. (Maria)

Women here must make the family, cook, clean, care for the children. Maybe that is why it is better to have men [leaders].(Marketa)

The best thing is for women to be involved in local [as opposed to national] politics. It is more suitable for women to have everyday work with people.(Alena)

The establishment of a socially defined Woman serves to restrict individual women to certain roles. Mothers and married women of child bearing age are regarded as a risk for employment because they will be the one to leave work early or take extra leave in case of sick children or pregnancy. Choice of employment is also restricted. Girls and women are pushed towards jobs seen as making the best use of their inherent traits. Travel agencies, translation firms and the health field are making the best of Woman and her natural ability to make people comfortable.

Another aspect of Woman in transition since 1989 is the need to be attractive to men. The most striking manifestation of this is 'sexiness'. Much more limited by dress codes and an unavailability of accessories, make-up and clothing under Socialist rule, some women today are exploring new ways of expressing their femininity. On the summer streets of Prague one can see women in jean shorts cut very high, tight mini skirts with high heels, permed hair and intricately made up faces.

You really see a big difference between men and women. Its like they [women] are selling themselves. (Jirina)

This phenomenon raises some questions, among them why do women feel the need to portray themselves in this fashion and does it mean a changing value structure? Interviewees had some

very definite opinions on the subject.

Women are making an assertion of some sort, of their importance, beauty, value. Value is beauty. Before sex appeal was not so exposed, not so obvious. It was not supposed to be. Communism didn't propagate open sexuality. It was Western and evil. (Jirina)

It is not a new value. It just couldn't be expressed before. It is only a new opportunity connected with a development of market commerce. Before everybody had to work so those awful women couldn't do these bad things. But now, these women don't have to work so they have time to buy and walk and look like that. (Milena)

The majority of the women questioned on this subject felt the desire to be sexy in a public way was present but suppressed under the past regime. Others point out dressing-up was one of the few freedoms possible for citizens under Socialism and could be used as an empowerment strategy. The dramatic increase of pornography, Western films, television programmes, beauty treatments and women's magazines promoting one commoditized, sexual form of beauty must also have had an effect. One respondent went so far as to critique the system as a whole :

Czechoslovakia is a white, hetero, Christian, male society. The result for women is that they are objects. The only way to be successful is to play this role, they think. It is enough to look at the make-up of Western women and our women. In the West it is the 'natural look'. Here a Czech woman is able to make from herself something completely different. (Barbara)

What ever the reason, Woman in Prague today must be attractive; in personality, skills, attitudes, manners and appearance. Instead of the comrade worker and hearty mother of previous government propaganda Czech society today is creating a different norm without fully escaping past traditions.

In order to survive the transition of norms and positions educated women of Prague are developing a specific collection of survival techniques. The next chapter will address women's biggest fears and the responses they have created to deal with them.

Chapter Four

CONCERNS AND RESPONSES

Working for survival in a time of transition can be a complex task. The educated women in Prague consulted for this paper expressed a number of fears and concerns about their position in a changing society. These topics have been condensed into the subheadings: Personal Relations and Fears. Recognizing problem areas clears the path to solutions and the third subheading, Skills, illustrates some of the techniques women are, or would like to use in addressing the overall situation.

PERSONAL RELATIONS

Before the revolution, this was the joint [connection between individuals] ---a belief in people. They were trying so much, with really bad results, they were unhappy. Yet, really strong, in really close families or friends. They were open to each other very dependent. Friends were number one. To loose a friend here meant something really, really terrible. It is changing. For me it is very difficult if you can't trust people, so much like before. Even your friends. (Miloslava)

When the individuals interviewed discussed their views of women in the transitional period and their own personal concerns, interesting patterns appeared. First, private relations were seen as becoming more problematic than in the past. Formerly one of the few areas in an individual's life free from direct government control, almost all the respondents made some

reference to the importance of good relations between people. Some focused on their hopes for personal situations. In looking at their own lives, the interviewees put emphasis on relations within both the conjugal union and in a wider context.

