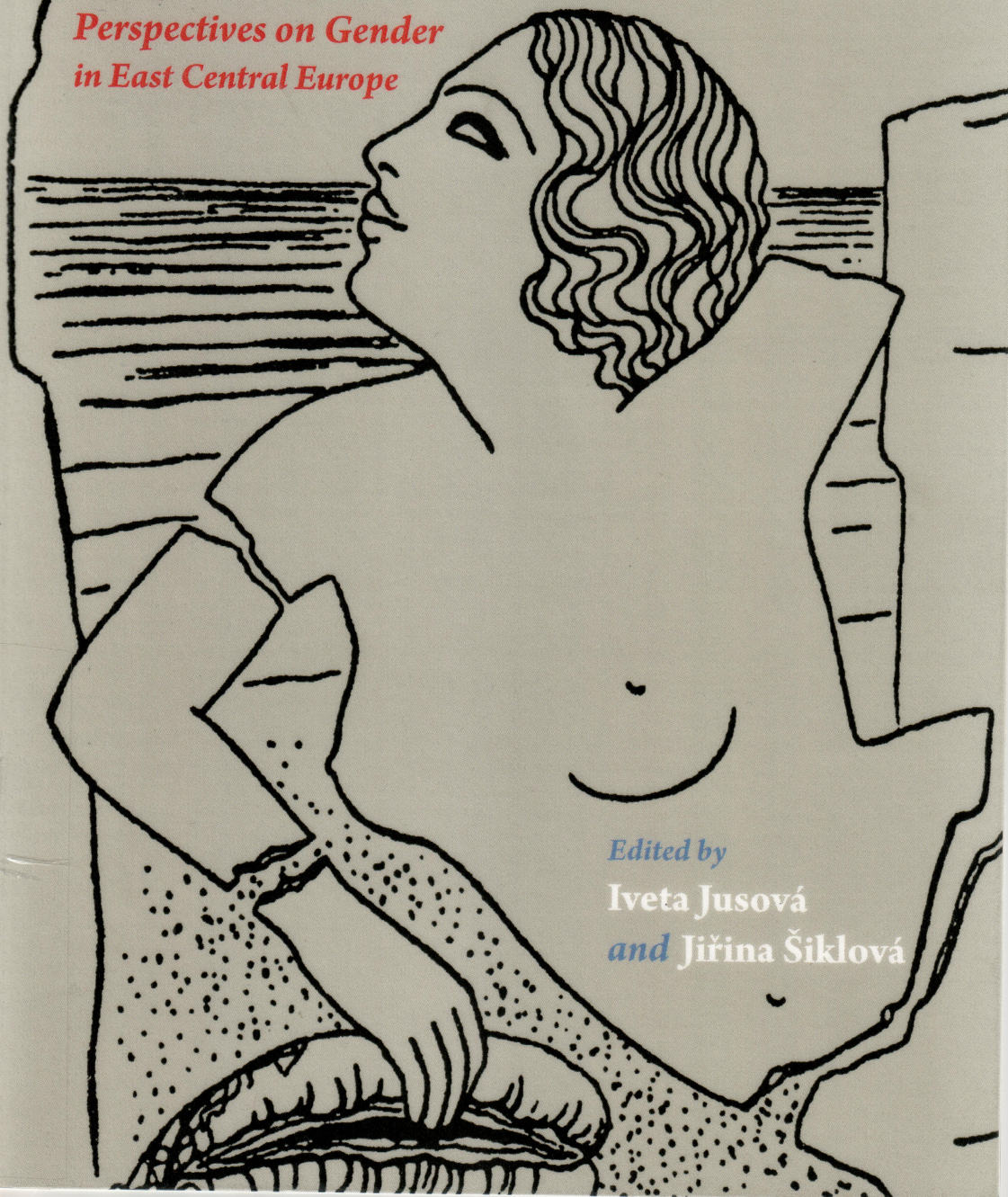


CZECH FEMINISMS

*Perspectives on Gender
in East Central Europe*

Edited by
Iveta Jusová
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6 CONTESTED FEMINISM

The East/West Feminist Encounters in the 1990s

SIMONA FOJTOVÁ

Throughout the years Western European and American feminists have had the opportunity to seek and define their program, to choose and discuss it. We could only accept or, in exceptional cases, reject the political program given to us. That being so, please give us time for our self-discovery. I would not like to see the women of Central and Eastern Europe merely taking over Western feminists' views and again imitating someone else.

