

## “WHO WOULD CREATE A CZECH FEMINISM?” CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING RELEVANT FEMINISMS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

*Karen Kapusta-Pofahl, University of Minnesota*

© 2002 Karen Kapusta-Pofahl All Rights Reserved

The copyright for individual articles in both the print and online version of the *Anthropology of East Europe Review* is retained by the individual authors. They reserve all rights other than those stated here. Please contact the managing editor for details on contacting these authors. Permission is granted for reproducing these articles for scholarly and classroom use as long as only the cost of reproduction is charged to the students. Commercial reproduction of these articles requires the permission of the authors.

As I spoke to those around me about feminism and women's issues during my time in the Czech Republic, I felt as if I was being pulled between two very different realities. On one occasion I remember a Czech coworker telling me that there was no feminism in the Czech Republic while at the same time handing me a pamphlet about a Czech feminist organization. Likewise, when female students in my English classes vehemently rejected the word “feminism,” they stated that although they did not know what feminism was, exactly, they did not like the sound of it. Yet when I asked them if there were any issues of women's inequality that they faced in the workplace, they often spent several minutes commiserating with each other over the lack of equal pay or the difficulty that older women who had stayed at home for several years with their children faced when seeking employment. These disorienting feelings increased when I volunteered at a Czech women's organization and discovered that, rather than being populated with young, privileged foreigners (the assumption being that they would be the only ones interested in such work), the program was staffed exclusively by Czech women from a wide range of ages and opinions on the subject of feminism. In this paper I offer an initial gesture toward charting the landscape of gender and feminist organizing. First, I outline some major themes in the English-language scholarly literature on women, gender and feminism in the Czech Republic. Next, I provide a glimpse into how members of a Czech women's organization are navigating through these larger discourses. I argue that analysis of actual organizations is vital to a nuanced understanding of the shape of discourse on feminism and gender in the Czech Republic and to creation of theories on gender and the “post” in post-socialist societies.

The bulk of information on Czech women and feminism available to non-Czech

speakers is contained in two widely cited anthologies: *Gender Politics and Post-Communism* (1993) and *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe* (1997). The themes presented in these texts can also be found in a scattering of journal articles as well as the small English-language anthology published in Prague entitled *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women's Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic* (1993), from which several articles are reprinted in the anthologies mentioned above. The material on gender and feminism in the Czech Republic presented in these sources falls into two broad categories: discussions of the impact of socialist policies of women's “emancipation” through labor-force participation and the resulting “double-burden” of work and family responsibilities and stories of misunderstanding and conflict with western feminists that are often accompanied by the argument that Czech women are alienated from feminism as a foreign ideology that is irrelevant and divisive.<sup>1</sup>

Many authors write of Czech women's seeming lack of interest in organizing to promote women's equality in the workforce and political life (Hradilková 1993, Kiczková and Farkašová 1993, Šiklová 1997b, Šiklová 1993, Šiklová 1997a, Šiklová 1998a, Šiklová 1998b, Havelková 1993, Vrabková 1997, Castle-Kanerová 1992, Busheikin 1993, Hauserová 1993). They argue that Czech women's negative experiences with socialist rhetoric of emancipation through workforce participation have made Czech women skeptical of feminist aims of equal pay for equal work because they view these policies as contributing to additional responsibilities rather than to freedom. Forced employment and family responsibilities created a double burden of paid employment and unpaid household duties for Czech women. Šiklová states, “Women worked longer than men, because they had to run the household, educate

the children, and cultivate the permitted bit of garden” (Šiklová 1998:31). Even for women who chose extended maternity leave while raising small children, the inefficiencies of the socialist planned economy and general bureaucracy made motherhood, in the words of feminist writer Eva Hauserová, a morass of “bronchitis, laryngitis, otitis and acute hysteria” (Hauserová 1993). Hauserová describes a typical day taking care of her infant son in this way:

A new baby. Walking around the housing estate pushing the baby carriage. Mud. Lots of mud everywhere; the sidewalks are not finished, the lawns are not laid out, and it’s necessary to wheel the baby carriage along the edge of a busy road, among the roaring lorries that rush quickly by and spray mud everywhere.... Never mind, we’ll wash everything at home...oh. The water doesn’t flow. This is not unusual. The underground pipes often crack, since they lay directly on top of sharp stones, without insulation. No water. It’s necessary to wash diapers, to wash the baby, to cook...but no water. Everything is sticky and dirty and everything stinks.... Hysteria (Hauserová 1993:41).