The most important dream may be to have good relations, to be like a friend with your husband. To have this relationship, to understand and help each other, not just 'I am your wife so I must do this and you are my husband , so you must do that.'(Eva)

I hope that in my own way I can connect with people in better ways, more friendly.(Libuse)

Not confined to the private sphere, the moral condition of the state was also cause for comment and concern.

The nation has not very good morals, no God in school, family, etc. Christianity is good for young children. They need to hear what is good and bad, not to steal, lie, etc. Personally I am sad to see society and culture are not important and ideals are disappearing.(Libuse)

Explanations for disappointing results of political and other changes following 1989 could be linked to personal relations, with problems ranging from growing egos to lack of social pressure.

[Changes I don't like are] relations between people, problems with ourselves. I feel a shift, I am nervous and so on. Both my husband and I are more individualistic and egotistic than before.(Helena)

People don't care any more what others think of them. Before, there was social control, not [just] governmental.(Sarka)

The existence of these concerns fits well with the profile of Woman voiced during the interviews. For the most part Czech women recognize 'inherent' gender differences which justify their concern and eminent role as watchdogs and holders of responsibility for good relations and both personal and national

morals. Part of Woman's responsibilities lead to concerns over all areas of life, including economic and political situations. The Fears section deals briefly with these topics.

FEARS

Stress is a recognized human response to change and interviewees expressed their worries and fears about several different areas of their lives. In the position of wife and mother, women must deal with a new system of consumption. In the past almost all shops were state owned and prices were the same every where. Scarcity was a problem and queues common, but finding bargains and avoiding shady private businesses were not part and parcel of putting food on the table.

Many people are not honest with private shops. I can not recognize who is honest and who is not.(Libuse)

Further economic changes and uncertain social policy have brought a sense of "survival of the fittest". Crime rates have soared and many people act not in the collective solidarity (or at least weary companionship) often found in the past but as individuals maximizing their own gains. Not knowing the rules or even the other players on their team, women are tense and nervous about a variety of subjects.

Sometimes with characters of people I don't know if I can cope. My reaction is individualistic, or with fear.(Helena)

I worry about money. I worry about criminality for my and my daughter's sake.(Anna)

I have a feeling of uncertainty. I hadn't experienced it until now.(Milena)

With the situation in Slovakia both Czechs and Slovaks are faced with the division of the country into two individual states. Such a separation will undoubtedly bring economic repercussions to both sides. The human cost will also be high, not it is hoped in bloodshed, but in families divided. The level of intermarriage among Czechs and Slovaks is quite high, with

sizable numbers settled in alternate regions.

Now we have the tension of Czechoslovakia becoming two states.(Libuse)

Many different types of stress have come with post revolutionary 'freedom'. Women are finding ways to maximize their own survival through experience and training to acquire skills needed to control their lives and end their fears. These new abilities will be presented next.

SKILLS

The whole state is expecting the 'New Man', more creativeness, more decisions, but also more wildness, forces, strong to get something, because of competition. (Libuse)

Currently in Prague women are sharpening their abilities to deal with a changing environment and the resulting tensions by the cultivation of various skills. The new faculties women have and feel they need to acquire has a measurable affect on their position and personal development. First must come skills needed for everyday life. In the preceding section women voiced concerns about their problems in dealing with the results of economic change. Here they discuss the necessity to be smart consumers in the Capitalist market.

We must learn new skills: buying in many shops, different prices. The shops are changing all the time. Women must chose good shops and services you can trust. (Libuse)

I feel I would like to have some economy education. I lack in this sphere. We have a gap in contrast with Western countries. (Helena)

It is also a skill to find cheap things and keep up the living standard. [This means] being more active, to endeavour, to try harder. (Sarka)

Trying harder would be made easier with the cultivation of assertiveness, or so said many of the women interviewed. The past government demanded the ability to 'stay in line' and now the opposite is rewarded and sometimes even a necessity. Now many women are seeking to engage with the world around them, contrasting the tendency for seclusion within the family found in the 1970's and 1980's.