JIŘINA ŠIKLOVÁ, former Czech dissident, sociologist, prominent gender scholar, and the initiator and cofounder of the Gender Studies Centre in Prague

Do Czech women need feminism? *Yes*, I think we do need feminism. The point is which kind of feminism. Feminism as a label standing for a collection of claims about women's oppression in the male-dominated patriarchal order, deepening in the Czech Republic already quite powerful channels of hostility, is not particularly welcome. Each of us should work on her or his own feminism—try to choose, construct, and reconstruct arguments and perspectives according to our needs, ways of understanding, maybe even tastes.

JIŘINA ŠMEJKALOVÁ-STRICKLAND

Contemporary Western feminism is already trying to cope with the challenges posed by Western women, primarily women of color and poor women, who feel it doesn't sufficiently address their realities. It took white, middle-class feminists a long time to stop talking about power only in terms of patriarchy—to accept that "men oppressing women" is perhaps too simple a formula, to give up celebrating sisterhood and begin celebrating differences, and to attempt to move beyond a binary us-and-them mentality. If we begin to listen to Eastern European voices, we are taken even further in this direction, and find ourselves in entirely new territory.

LAURA BUSHEIKIN, describing her experience in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s

The differences of opinion alluded to in the above passages take us back to the post-1989 period, which witnessed the dissolution of borders, the celebratory tearing down of walls at the collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe, and the unmaking of a cultural-political landscape that had for a lifetime largely blocked dialogue between women of the East and West. As addressed in several of the preceding chapters, Czechoslovakia of the communist era (1948–89) was marked by tight government control of social research activities. Even though the position of women in Czechoslovakia of that time was publicly discussed and addressed through research, women's emancipation was seen mostly in terms of legal equality and equal labor force participation and was also viewed as having been accomplished to a great extent. The different perspectives on women's/gender issues that had started to develop in Western Europe, the United States, and Canada as part of the feminist second wave, including those focused on questions of sexuality, sexual orientation, or gender identity, were long rejected as "bourgeois" and considered dangerous to the communist regime.

After the fall of communism in 1989, expanded discussions about women's issues and feminism began to emerge. Even though a vocal and popular feminist platform was missing in Czech post-socialist society, women's issues became a subject of interest among women writers and intellectuals, who gradually started advocating for the necessity of studying gender. The interest in feminism unfolded in a context of international exchanges and contacts through which Czech women engaged with feminists from Western Europe, the United States, and Canada, who were arriving in the region in large numbers to study local women's situations. In the often-heated cross-cultural exchanges that unfolded throughout the 1990s, and in which misunderstandings abounded on both sides, "feminism" became a highly contested term and was often represented as a Western import.

These cross-cultural exchanges were complicated by the way feminism was being represented in the popular Czecho(Slovak) media at the time.¹ In the early 1990s, the Czech media delighted in ridiculing feminism, often giving platforms to returning chauvinistic male Czech émigrés, who warned Czechs to stay away from "feminist ideologies." Consider, for instance, the following comment from an interview published in 1992 in the noted Czech weekly *Respect* with one of the most prestigious Czech-Canadian émigrés, writer Josef Škvorecký:

One of the worst things that can happen to a good idea is when a madman à la Lenin turns it into a basis for an ideology. . . . The most recent example of this process, which we have experienced firsthand here [in Canada], are

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the latest adventures of American feminism. The idea of women's equality in all aspects of life has been turned into the ideology of women's superiority, whose spokeswomen and spokesmen . . . represent a typical "vanguard" of feminism, in the most extreme case openly lesbian or radically anti-male. (quoted in Šmejkalová 1998, 16; my translation)

Or see another example from an interview with émigré Otto Ulč, published in 1992 in the esteemed daily *Lidové noviny* (The People's Newspaper) under the title "Zabíjejte novorozené chlapečky! Neklid na lesbické frontě" (Kill Newborn Baby-Boys! Unrest on the Lesbian Front). Ulč here describes the delegates of a lesbian congress he had presumably attended as "frowning, irritated, insulting and aggressive, suggesting injuries. Witnesses saw that the ladies not only raised clenched fists in a revolutionary greeting, but with two fingers they were making a scissors motion, cut, cut. Passerby men, even owners of the most peaceful penises all ran away, in fear for their manhood" (quoted in Sokolová 2005, 34).