Given the daily difficulties of unemployed women such as Hauserová, it is easy to imagine that employed women indeed felt their burden to be doubled. As all of this occurred under the guise of “women’s emancipation,” authors argue that it is understandable that many Czech women are not convinced by what they perceive to be western feminist claims that the focus of feminist action should be equal employment.

Following from arguments of the dangers of “emancipation,” several authors argue that Czech women see feminism as an irrelevant ideology and use examples of early negative interactions with western feminists to substantiate their arguments or explain Czech women’s seeming lack of interest in gender or feminism (Šiklová 1997a, Šiklová 1997b, Šiklová 1993, Šiklová 1998a, Šiklová 1998b, Hradilková 1993, Havelková 1993, Vrabková 1997, Beck 2000, Goldfarb 1997). Czech sociologist Jiřina Šiklová, perhaps the most prolific of these authors, writes of a conference in the Czech Republic in 1990 with “representatives of feminist and women’s activist groups” from western countries at which,

One of the women lecturers kept saying ‘human rights are women’s rights’, and she

advised us to teach other women articles of women’s rights, maybe by having them sing the chorus ‘human rights are my property’ while working in the rice fields. We pointed out to her that we had neither rice fields nor cotton plantations...that only 4 per cent of the population worked in agriculture.... The lecturer then changed her remarks, but only marginally. (Šiklová 1998b:153)

Šiklová further remarks upon the similarity between the slogan “human rights are my property” and socialist-era slogans and argues that Czech women want no part of something that they identify with empty rhetoric (Šiklová 1998). Šiklová states elsewhere that Czech women see feminism as a leftist ideology that is overly concerned with issues such as equal employment and women’s representation in politics—issues that she argues are alternately irrelevant because “rights that western women are still fighting or are taken for granted here” (1998a:33), or as frivolous “problems that have their source in luxury...that we have neither the time, nor the right conditions to think about” (1993:10). Several authors thus conclude that given the contentious terrain of western ideology and Czech anti-feminist sentiment there is no feminism in the Czech Republic at the present time and they are often very skeptical that it will arise in the future.

Very few articles address the presence of women’s organizations or groups, and these do not discuss the existence of organizations or groups of Czech women who identify as feminist or engage with feminist theory (Hauser 1995, Šiklová 1997b).<sup>ii</sup> A brief but important exception is Jiřina Šmejkalová-Strickland’s provocative and refreshing piece entitled “Revival? Gender Studies in the ‘Other’ Europa” (1995). Šmejkalová-Strickland begins by discussing the constricted environment within which so-called “East/West” debates occur. She writes of what had by 1995 become a trope of western research in the Czech Republic:

A Western academic gets a grant for research on Eastern Europe. She uses her grant money to travel to the area and we spend hours and hours with her answering questions.... The she flies herself back and no one sees her anymore. Several months later, if we are lucky, we receive a photocopy of an article published in one of the feminist journals.... And there we read a report on “our” world, full of misspelled

names, misunderstood points, unconfirmed information, and rarely any insight (1995:10001).

Šmejkalová-Strickland goes on to further problematize western feminist understandings of issues of feminism in Eastern Europe by pointing out the constraints placed on Czech scholars attempting to participate in international intellectual arenas:

We find ourselves hunting for invitations to international conferences that usually cover travel expenses or even pocket money in so-to-speak hard currency. Due to the already established exclusionary circles of mutually supportive relations, the same persons regularly appear at various meetings, whether these be on women's health education or the representation of femininity in medieval poetry. They read badly translated papers on "Eastern women's oppression," ignoring the fact that foreign language competence is the first step toward any intercultural communication. Consequently, there are still many humiliating experiences of facing the ones who know more and have more. Or who present themselves as knowing and having such (1995:1001).