The first [skill is] to think in a different way.(Sarka)

I would also like to be more assertive, to insist on my own ideas. The regime before did not develop this, of course, on the contrary. My friends from abroad are much more opinionated and assertive.(Helena)

For my age group it is important to learn a lot about everything, to go abroad to learn how other women and girls live, what they do and wear and think, also to find good friends for life, boyfriend, etc.(Jitka)

Taking advantage of new job and career opportunities some women are seeking to educate themselves about both the new hardware and behaviour of business, for use in their own companies or those of their employers.

Skills? New technology, computers, faxes.(Barbara)

I had to learn about computers. I was afraid, I started and now I feel very well. Management. I can organize time, I know how to find jobs, how to talk with office people and its important to know really what I want and to formulate sentences very exactly. To talk to people long and deep to have what I want. (Katka)

Faced with a stressful new environment, women are coping by learning new skills of all types. Some begin and end with learning how to comparison shop, seeking out the best prices and learning to budget more than in the past in order to maintain or increase their standards of living. Others are trying to be more aggressive as they see their western counterparts, to deal with the new social element of fighting for survival. Last, technology and business competition are areas calling for computer skills and office manners. In gaining new abilities women are shaping their own positions by meeting head on the challenges of present and future times.

Chapter five

REFLECTIONS

Having moved from the interview based body of the paper to the last two chapters, I would like to offer some reflections and theories about the various items presented in the preceding sections.

First of all, any attempt at discussion of changing positions of Czech women is hampered by a lack of theoretical work, at least in English. Much factual material has been written, detailing economic effects, political participation, unemployment, rising nationalism and the like, but strong frameworks specific to women in this current period of transition are only now being published. With that in mind, I have sought out a few Eastern and Central European thinkers with some success in the form of Irene Dolling and Hildegard Nickel⁶ as well as Mira Janova, who writes with her French friend Mariette Sineau⁷. I have also ventured to fill some gaps with my own ideas and theory. Still, some questions remain and will be highlighted in the end of the last chapter, while proposals for addressing them will follow.

⁶ Both formerly East German women did research on women under the past regime, but were limited in what they were allowed to report. Now Nickel is a sociologist and Dolling a professor of culture. They are co-founders of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Women's Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin.

⁷ Janova works at the National Centre for the Study of Public Opinion in Sofia and Sineau is with the National Political Science Foundation in Paris.

DUALISM

One of the more intriguing parts of the process of change for educated Czech women is the way their responses to transition can be divided into two seemingly opposing camps. This by itself may not be surprising but the fact that individual women do not restrict themselves to one side in thoughts or actions certainly is. The two parts can be named in a number of ways, but unfortunately I can not escape my own Western Feminist background in choosing them⁸. With this in mind, I offer a suggestion for titling the dualistic ways of thinking distinguishable in the area of changing position and transition in Prague at this time. The first group I title "Traditionalist". Ideas of this genre include creating new spaces for women by reacting against what came under Socialism. "Feminism" and "emancipation" are rejected, tied as they are to the Soviet definition, which resulted in leaving women with no social or economic choice but to work full time outside the home while taking complete responsibility for children and housework.

The "Traditionalist" approach draws on the time before Communism and the idealized acceptance of the so called 'norm' in the West, with full time mothers in happy family situations and bread winning fathers providing for bright and morally balanced children. Until quite recently, the view of the archetypal Western woman was "the idle, bourgeois woman, happy to stay at home to raise her children and look after her husband and home" (Janova & Sineau, p123:1992). This stereotype has become appealing .