Local women activists and intellectuals who were interested in women's issues found themselves responding to two very different discourses and constituents—on the one hand, they faced derogatory and dismissive representations of feminism in the Czech media; on the other hand, they fielded inquiries and questions from an influx of feminist scholars arriving in the region (and especially Prague) to study post-socialist women. On the positive side, the fact that productive relationships had already started developing between Czech and foreign feminists in the early 1990s (tensions notwithstanding) is exemplified by the story of the founding of the Gender Studies Centre in Prague. While the Czech sociologist and former dissident Jiřina Šiklová played a key role in conceptualizing and founding the center, the startup money was provided by Ann Snitow, the founder of the Network of East-West Women (NEWW), and the center's feminist library initially relied heavily on book donations acquired through the NEWW.² Later the center received long-term support from the German foundation FrauenAnstiftung, funding that was acquired in 1992 with the assistance of Czech-German feminist Saša M. Lienau (Hašková 2011, 148). Yet aside from the largely successful collaborative cross-cultural relationships such as those surrounding the Gender Studies Centre, the debates between Western and Czech (and other Eastern European) women throughout the 1990s were often marked by frustrations and misunderstandings, as well as by disputes around power and difference.³

Often described as contentious and confrontational, these cross-cultural exchanges focused on the relevance of Western feminist analysis in post-socialist

societies (Drakulić 1991; Šiklová 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 1998; Havelková 1993, 1997; Einhorn 1991, 1993; Wolchik 1991, 1995; Šmejkalová-Strickland 1993; Busheikin 1993; Funk 1993, 2004; Occhipinti 1996; Heitlinger 1996; Snitow 1997a; Renne 1997; Ferber and Raabe 2003; Ghodsee 2004; Nash 2002; Argent 2003, 2008; Slavova 2006). In the views of many scholars, appeals to global sisterhood remained unanswered in most post-socialist societies in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. Scholars noted the absence of vibrant feminist mobilizing and advocacy for women's rights, and analyzed why women's movements in Eastern Europe did not become a strong social force in the process of transformation. The negative public attitudes displayed toward feminism in Eastern Europe became one of the most discussed issues among Western feminist scholars, and the communist legacy served as an explanation for Eastern Europeans' alleged apolitical attitudes and antipathy toward feminism. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, many scholars were posing questions such as, Why were Western feminists being perceived as culturally insensitive and feminism understood as a form of theoretical imperialism rather than an emancipatory force? Why were Eastern European women exhibiting so much resistance toward feminism?

Among the former socialist countries, Czechoslovakia became associated with the most pronounced resistance to Western-style feminism. For example, Barbara Einhorn suggested in 1991 that Czechoslovakia may have "the strongest resistance to an explicitly feminist grouping" as compared to the other former socialist countries (29). Reflecting on her research stay in the 1990s, Rebecca Nash similarly noted that Czech women were seen as lacking gender consciousness and feminist activism: "Feminists, East and West, often remark on gender inequalities in the Czech Republic, and on what they see as a lackluster response to the situation on the part of leading Czech women academics. . . . While in Prague, I regularly encountered other American women (from tourists to long-term residents to diplomats to fellow researchers) puzzled by what they interpreted as acceptance of or indifference to large-scale subordination at work, in politics, the media and the household" (2002, 303). In 1996, the Czech historian Jitka Malečková also commented on anti-feminist sentiments among the Czech public and argued that "the reaction of both men and women, the public as well as the academics, towards the very terms feminism, women's movement and Women's Studies is generally negative" (101).

Now, more than twenty years later, the commonly debated question from the 1990s about the possibility of feminism coming to life in Eastern Europe, and specifically the Czech Republic, seems to have been answered. When we

look at the changing academic, social, and cultural landscapes that reflect growing gender consciousness and a feminist ethos, it is apparent that feminism has taken root. In contrast to the 1990s, the new millennium has offered a steady growth in Czech feminist scholarship, a burgeoning institutionalization of Gender Studies programs at Czech universities, and an increased presence and influence of women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Moreover, a significant change has also become visible in the portrayal of feminism in public discourse. The post-1989 attacks on feminism in the Czech media have lost much of their original vitriol as well as mass support, and in the past several years the Czech mainstream press has even started featuring pro-feminist articles. This change is also evident in other post-socialist countries. As the feminist historian Maria Bucur observed in 2008, "whereas feminism was deemed an exotic foreign import in the 1990s, the emergence of a definite feminist sensibility can be seen in the realm of popular culture in post-communist Eastern Europe [today]" (1388).