Šmejkalová-Strickland uses the remainder of the article to discuss the theoretical perspectives gained during her experiences while teaching a course on gender at Charles University in Prague and organizing a workshop on gender studies at the Second World Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. She writes of her goal to "challenge the locally constructed, banal horror images of feminism in students' minds, to move them beyond the question, 'Feminism: yes or no?'" (1995:1002) and of discussions with fellow workshop participants about the dangers of accepting and perpetuating homogeneous notions of "*East, West, Central Europe and postcommunist woman*" (1995:1003, emphasis in original). In conclusion, Šmejkalová-Strickland argues for a more nuanced understanding of gender and feminism than that which has dominated the intellectual and popular exchanges on the subject: "Instead of any concluding moral, let me contribute one more question. What is to be the position of thinking and teaching gender in the hectic processes of transition in our part of Europe? My answer would be to revive articulation of gender identities as a sophisticated project, whether it be in political debates, social work, cultural activities, or scholarship"

(1995:1006). This call for complexity is a much-needed and little-heard directive within the English-language scholarship on gender and feminism in the Czech Republic, and begs the question of why U.S. scholars have not pursued the topic more vigorously in the previous twelve years.<sup>iii</sup>

While this literature serves well as an introduction to the study of the impact of certain socialist policies on Czech gender discourse and provides examples of points of contention regarding the use and meanings of the term feminism in the Czech population, it does not adequately theorize the existence of organizations founded and operated by Czech women. Given the positioning of many of these groups as resources for policy-makers and journalists trying to make sense of discourses on gender from a myriad of sources including European Union gender mainstreaming legislation, academic feminist theories, and feminist and queer youth movements, the lack of analysis and discussion of the meanings being generated and negotiated by these organizations constitutes a significant lacuna.

When I spoke with members of an established Czech women's organization (hereafter referred to as Woman's Action Organization, or WAO), I found that although many WAO members work with Western feminists and their particular ideas on a regular basis, they by no means simply "sing the song of those whose bread [they] eat" (Šiklová 1997a:262). Their definitions of the concept of feminism vary as widely as their opinions on Western feminism, which range from outright dismissal to conditional acceptance, and often hinge on the circumstances of the encounter.<sup>iv</sup> Marie, a woman in her late 40s who often serves as a liaison between foreign activists and members of Czech activist communities, describes her experience with Western feminists in this way:

There were a few women at the beginning of the '90s who came here for just one week or three days and they just wanted to teach us exactly what we should do (for example, to hold big demonstrations on main Prague squares where women would shout into microphones about how they were raped, or night marches where women would reclaim the streets). This was completely unthinkable then, and it seems pretty crazy even today, so these women couldn't really understand what was happening here. They used to come here

immediately after 1989, while later (in the mid-90s), I've cooperated with women who have spent several years or months here...who were really open-minded.

Westerners who went to Prague for a brief period and who, while there, attempted to dictate to or generalize about Czechs were not well regarded. Karolína, an influential member of WAO, says:

My experience is that when they come and question [us] they don't bother to read something beforehand, so their questions are really stupid.... They usually come like this, but [Westerners] do it with everything and everybody, not just the feminists. It's just their style, like the social anthropologists. I know it from Cambridge, in England. It is the same way there as well.

In general, organization members emphasize the inspirational value of Western feminism and the value of the written work and information from Western feminist organizations and scholars, while also emphasizing their autonomy from Western feminism's culturally based ideas. Erika, a younger staff member, says,

I think the value [of Western feminism] is in [its] inspiration. The development of Czech feminism was totally different from the Western countries, but it was, for sure, inspired by [them]. Czech feminists started with the main Western issues, but then they started to build their own feminism.

Although most members are like Erika in that they believe that Western feminist ideas have merits, they also believe that Czech women must have the freedom to determine the usefulness of Western feminism for themselves.

Stories of "East/West" conflict over the meanings of feminism have in many ways become symbolic of the inability of feminism to serve the needs of women in East Central Europe (see Šiklová 1998ab, Drakulic 1993, and Smejkalová-Strickland 1995 for a critique of this). It is important, however, not to lose sight of the contentious debates on feminism taking place within the "West" and around the world. Reflecting on these conflicts, Gal and Kligman write, "Indeed, if we look farther than Europe and the United States we see that feminisms all over the world run the gamut from essentialist to rights-based, from ecologically sensitive to development focused. Thus, the controversies among women in East Central Europe, and between them and feminists based in Western

Europe and the United States, are hardly exceptional" (2000:102). This diversity of opinion is also expressed in WAO members' thoughts on their definitions of feminism.

WAO members have broad definitions of the concept of feminism. Some emphasize individual determinations of feminist priorities, with stress on the fight against unequal treatment of women, while others view feminism as a way of life and mindset that can be useful in understanding the world. These categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, for Marie, feminism is both the fight against discrimination and a way to analyze that discrimination. She says, "[Feminism] is a struggle for freedom, not only for women, but also for men, and it is especially about analyzing and releasing traditional pressures, prejudices, gender roles – simply everything that I find so restricting and so disgusting." Věra, a coworker, also characterizes feminism as a mindset:

I am a feminist throughout my whole life attitude. Feminism means, for me, basically everything connected to women's rights or women's situation, and also with different women's and men's views of the world – I want to stress this, because it's not only a question of women's rights but also of different attitudes to one's whole life, a different way to perceive life.