Faced with non-Soviet Feminism, or a focus on issues pertaining directly to women, some Czech women of "Traditionalist" leanings reject it all outright saying common

⁸ These terms accept Western Feminism as the final goal or method of measurement. With many of my own doubts about the Euro/American schools of thought I am far from fully satisfied, but wish to provide some sort of beginning framework for discussion.

problems like the Czech - Slovak divide, a falling standard of living and other economic changes are more pressing and women's problems must wait.

The other side is "Progressive", which looks to the Capitalist West in search of solutions, like part time work, later age at marriage, exploratory travel abroad, learning of new, technical skills. Janova & Sineau (1992) propose that because Radical Feminism is present in the West, a link with Communism is not "obligatory". They suggest Westward looking intelligentsia may bring and reshape Feminism to a form more palatable to the citizens of former Socialist states, especially as the protection of rights such as child care, access to abortion and equal wages demand organization.

As stated before, very few women seem to fall squarely into one category or the other, choosing, however unconsciously what seems best for each issue or situation. One almost universal carry over from the socialist era is the acceptance of women's position as wives and mothers. None of the interviewed heterosexual women, (already married or not) expressed any questioning about the role of women in the family, as mothers, primary child care providers, and household labourers. Only the lesbians provide an exception among the interviewees. These women are setting up households and families with shared distribution of domestic burdens.

The dualism resulting from the "Traditionalist" and "Progressive" ways of thinking has many sources. One which will next be discussed is the all encompassing influence of a state empowered with a special form of patriarchy.

PATRIARCHAL-PATERNALISM

In attempting to explain the lack of interest in Feminism or politics among women of former East Germany, Irene Dolling (1991) and Hildegard Nickel (in Rosenberg, 1991) are developing a theory about the "patriarchal-paternalist" state. The patriarchal-paternalist system of State Socialism is different from Capitalist linked patriarchy and so has a different outcome.

In the latter form, the root, "patriarch" or "father" gives 'rule of the father'- limited at first to a recognized family or household unit. This power includes control over labour, both productive and reproductive of all members - wives, children, servants etc. (Omvedt, 1986). Other theorists have expanded the 'rule of father' to the 'rule of men', protected in state systems. In her recent book, Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990 p20). The patriarchal-paternalist state goes further, removing individual men as patriarchs upon which women in family units are dependent upon and actually replacing them with state systems. For example in a patriarchal state a woman is dependent (or expected to be) upon the father of her children to support her and the offspring. In patriarchal-paternalism women, still responsible for the children, come to depend on the state rather than an individual patriarch for necessary care and financial support.

Patriarchal-paternalism, like patriarchy still uses women to support the needs and interests of a male directed state. Although seeming to advance the emancipation of women by their participation in the labour force, the Czechoslovak State did not bring equality within the home, nor at the same time did it provide more than basic services to relieve women of their double and triple burdens in the society. Reproductive policies, access to abortion and financial incentives all changed with the needs of the patriarchal-paternalist state for workers, not for the

wellbeing of women.

Women as mothers were not the only ones affected by patriarchal-paternalism. In such a system, all citizens become the children of the state. Reflecting on the situation in Hungary, Kiss (1991) tells how the police would give scoldings to suspected criminals before handing them over for prosecution. The forced extension of childhood by control of personal choices or freedom necessitated the development of certain skills or coping strategies, such as passivity, remaining within the bounds of the status quo, curbing criticism and crushing personal initiative. Results created social and cultural patterns endemic to Socialist states.

Nickel claims patriarchal-paternalist forms of equality ended in lifting responsibilities from individual husbands and fathers while concurrently intensifying traditional roles for women. Women had final responsibility for the development of their children, while the State appeared to take up the burden with food provision through sponsored meals, child care at creches and summer camps, medical care through the national system, etc. Dolling points out that women in refusing to participate in new political systems or those "Traditionalists" who want to withdraw from the workplace to become full time housewives are in reality acting out of a "massive emotional fear of a situation in which individual lack of responsibility will no longer be rewarded, but more responsibility for oneself will be demanded" (Dolling, 1991, p12).