Given the transformation of feminism from a Western ideology of questionable relevance to an established academic field and important perspective of analysis, why return to the earlier debates about the applicability of feminism in Eastern Europe? My aim in revisiting the East/West dialogue about feminism is to complicate the commonly accepted academic assessment of the 1990s in the English-language scholarship, according to which Czech women rejected feminism. Also, in many accounts of these conversations about feminism, the communist past is used as an explanation for the lack of feminist mobilizing and gender consciousness. Yet I believe there is another way to understand the dialogues and a different story to tell.

The challenge with respect to Western feminism in the 1990s was particularly evident in the English-language writings by Jiřina Šiklová, Hana Havelková, and Jiřina Šmejkalová, all of whom expressed concerns about the relevance of Western feminist concepts for the post-socialist context. Šiklová emerged as the most critical voice on Western feminism at the time, and she has since become "the most frequently translated and esteemed 'Czech Feminist' in the popular Western imagination" (Argent 2003, 38). Although English-language texts by Šiklová, along with texts written by sociologist and philosopher Havelková, became the most anthologized, Šmejkalová's work remains less known despite its importance for understanding the East/West debates on feminism. While Šiklová, Havelková, and Šmejkalová questioned the relevance of Western feminist theory for Czech women in different ways, they shared important commonalities in terms of how feminism could take into account Czech specificity.

Drawing on the work of Šiklová, Havelková, and Šmejkalová, I argue that even though top-down women's emancipation by socialist states did create specific conditions through which Eastern European women approached (and reproached) feminism after 1989, feminism did not become contested solely because of the communist legacy. Czech women's experiences with socialism did not necessarily lead to their perceived rejection of feminism; rather, these experiences exposed the limitations of the applicability of liberal Western feminism to the Czech context. Contrary to the dominant academic assessments, I argue that their critiques should not be seen as a rejection of feminism but as a call for a cultural and political situatedness of feminist analysis relevant to Czech women. Pointing out differences in social, political, and intellectual experiences, Czech gender scholars have argued that feminism conceptualized only as seeking equality between men and women simply did not resonate with Czech women.

The East/West differences and disagreements over the meanings of feminism thus exposed a need for new forms of analysis, and I want to argue that intersectional theory offers a form of analysis relevant for the post-socialist situation of Czech women. Frequently deployed in acknowledgment of differences among women, intersectionality not only questions the exclusive theoretical focus on gender but also offers a commitment to situatedness. Still, even as intersectionality has broadened the focus of Western feminist theorizing beyond patriarchy to examine how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, ability, and other identity markers, issues of nationality and the role of the state, and especially of the communist regime, have received less theoretical attention. Given the primacy of national identity and the top-down emancipation of women by the Czechoslovak communist regime, Czech scholars' critiques suggest that intersectional analysis that specifically investigates how gender intersects with nationality and the role of the communist state would provide a particularly appropriate lens through which to examine the situation of Czech women.

To be sure, calls for attention to be directed toward the situatedness of feminist analysis are not new. Similar suggestions have previously been made as women of color and lesbians in the United States, as well as Third World women, challenged Western feminist notions of universal oppression, the uniformity of women's experiences, and a global theory of patriarchy. Czech resistance to Western feminism can be seen as a way to continue the critiques by women of color that have challenged the subject implicit in Western feminist thinking, a subject that normalizes the experience of white, middle-class, First World women (hooks 1984; Trinh 1989; Mohanty 1984).

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Drawing on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's insights into the construction of Third World feminism, Kornelia Slavova has argued that Eastern European feminisms have followed a similar trajectory of deconstructing and constructing: "On the one hand, they are critically appropriating and subverting established Western feminist models, while on the other hand, they are striving to construct their own feminist identity and politics" (2006, 247). In this respect, when Czech women questioned the relevance of Western liberal feminism, it was their way of challenging the Western-produced category of woman, as well as the first step in their efforts to develop their own feminism. Czech women's critiques of Western liberal feminism in the 1990s can thus be seen as contributing to ongoing attempts to assess the relevance of Western feminist theory beyond national borders, and the East/West feminist exchange can serve as a case study for building future feminist coalitions across those borders.