Emphasizing self-definition, Irena says, "Feminism is, for me, to define my needs and my goals and the means with which to achieve them. Also, I think that women should organize together to achieve their goals. To struggle together with men, but in separate organizations." Erika also stresses individual self-definitions: "I think [the definition of feminism is] each person's question. What I consider feminism may not be feminism for you. For example, you may have other priorities in your feminist thinking." Karolína says, "[Feminism is] a kind of view of the world through women's eyes, because I believe that everything that has been done in the world, like science or history, is [from] the male point of view, and feminism is doing the other [point of view] and shows that the male one is not the generic one." Roman sees feminism as "a challenge for a new space of gender freedom and a different way to form thinking – a redefinition of gender being." Jasmína views feminism as:

A network, a tool for changing the world, for communicating ideas. For me, it's more like a critical thinking method of how to

approach the asymmetry that has been here in history and to discuss it. It's definitely nothing to do with feeling like a victim. It's definitely not got anything to do with wailing out, "Oh, God I'm oppressed!" It's the opposite of it. It's a positive tool for improving everyone's lives.

While these explanations of feminism are by no means precise theoretical concepts, these definitions construct feminism as a conceptual category for understanding, analyzing, and addressing gender inequality. WAO members, who are working within an international feminist framework and are required by virtue of their very existence to communicate feminism to policy makers and people who walk in off of the street, are in a position to posit a working definition of feminism. Their lack of a single organizational definition is perhaps a testament to the newness of the Czech feminist debate, or alternately it could be interpreted as an attempt to avoid anything resembling socialist slogans. That multiple definitions exist at all, however, suggests a rich culture of debate that is not reflected in the available literature.

A further point of contention both in the literature and in participants' lives is the debate surrounding whether to use the term *gender* instead of *feminism* when explaining the aims and content of organizational activities (Šiklová 1998a; Hradilková 1993). Some reasons are the relationship of the term *feminism* to western feminism, stereotypes people hold about the word *feminism*, and the term *feminism*'s apparent exclusion of men. Participants' thoughts on use of the word *gender* vary greatly. In both arguments for and against using *gender*, participants point to its lack of Czech-language equivalent and therefore people's inability to understand it, as well as its academic nature. Participants who prefer the term like that it signals gender inclusivity and that its incomprehensibility sparks discussions among people. Those who would prefer not to use it bemoan the task of needing to explain the term every time they speak about it with a member of the media. Like several other participants, Monika does not like the word "gender." She says,

We have a big problem with the term *gender*. [It is used] in the English form, which is problematic. It looks ridiculous when we translate it into the Czech form.... Gender Studies at Charles University uses

the term *rod*, which is the Czech word to describe differences in language. We don't have a perfect translation, that's the problem.... [Nevertheless] *Gender* seems to be entering the Czech language. We're beginning to see it used in different grammatical forms, which means it's entering the language.

Markéta likes to use the term *gender* in her academic work, but thinks that "for the media and public debate it is a problem because nobody understands it. If you look in dictionaries, you just don't find it—even in Czech-English dictionaries, you just don't find it anywhere—so what can journalists do with it? You just have to explain it over and over again."

Radka says, "I really think that no one knows the word *gender* unless you are in academic circles where everybody knows, but in general people don't know what it means. They don't know how to spell it, they don't know how to write it, they don't know what it's about." One participant is concerned with the ways the term *gender* is used within WAO itself:

[One WAO member] has proclaimed many times that she is not a feminist. She is only interested in gender studies. I see many different things in this attitude. It is a signal for society that feminism is bad and that there is a "neutral view"—scientific, positivist...it's horrible for me. It's an 18<sup>th</sup> century belief that there is a "natural" attitude. I think this is false. But I think that "gender" or "women's issues" are important for society. The problem is that, in Czech society, there are many gender problems. Society needs an intellectual instrument to describe this problem and *gender* is one of these instruments. It is necessary to use, but the question is how.