Is it possible for women's responses be objectively classified? The next section deals briefly with the conflict Eastern/Central European actions and Western interpretations.

FIGHTING BACK OR GIVING IN ?

Certain actions taken by Czech women in response to new freedoms send alarm bells ringing for Feminists from the West, but is that always a reasonable reaction? Increasing emphasis on "sexiness" falls into this seemingly dangerous category of actions, as do movements from the labour market to full time housewifery. The emphasis on motherhood may also be uncomfortable for Feminists from outside the former Eastern block.

Dolling comments upon the growing attraction of "femininity" or "sexiness" as a form of backlash, a response to years of expectations that women behave in an undervalued 'female' manner, while at the same time thinking and working in a 'male' fashion. Others wish to live out the full scale of their interpretation of female gender by refusing 'manly' behaviour and dress. Additional scenarios might include a recognition that feminine dress and other forms of personal adornment in the past were a struggle for autonomy from the state and a division from the rest of the population, and so continue to be viewed by some women in that framework. In a similar case, some women want to drop their fatiguing double or triple burdens and go against confining social expectations, by leaving the workplace.

In the past motherhood could also provide an opportunity for personal control. Ewa Charkiewicz-Pluta, a Polish staff member at the Institute of Social Studies, explained that she used her three years maternity leave to get "freedom from the system" while raising her daughter in an "alternative free way" and so found motherhood as a "libratory strategy". She does, however problematize having children when it becomes "obligatory".

New freedoms may be seized and utilized by strong women following old patterns, seeking to secure their own well being while elevating the status of their sex in a manner which seems nonsensical or even dangerous to outsiders. Is this Feminism ? For Eastern and Central European Feminists the answer may very well be yes, but the question remains as to the final effect.

It is easy, while at the same time problematic to make judgements when the full impact of forty-five years of Socialism is still not fully understood, neither by the women who experienced it, nor by outside Feminists.

In the next (and last) chapter some conclusions will be drawn and predictions made about the actions, responses and positions of educated women in Prague, as well as the possible future role of Feminism.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

From the beginning this paper has set out to explore the impact of the "Velvet Revolution" on an special group. Educated city dwellers, the women in this work are not directly representative of the population as a whole. At the same time women in the Czech lands face many of the same problems and challenges and are affected by a common historical background. The findings presented here, while not claiming to be comprehensive, can serve to identify important issues and responses and give the reader some insight to events in the Czech Republic.

TRANSITION

As explained in the introduction and first chapter, the situation today is one marked by transition, with sweeping reformations as the former Soviet satellite country, dependent politically and economically on the Eastern Bloc embraces Democracy and free market policies. Filtering down to individuals, changes are diverse and often unsettling as a controlled, but nominally secure and predictable personal future is replaced by freedom and uncertainty.

Women's responses are shaped by their histories, both personal and collective. As Czechs, the women have a background shaped by the First Republic, which was in turn a product of religious, democratic and intellectual freedoms developed in preceding centuries. After World War II the Communist Party began to make its mark on Czech history as Czechoslovakia was Stalinized and the government became the main force acting to influence people's lives. Prague Spring was an attempt to curtail the affects of Socialism, but its failure led to increased repression for individuals and a withdrawal from public life.

"Normality" was one way of labelling the pressure exerted

by the Communist government on its citizens. The impact for women was a clearly defined position and life path based on marrying, having children, working outside and in the home, acquiring a decent standard of living and maintaining good personal relations within the family. The political events of 1989 replaced passive "normality" with active "freedom" and this alteration has brought some universal changes and yet also meant diverse things to different women in the survey.

Across the board women must deal with the impact of the move towards Capitalism. The clearest evidence is ever increasing prices and the replacement of government owned shops with private ones. Closing of government institutions also means unemployment and the search for new work. Mothers are affected by cutbacks in state run creche facilities and subsidy cutbacks for children's meals and clothing.