NEGOTIATION RATHER THAN NEGATION OF WESTERN FEMINISM IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

As noted above, when Western scholars searched for recognizable signs of a feminist movement in post-socialist Europe in the 1990s, they did not find much indication of feminism coming to life. Instead, they saw multiple manifestations of anti-feminist attitudes among both the general public and intellectuals, and a lack of vibrant feminist organizing, mobilizing, and advocacy. Many scholars focused on the communist legacy as an explanation for this alleged antipathy to feminism. In the introduction to *Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*, Tanya Renne, for instance, summarizes the main reasons for anti-feminist sentiments in post-socialist Eastern Europe: "[Feminism] is seen either as an imported Western ideology to be rejected out of hand or as an old communist principle to be proudly refused. People of the region are painfully familiar with the use of the women of the Communist Party to spread the propaganda of their governments" (1997, 2).

More specifically in the Czech context, scholars were pointing out that the Czech communist government not only endeavored to discredit feminism as a Western ideology but also appropriated the independent Czech women's movement from interwar democratic Czechoslovakia (1918–38) for the government's own purposes. Viewing the communist legacy as the main source of feminist antipathy, Melissa Feinberg, for instance, contends that "in the Czech case at least, current attitudes toward feminism can only be explained as a legacy of Communism, which gutted the democratic Czech feminist movement and

took its language, its organizational structure, and even its magazine for itself” (2006, 10). Feinberg’s book, which details the history of the Czech feminist movement in the first half of the twentieth century, in fact diverges from the view which was prevalent in the 1990s that Czech women exhibited a historical antipathy to feminism and that “independent feminism is relatively new to Eastern Europe” (Renne 1997, 2). Mapping out the women’s movement in democratic Czechoslovakia, Feinberg discusses the political influence and intellectual authority of Czech feminists in the interwar period and argues that “their story also serves to remind us that the lack of popular sympathy for feminism in Eastern Europe today is not something intrinsic to the region” (2006, 10).

The Czechoslovak communist government not only effaced the memory of the feminist history of the first Czechoslovak Republic by appropriating aspects of the Czech feminist movement, but it also implemented state policies that resulted in forced emancipation of women. Such policies overburdened women by mandating that they work outside of the home in addition to being mothers, wives, and full-time housekeepers.⁴ Czech critics and Western feminists have rightly exposed the alleged equality of Czech women as almost singularly a matter of economic emancipation that served the political interests of the regime. Thus, in response to those who pointed out the strong presence of women in the socialist labor force and interpreted it as a sign of achieved economic equality of women under socialism, others challenged such egalitarianism and claimed it was actually forced emancipation that necessitated mandatory engagement in paid labor. Hana Havelková summed up these critiques: “There is a sense that women’s emancipation, defined as full employment, was achieved under socialism but that no one really benefited from it” (1993, 65). Rather than becoming liberated and fulfilled through paid employment—as many Western feminists envisioned for Western women—Czech women became overburdened. As Šiklová explained, “It was necessary for women to enter the workforce, and thus the majority of women did not regard the involuntary ‘choice’—the possibility or necessity of gainful employment—as an opportunity for self-realization or self-assertion” (1997b, 76).

While economic independence and social participation became core concepts of women’s liberation in Western feminism, they were not seen as relevant goals for many Czech women after 1989 given women’s triple role under communism. If the second wave of Anglo-American feminism focused on bringing women into the public sphere through paid employment, education, and political participation, Czech women had already achieved these goals under state socialism to a certain degree because they were obliged to participate in the

public sphere not just through paid labor but also via their roles as citizens. As Alena Heitlinger has pointed out, "Throughout the communist period, women's role was defined as a unity of economic, maternal, and political functions; a counterpart to this threefold role has never been spelled out for men" (1993, 95).