Other participants feel that *gender* is an important term because it signals inclusivity and openness to men. Věra says that, although she has not always liked the term "gender," "nowadays I am quite happy with it because using the term *gender* indicates a wider range of activities, it doesn't exclude men." Lucie agrees, "Gender is a relatively new word that is possible to use without prejudice. Also, it means that it is connected with the interpretation of men's situation as well.... How can you speak about the right without the left? You can't speak about women without comparisons with men. That's why *gender* is more important." Marie also thinks that *gender* is a useful term to use

because, “although it is useful to speak of women’s issues specifically, it is also important to speak of men’s issues as well. I think they are two sides of one coin, so it is necessary to speak about gender issues.” Erika says, “[Gender] is not a feminist term.... It’s a sociological term that doesn’t concern only women but also men.” Perhaps even more than the word the word feminism, the term gender evokes controversy among participants.

In much of the literature written by and about Czech women, a connection to the other former Eastern Bloc countries is assumed. Their shared experiences of state socialism are posited as a common ground that unites them as post-socialist. Often, WAO members affirmed these bonds as well and pointed to commonalities among people’s experiences in the region. Nevertheless, WAO members hold differing and often opposing views on the possibility of Czech or post-socialist feminisms. Erika says, “I think there is a Czech-style everything! Czech-style government, Czech-style feminism.... But now I think that Czech feminism is maybe more united than Western feminisms because there aren’t many feminists here and even if they have different opinions, they are able to unite.” In an ironic and telling statement, however, Karolína dismisses the possibility of a locally created Czech feminism. She says incredulously, “I don’t believe it, because who would create it?” I found this statement to be particularly reminiscent of my earlier disorienting encounters with women who simultaneously acknowledged and denied the relevance of feminism in their lives.

Like the notion of a specifically Czech feminism, WAO members disagree about whether there is a post-socialist feminism. The reasons they give for both “yes” and “no” answers have to do with socio-historical backgrounds of countries and regions. For example, Radka says that there is a post-socialist feminism because, although she believes that “every country has something specific,” she thinks that “in general...the problems we are facing are really joined, or common, to all the post-communist countries of Central Europe.” By contrast, Erika points out, “The development was different in every post-communist country. For example, it went quite easily in the Czech Republic, but when you look at Poland there is a tragedy, you know, the Christian state, and feminism there is very important but it doesn’t have many chances, because they have abortion laws and stuff like that.” When discussing the

existence or nonexistence of specifically Czech or regional post-socialist feminisms, the position of the Czech Republic as not quite “East,” not quite “West,” is reflected in WAO members’ varied opinions. Their opinions also reflect the broader questions of whether there is something linking the inhabitants of post-socialist Europe to one another, or whether the links of the past are being subsumed under national identities and priorities.

In *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman suggest that conflict between east Central European women and Western feminists is “not only about east Central Europe, but is contributing new understandings of ‘feminism’ itself, and its possibilities as an international social movement in a post-Cold War world” (2000:100). Indeed, these new understandings are brought to light through the ways in which WAO members shape definitions of feminism to suit their socio-occupational contexts and through their selective appropriation of Western feminist theories and practices. I have attempted to demonstrate here that rather than holding a blanket aversion to feminism, as is often claimed, organization members are in fact engaged in active characterizations and transformations of feminism in ways that better suit the framework of their lives and work and, at the same time, reflect important gendered negotiations of transition on a larger scale. Through the process of defining feminism for themselves, WAO members are asserting their independence from and equality to Western feminists as well as their desire to be involved in multivocal and multilocal feminist discourses.

## References

- Beck, Julie. 2000. “(Re)negotiating Selfhood and Citizenship in the Post-Communist Czech Republic.” In *Gender and Global Restructuring*. Marianne Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan, eds. Pp. 176-193. New York: Routledge.
- Busheikin, Laura. 1993. “Is Sisterhood Really Global? Western Feminism in Eastern Europe.” In *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women’s Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic*. Susanna Trnka and Laura Busheikin, eds. Pp. 69-76. Prague: Prague Gender Studies Centre.
- Castle-Kanerová, Mita. 1992. “Czech and Slovak Federated Republic: The Culture of