The end of Socialism also necessitated the creation of new political systems and politicians. Many women interviewed found the bickering in Parliament unnerving. The future divide of the single Czech and Slovak state, a casualty of Democracy, also brings a high level of tension into people's lives, raising more questions about the economy and familial splits.

Outside of the Czech-Slovak divide, the family and personal relations between individuals are a focal point of concern for a number of women. No longer needed as a safe haven from oppressive government activities or the secret police, the family is at threat of loosing the strong position in Czech life it held under Socialism. Women, as the foundation for family life may lose power they held within the home. Personal relations between non-family members are also greatly affected by a changing political and economic climate as competition replaces communalism. Not confined to one group of tried and tested friends or colleagues individuals may enlarge their social contacts, increasing quantity while perhaps giving up quality.

General changes, like the ones briefly discussed above are part and parcel of the movement out of Socialism. The Czech-Slovak divide will certainly prolong the transition, but if it proceeds in a controlled fashion without violence, I predict the

next three to five years will see the beginning of the end of the transitional period for the Czech lands. The fears of many women will be realized, as their standards of living drop and families are divided with the country. Alternatively some people will continue to benefit from the lifting of prohibitions on personal entrepreneurial efforts, going ahead with their own businesses or investments. Personal friendships will lose some of their intensity, free of artificial pressures like concern about informers, but other types of relations will be formed.

AGE, MARITAL STATUS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Beyond general issues facing most or all of the women interviewed arise problems and reactions specific to particular groupings. Individually, the interviewees, already distinct from the main population, were found to have reactions differing by age, marital status and sexual orientation.

Young heterosexual women, unmarried, without a history of Communist Party membership, just finishing school or beginning their careers spoke as if they expected to fill many of the old positions open to them in the past. At the same time I question the final outcome. Already these young women are delaying the former roles, pushing back the time they expect to marry and 'settle down'. Instead, many of them are acquiring experiences and education not available to their predecessors of the past forty-five years as they travel and work outside Eastern Europe, building friendships and observing or participating in lifestyles different from their own. I expect women will want to devote more energy to their own interests and ideas than in the past. This means careers will gain in importance, and while not topping, nor probably equalling the value given to mothering, will play a larger part in young women's lives, than those of the generation before. How much support they will receive from spouses and society is also in question. Entrepreneurs may recognize the market value of providing various services and the availability of contraception may serve to push back the age

women first have children.

Lesbians are also diverging from old positions. No longer socially and psychologically crushed by the demand of government supported "normality" pushing them to fill heterosexual positions, many of these women are setting their own standards and creating new lifestyles. The extent varies from woman to woman, of course, and is affected by family and job constraints, but some lesbians are open in their love for women, making no secret about it at work or in their shared homes. Social clubs, events, publications and contact with women from other countries help lesbians come together to support each other and create a group awareness or identity.

The upheaval inherent in such a transitional period as Czechoslovakia is now experiencing has much to do with the freedom of which lesbians have been able to take advantage. Hopefully the institutions and networks now being created will survive into the future. If the rising religious fundamentalism and fascism seen recently in other Eastern and Central European countries makes any advance in the Czech Republic, gains made by gays and lesbians would certainly be in danger. However I think this is unlikely. There may come a time when gay and lesbian rights come under public scrutiny, especially as the constitution (of the Czech country resulting from the Czech-Slovak divide) is written and ratified, but I expect the results to be in line with most European countries.

The position of older married women with children is more static than that of lesbians or young women. Members of this group are concerned about keeping their jobs and maintaining what they have managed to achieve, more than making dramatic advances. Employment is problematic. Older women fear losing their jobs and not being able to find new ones, as employers seek men or women without children to fill positions. If this was not enough, women with histories of Party membership fear reprisals and job dismissals as punishment for past activities. The women of this age group spent their whole lives (or the majority of their adult lives) living under Socialism. Some were supporters of the government at one point or another and prior to 1989 most were

probably at least resigned to the future clearly laid out before them. 1989 brought an end to certain expectations and increased uncertainty. I am not as optimistic about the future for older women, especially those with Communist backgrounds as I am about young women. Some will of course be successful, continuing in old jobs or opening their own businesses, making use of past connections and resources. Others may opt for early retirement, especially if their husbands have good jobs. Divorced, widowed or unmarried women in this group, especially those with children may very well become marginalized, taking on feminized jobs below their abilities in order to make ends meet.