Czech scholars have not only questioned the relevance of the goals and priorities of Western liberal feminism, such as women's economic emancipation and political participation, but have also questioned the strategies and language many Western feminists used to achieve such goals. Along with associating Western-style feminism with the discredited politics of the former communist regime, scholars explained the perceived negative associations between state-sponsored women's emancipation under communism and Western feminism in terms of the language used and the forms of advocacy prioritized. The Western feminist rhetoric and the forms of organizing it called for seemed to be reminiscent, in the eyes of many post-1989 Czech women, of discredited socialist emancipatory slogans. As Šiklová explained,

When Western feminists ask us how many times we have demonstrated against our government, against the discrimination of women in employment, or against lower pay, we are at a loss as to what to say. We have not demonstrated; we do not revolt as women. In this country, the political struggle for women's rights has not been included in our program. Czech women were obligatorily organized for too long; hence, they tend to connect liberty with the liberty not to be organized in any way. (1997b, 79)

Because Czech women were expected to be politically engaged under communism, Šiklová views the communist legacy as an explanation for their current disinterest in public and political involvement. Yet her explanation for the lack of public involvement does not necessarily imply a disinterest in women's issues. Šiklová simply sees small, grassroots women's organizations, rather than the large-scale political activism characteristic of second-wave Western feminism, as an appropriate venue for addressing women's issues in post-socialist Czech society.

Rather than rejecting feminism in its entirety, many Czech writers have questioned particular Western feminist goals, strategies, and theoretical frameworks, expressing instead a demand for a feminist discourse that is culturally relevant to the situation of Czech women. In 1993, Šiklová spoke of concerns about the significance of Western feminist concepts in the post-socialist context and warned: "No identity, let alone a feminine one, can be imported. The absence of feminism in theory and practice cannot be corrected by merely accepting the experiences and ideologies of the Western feminist movement" (80).

As illustrated through the epigraph quoted at the top of this chapter, Šiklová envisioned the possibility of a feminism that would be informed by specifically Czech conditions. While Šiklová cautioned against the uncritical adoption of Western feminist frameworks, Havelková also stressed the limited relevance of Western feminist theory due to the differences between Eastern and Western contexts: “There are many strong arguments that women’s experiences in post-totalitarian societies constitute the basis for a different practical-philosophical approach to the women’s issues, one that differs considerably from the model of feminism derived from the political context of western societies” (1993, 63). And Jiřina Šmejkalová-Strickland underscored the divergent intellectual histories in Eastern Europe and the West that gave birth to different theoretical approaches to women’s issues. She argued that while psychoanalysis, Marxism, and post-structuralism became important theories in the West, these theoretical traditions did not resonate in the Czech intellectual milieu (1993, 16).

Some scholars questioned the applicability of Western notions of women’s liberation from their prison-homes in the post-socialist context: “The treatment of the family by white [Western] feminists . . . has taken the family to be a significant, if not the primary, source of women’s oppression.’ . . . This approach has been criticized by Black and Third World feminists . . . as culturally and historically embedded; it is no surprise then, that it is highly problematic when applied to Eastern Europe” (Occhipinti 1996, 18). And still other scholars have probed the limitations of Western feminist concepts of liberation and oppression. While examining the emergence of women’s NGOs funded by Western aid, Kristen Ghodsee urges us to interrogate the forms of feminism imported into Eastern Europe (2004, 749). Overall, the post-1989 East/West debate over the meanings of feminism helped articulate questions concerning the dominant assumptions about the universality of feminist goals across cultures and exposed a need for new forms of analysis and activism.

As mentioned earlier, intersectional theory offers a new form of analysis relevant to the situation of Czech women. Given the history of exclusions in feminism, intersectionality has been deployed as a way of redressing these exclusions and acknowledging differences among women.⁵ However, the prevalent Western focus on race, class, and gender as intersecting lines of oppression does not necessarily provide a relevant framework for Czech women since their difference stems from the political systems of communism and nationalism. As Laura Busheikin put it in 1993, “now it has become fashionable in the West to talk of ‘race, class and gender’ as intersecting lines of oppression, but this doesn’t offer a framework which can fully account for East European wom-

en's experience" (74). Many of the critiques by Czech scholars reflect a similar notion. Havelková, for instance, wondered skeptically, "what are we, Czech women with respect to the categories of race, class, and gender? We experience neither race nor class oppression and we still do not consider gender oppression a priority" (1997, 59).⁶ And reflecting on class as a key analytical category in Western feminism, the historian Jitka Malečková explains why class has not become a relevant theoretical perspective for either contemporary Czech feminism or the early Czech women's movement: "In post-communist societies, the concept of class often has a negative connotation, reminiscent of the simplified orthodox Marxist (ab)uses of the term" (2009, 264).