- Strong Women in the Making?" In *Superwomen and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Chris Corrin, ed. Pp. 97-124. London: Scarlet.
- Corrin, Chris. 1992. *Superwomen and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. London: Scarlet.
- David-Fox, Katherine. 1993. "Czech Feminism and Nationalism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy." In *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women's Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic*. Susanna Trnka and Laura Busheikin, eds. Pp. 23-26. Prague: Prague Gender Studies Centre.
- Drakulic, Slavinka. 1998. "What We Learned from Western Feminists." *Transitions*. 5: 42-47.
1993. "A Letter from the United States: The Critical Theory Approach. In *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, Pp. 123-132. New York: Harper.
- Gal, Susan and Gail Kligman, eds. 2000 *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2000. *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goldfarb, Jeffrey. 1997. "Why Is There No Feminism After Communism?" *Social Research* (64) 2:235-257.
- Hauser, Eva. 1995. "How and why do Czech women organize? Altos, sopranos and a few discordant voices." *Canadian Women's Studies* 16 (December):85-89.
- Hauserová, Eva. 1993. "Bronchitis, Laryngitis, Otitis...and Acute Hysteria: The Cult of Motherhood." In *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women's Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic*. Susanna Trnka and Laura Busheikin, eds. Pp. 41-44. Prague: Gender Studies Centre.
- Havelková, Hana. 1993 "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts." In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds. Pp. 62-73. New York: Routledge.
- Hradilková, Jana. 1993. "(Re-)building the House of Gender Studies." In *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women's Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic*. Susanna Trnka and Laura Busheikin, eds. Pp. 41-44. Prague: Gender Studies Centre.
- Kiczková, Zuzana and Etela Farkašová. 1993. "The Emancipation of Women: A Concept that Failed." In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds. Pp. 84-93. New York: Routledge.
- Nash, Rebecca. 2002. "Exhaustion from Explanation: Reading Czech Gender Studies in the 1990s." *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 9(3):291-309.
- Penn, Shana. 1998. "Looking East, Looking West: Cross-Cultural Bumps and Triumphs." *Transitions* 5 (January):48-51.
- Renne, Tanya, ed. 1997. *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*. Boulder: Westview.
- Sayer, Derek. 1998. *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Skilling, Gordon. 1991. "T.G. Masaryk: A Radical Feminist." *Cross Currents* 10:195-211.
- Šiklová, Jiřina. 1998a. "Why We Resist Western-style Feminism." *Transitions* 5 (January):30-35.
- 1998b "Women and Human Rights in Post-Communist Countries." In *Gender, Planning and Human Rights*. Tovi Fenster, ed. Pp. 153-168. New York: Routledge.
- 1997a "Feminism and the Roots of Apathy in the Czech Republic." *Social Research* 64:258-80.
- 1997b "McDonalds, Terminators, Coca-Cola Ads-and Feminism? Imports from the West." In *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*. Tanya Renne, ed. Pp. 76-81. Boulder: Westview.

- 1993 "Are Women in Central and Eastern Europe Conservative?" In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds. Pp. 74-83. New York: Routledge.
- Šmejkalová-Strickland, Jiřina. 1995. "Revival? Gender Studies and the 'Other' Europa." *Signs* (20)4:1000-1006.
- Trnka, Susanna and Laura Busheikin. 1993. *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Women's Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic*. Prague: Prague Gender Studies Centre.
- Vesinová-Kalivodová, Eva. 1998. "The Vision of Czech Women: One Eye Open (Gender Roles in Czech Society, Politics and Culture)." *Dialectical Anthropology* 23:361-374.
- Vrabková, Jiřina. 1997. "Women's Priorities and Visions." In *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*. Tanya Renne, ed. Pp. 72-75. Boulder: Westview.

---

January-March 2001). I interviewed ten WAO members, 9 women and 1 man, from ages 18 to 70. Informants included paid and volunteer staff; some had been at WAO since its inception, other for only the past few months. All names are pseudonyms.

## Notes

---

<sup>i</sup> A couple of articles gesture to Czech history as a source of Czech feminism. David-Fox 1993 analyses Czech feminist activity during the National Revival period of the 1890s-1918 and Skilling 1991 positions Czechoslovak First Republic president Tomáš Masaryk as a "radical feminist."

<sup>ii</sup> Exceptions are Šiklová 1993, in which she mentions the Prague Gender Studies Centre as a place for Czech women to learn about feminism briefly at the end of the article and an article about the Czech feminist literary and cultural journal *One Eye Open* (Vesinová-Kalivodová 1998).

<sup>iii</sup> For example, there is only one article that addresses gender in the Czech context in Gal and Kligman's otherwise thorough and provocative volume entitled *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism* (2000). The aforementioned article is entitled "Reproductive Policies in the Czech and Slovak Republics."

<sup>iv</sup> This paper is based on information collected during two visits, one work-related and one research-specific, to the Czech Republic (September 1998-July 1999 and