All of the predictions given above depend greatly on the outcome and end of the period of transition. Other factors like conflict surrounding the Czech-Slovak divide or widespread dissatisfaction with the rate of Capitalist development could completely alter the situation.

REMAINING QUESTIONS

In the last chapter some theoretical explanations were offered to give some clarity to the position of women in Prague today. Patriarchal-paternalism serves to rationalize the passivity and accompanying benefits which were part of existence under the former regime. Breaking free from a life time of dependence on a state which provided all forms of care (however high the cost) is no simple matter and helps to illustrate the appeal of "Traditionalist" approaches, replacing dependency on the state with dependency on male figures in the family. On the other side realization that Capitalism often implies "survival of the fittest" and a desire to exploit new freedoms encourages some women to "Progressive" strategies, seeking new skills, responses and lifestyles.

In the end working with a limited amount of available theory concerning women in transitional Eastern and Central Europe some questions still remain. Many of these questions centre around expectations for the future. Will educated women in Prague try

to break from former positions and roles, fully challenging patterns established in the past? Will either "Traditionalism" or "Progressiveness" come out in the next few years as a favoured school of thought among the female population of Prague? Will Feminism, in any of its already established forms take root or will a new branch result from the unique situation in the Czech lands?

On the other end of the spectrum it might be well to question if religious fundamentalism like that found in Poland or the possibility of rising fascism, so recently in the news from former East Germany could prevent women from effectively challenging the status quo, or even cause them to loose rights.

From my knowledge and experience with educated women in Prague, I would hazard a few promising predictions. I feel the old, pre-Socialist traditions will show themselves again and although women can not realistically be expected to collectively rise up and challenge the status quo at the same time as they are struggling with survival in the current transitional period, I feel a new Czech or Eastern European Feminism will come together over the next few years. Women in former Socialist countries may find it necessary to organize in order to protect or reestablish rights and services they had under old regimes. These might include creches, access to abortion, national health schemes, pensions, etc. On the other hand, as some of the promises of Democratic-Capitalism come up short Czech women may look for help or guidance from European women experienced with such systems. In any event, I am firmly confident in the ability of educated Czech women to address issues they deem important enough to warrant attention and action.

APPENDIX

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

At this point there are many obvious possibilities for further study. The first group addresses the obvious limitations of this paper, calling for an enlarged population to be studied. Ideally women of all levels of education, equally representing the ethnic variety in Prague could be interviewed with the same goals, if not necessarily results, as this paper. Likewise the study population could address the concerns of women, educated or not, in rural areas. Keeping the study within the Czech lands, the impact of specific issues like unemployment, price increases, the Czech-Slovak divide, birth control, influx of Western cultural influences, etc. on women could all be studied.

Expanding to different regions, comparisons could be made between Czechs and other Eastern/Central European women (including Slovaks), with the purpose of sharing experiences and coping mechanisms. The same could be said of women in developing countries undergoing structural readjustment.

For action oriented Feminists, a paper creating an Eastern/Central European Feminist framework would be most welcome. The sticky problem of outside intervention in Czech women's issues, projects or overall adjustment to Democratic-Capitalism could be addressed. In the same vein, a comparison study of South to West Feminist relations could be considered to draw similarities with East/Central to West relations. Another idea might be to offer explanations of why Czech and other Eastern/Central European women many choose 'emancipatory' strategies which include such things as withdrawal from the labour market and high heeled shoes making Western Feminists cringe or sorrowfully shake their heads.

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