Given the interconnectedness of women's issues with Czech national interests and the political system of communism, scholars and activists need to move beyond single-axis feminist analyses in order to understand the situation of Czech women. While the prevailing intersectional approach connecting gender, race, and class might not necessarily offer relevant categories of analysis for all Czech women, theorizing the relationship between gender and nation would certainly provide a useful intersectional framework.

BEYOND GENDER AS A SINGLE CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS: THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF WOMEN'S AND CZECH NATIONAL ISSUES

As acknowledged above, Czech and other Eastern European women have not been alone in questioning the dominant concepts underpinning Western feminist theory. In her article, "Looking at Western Feminisms through the Double Lens of Eastern Europe and the Third World," Kornelia Slavova examines the similarities in critiques of Western feminist theories expressed by Third World feminists and women in post-socialist Eastern Europe. As she argues, "Their visions and revisions of Western feminist theory . . . pose similar questions about the validity of certain assumptions and theories that attempt to embrace 'global' feminist developments, such as: the universality of feminist goals and methods, 'the equality of rights' agenda, the role of patriarchy, and the easy alliance between feminism and Marxism" (2006, 246–47). While Slavova's comparative analysis is a welcome contribution, little attention is paid in her essay to the differences that exist among Eastern European women. Yet there is a specificity to the Czech women's movement that differentiates its approach to women's issues in the Czech historical context from other Eastern/East Central European countries. Aligning women's issues with Czech national interests has

historically been a characteristic feature of the Czech women's movement. This dimension is tied not only to the socialist experience but also to the history of the early Czech women's movement in the nineteenth century and to the Czech feminist movement during the First Republic.

Given the Czech struggle for national independence from the Habsburg monarchy in the nineteenth century, there is a long history of Czech women's service to the national cause. Historians of Czech women's issues, such as Malečková, have examined this relationship. Malečková has characterized the early Czech women's movement, which was closely aligned with the struggle for national independence, as a movement of middle-class women focused on achieving full equality in education and access to professions. Moderate in its character, the women's movement for the most part did not encounter violent opposition and was mostly supported by Czech male politicians and intellectuals. In her earlier work, Malečková highlighted two characteristics of the Czech women's movement: "The prevailing subordination (or better connection) of women's aims to the interests of the whole nation, and the role of men in the women's movement, namely their active support of women, and women's deliberate collaboration with them. From its early beginnings, the Czech women's movement, emerging as a part of the national movement, shared a common 'enemy' with the latter—Austrian rule and authorities, and Germanization" (2004, 187).

The emancipation of the Czech nation and the emancipation of Czech women became inextricably linked in the nineteenth century, and similarly the democratic process during the First Republic, with its emphasis on egalitarianism, was intertwined with the feminist movement for equality in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, due to the convergence of feminism and nationalism, Czech women gained some rights—such as legal parity—with less struggle than women in other countries. For example, as Melissa Feinberg notes, "In the Czech lands, women got the vote only after a few years of work. Their rapid success was certainly not typical in Europe" (2006, 11). Although not all rights were achieved so quickly by Czech feminists in the First Republic—abortion rights and progressive changes in family law were accomplished only later under communism—Czech feminists secured a high degree of political influence and intellectual authority in the first half of the twentieth century.

Czech nationalism not only helped shape Czech women's approaches to women's issues but has also had an impact on the relationship between Czech women and men. Much of the scholarship on the early Czech women's move-

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ment points out how the interconnectedness of women's and Czech national issues resulted in Czech men's historical support of women's equality. Likewise, the democratic principles and egalitarian ideology of the First Republic extended to include equality for women as well. As Malečková has argued, "This view of the early women's movement and its favorable acceptance by the mainstream Czech national society had implications for the present as well: it suggested that in the post-communist Czech Republic men were women's allies rather than obstacles to women's equality" (2009, 263). Moreover, in Malečková's view, showing the strength of the earlier women's movement served as an important legitimizing mechanism for contemporary women's movements in many post-socialist countries because "it showed that the movement for women's rights and equality was neither a Western import, nor could it be identified with the official women's organizations under communism" (264).

Demonstrating that Czech feminism was indeed a historically homegrown product rather than a foreign import (which, of course, does not mean that Czech women and feminists worked in isolation from the rest of the world) became especially important in the context of the post-1989 East/West feminist encounters. The history of the early women's movement could offer Czech women a local building block for creating their own contemporary feminist movement, an important opportunity considering the concerns expressed by Czech scholars throughout the 1990s about uncritically importing Western feminist theory and strategies. We should not understand these scholars' critiques as a rejection of feminism but as a call for a different theoretical framework. And considering that national identity has been historically constructed for Czechs as their primary identity, I have suggested that intersectional analysis, one that specifically investigates how gender has historically intersected with nationality and the role of the communist regime, might be a particularly appropriate lens through which to examine the situation of Czech women.

Placed in a unique position between the West and the rest, the Czech context invites a new analytical perspective given the specific Czech dimension aligning women's and national issues. It can serve as a useful case study for examining how gender intersects with nationalism. Moreover, analyzing gender issues from a Czech perspective and in the Czech context can enrich Gender Studies debates still dominated by Anglo-American and Western European influences. As the editors of this volume have suggested in their introduction, attending to the situatedness and specificity of the Czech context can suggest new angles and approaches to existing feminist debates, and can lead toward acknowledging new concerns from which feminists globally could benefit.

NOTES

1. In 1993, Slovakia separated from Czechoslovakia, and the country split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

2. Ann Snitow remembers the NEWW contributions to Prague's Gender Studies project in her short piece "Appendix: A Postscript to Laura Busheikin" (1997a).

3. I use the term "Western feminism" as a shorthand referring to the variety of feminist discourses as they were perceived as "arriving" in Eastern Europe from the United States, Canada, Britain, and Western Europe in the 1990s. This is also how the term was used by many Czech and other Eastern European women writers at the time. I do not mean to suggest that feminist theory and philosophy are exclusively Western phenomena in their origin or usage. For a critique of the notion of feminism as a Western concept, see, among others, Aili Mari Tripp 2006. Numerous examples of women's activism in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe (collected in Franciska de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements*) clearly demonstrate that, whether calling themselves feminist or not, women's movements have a long history in the region.

4. With the exception of those with a medical condition or those on maternity leave, women under socialism did not have the choice of not working long-term. Czech women had the highest employment rates among the socialist countries. The result was the much-discussed double burden of mandatory paid employment and unpaid household duties.

5. While many black women writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addressed both issues of gender and race, intersectionality is most often associated with U.S. black feminist theory of the late 1970s and 1980s. The 1977 manifesto of the Combahee River Collective, a U.S. black feminist lesbian group, stressed the importance of integrating gender, race, class, and sexuality into feminist analysis. Many other U.S. feminist scholars examined multiple forms of discrimination and theorized the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality, especially hooks (1984); Davis (1981); Hull, Scott, and Smith (1982); Smith (1983); Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983); Zinn and Dill (1994); and Crenshaw (1989, 1991). While the concept itself had been used earlier, the term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and has been associated with her work, specifically her 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." Building on earlier U.S. black women's challenges to feminist exclusions, Crenshaw's criticism extends to legal discourse, which has also failed to address the multidimensionality of black women's experiences. Therefore, Crenshaw advocates for an intersectional approach, which treats race and gender as intersecting rather than mutually exclusive categories of analysis and experience. Intersectionality has also been used as an analytical perspective in areas other than feminist theory, and it has been adopted to address a variety of exclusions other than race, such as class, sexuality, ability, and nationality. Even though Crenshaw developed intersectionality as a theory that highlights race, some European scholars have taken the concept in other directions. For a transnational deployment of intersectionality and the importance of local contexts, see Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar, and Linda Supik 2011.

6. Havelková's "we" in this quotation constructs Czech women as a racially homogenous category and as white. Even though the presumed "Czech woman" for many Czech feminists seems to be white (and thus race-less), some feminist scholarship has begun to question the whiteness of this "we." For example, two articles in this collection focus on women of color in Czech society. Examining specific issues that Romany and Vietnamese women face in their communities and in Czech society, Karolína Ryvolová (chapter 9) and Mária Strašáková (chapter 10) highlight the need for an analysis of both gender and race.