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“I couldn't live without my factory now” The recruitment of women into the workforce in Communist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s²

Abstract

This paper provides a gender analysis of the recruitment campaigns aimed at bringing women into the workforce in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s. This period was noteworthy for the intensity of the recruitment campaigns and for the image of the female worker, which contrasted markedly with traditional ideas of femininity. In later years as the campaign lost its intensity the discourse construction more often reflected other images of the new socialist woman, particularly in terms of their private lives. Methodologically, this is a cultural-historical study based on gender analysis and critical discourse analysis. The sources are largely made up of periodicals from the time and instructional pamphlets for women, as well as archive material from the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and mass organizations for women.

Key words: gender, Communism, Czechoslovakia, workforce

The February Coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 meant a strengthening of the directed transformation of society, politics, culture and the economy to a "higher" level of socialism (McDermot 2015, Gellately 2013, Applebaum 2012, Heimann 2011). These powerful forces also affected gender relationships, roles and identities. In particular, during the government's first decade of rule, the idea of overcoming stereotypes

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was one of its main goals. The Communist leadership's transformational ambitions in terms of gender were most evident when it came to the intensive and systematic promotion of women in employment.³ Both public and private spheres were subject to massive recruitment campaigns encouraging women to join the workforce. The propaganda of the Communists was distinguished by an almost identical rhetoric, employing several different discursive strategies. The popular image of the resolute worker in overalls was one of the most common symbols of the period.

This paper provides a gender analysis of the recruitment campaigns aimed at bringing women into the workforce in Czechoslovakia. The 1950s was a period which was noteworthy for the intensity of the recruitment campaigns and for the image of the female worker, which contrasted markedly with traditional ideas of femininity. In later years as the campaign lost its intensity the discourse construction more often reflected other images of the new socialist woman, particularly in terms of their private lives. Methodologically, this is a cultural-historical study based on gender analysis and critical discourse analysis. The sources are largely made up of periodicals from the time and instructional pamphlets for women, as well as archive material from the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (ÚV KSČ) and mass organizations for women.⁴

Higher women's employment

During this period there were several different issues which affected the Communist leadership's thinking about the workforce. One of the most important was the shortage of labour, which together with other factors complicated the successful operation of local industry after the end of the Second World War. At this time, there was already a clear tendency to use women, mainly housewives, to supplement the workforce needed to rebuild the economy destroyed by the war. Up until then, this section of the population had been seen as an underused "reservoir" of labour which had strong potential in this respect. Over the course of the two-year plan from 1946–1948 in the Czech lands, 365,000 people

³ The transformational ambitions also affected other aspects, another important part of the official discourse was the image of the mother and publicly engaged women. On the other hand, images of the housewife and the partner/wife were marginalised (Nečasová 2011: 348–374).

⁴ This study's source base is substantially larger than the collection of material cited here.

were incorporated into the workforce, half of whom were women. Due to the continued shortage of workers in the post-February period, this upwards trend continued, and thanks to the various efforts made to recruit women, it gained emphasis and breadth. From 1948 to 1967 this effort was rewarded by further growth. In 1948, women made up 37.4% of the workforce, in 1955 this was 42.3%, reaching 44.8% in 1967. In total there was a 7% increase in the number of women in the overall workforce (Czechoslovak Historical Statistical Almanac 1985:150–151).⁵

However, the post-February issue of employment not only contained aspects of quantity, the restructuring of a state-directed economy with its strong bias towards heavy industry also required a qualitative shift of workers to a professional level. This was another of the reasons for the Communist leadership's interest in the workforce, while people working mainly in the tertiary sector and light industry were no longer as important. In the spirit of the communist vision, women's "favourite" professions such as hairdressers or seamstresses were to make way for supposedly more useful ones: "Do you think that Božka will train to be a hairdresser, that Jiřka will learn to sew and Marie will just stay at home and learn to cook? Absolutely not! Boženka, Jiřka and Marie are going into mining!" (Vlasta 1950: 28/2) read one of the many propaganda texts from the time. Women had already been praised in the postwar months for doing work traditionally viewed as a male preserve, but February 1948 opened up opportunities for more intensive propaganda. One of the main motivating factors behind the propaganda was to overturn gender stereotypes. Very often one could come across female tram drivers, foundry workers, turners and even celebrity tractor drivers who found the work to be satisfying and financially rewarding. Růžena Bičíšřáková confessed similar feelings in the magazine Vlasta⁶: "I like my job. I can't imagine that I'd just be at home (...) before I used to just mend the clothes, but I couldn't live without my factory now." (Vlasta 1950: 48/16)

In addition to quantitative indicators and attempts to change traditional views on suitable jobs for men and women, Marxist-Leninist ide-

⁵ In addition to the intensive propaganda, the percentage increase in the number of workers was also due to the closure of small businesses, the reduction in the number of liberal professions and the collectivisation of agriculture. Women who had previously been working in the household were, at the same time, forced into standard employment.

⁶ Throughout the whole communist period the magazine Vlasta was the most significant magazine aimed at the broadest range of women in Czechoslovakia. From 1947 it was issued fortnightly in enormous print runs which in some years exceeded half a million copies (e.g. 630,000 in 1967)

ology, which officially underpinned the newly installed government, also played an important role in the post-February issue of the workforce (Attwood 1999: 5–14). Here the aspect of women's emancipation in society was most frequently emphasized through paid employment. This was of great importance within the ideology as it represented the fundamental division of society at its economic basis, from which the social superstructure emerged. With paid employment women gained financial independence and could share in the reproduction of material and intellectual values, thus becoming fully valued, equal members of society:

"The extent of women's equal rights is dependent on working as a means of economic independence, and it is also a factor behind the level of women's actual equality in society." (Slušná 1988: 43)

In Marxist-Leninist ideology the emancipation and development of women's character through work was the basis for satisfying an individual's needs. This was contrasted with the previous traditional view of a woman's position as mainly being in the family and the home. The negative aspects of household work were very colourfully described by V. I. Lenin:

"Women remain domestic slaves despite all the emancipatory laws, because these household chores humiliate and oppress her, make her insensitive and dull, they chain her to the family and to the child's bedroom, her creative energy is sapped by work, which is frustratingly unproductive, petty, tiring, boring and debilitating." (Lenin 1962: 423–424)

The numerous work recruitment drives not only focused ideologically on the woman as an autonomous subject with her own personal motivation and status in society, but also as a subject who contributed to the "greater good of the whole". Linking women to employment theoretically contributed to their own development and prosperity, as well as to building a socialist society. The overarching aspect of the whole was also presented in various ways, completely in line with the collectivist character of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which in principle suppressed the individual element.⁷ Another important aspect of the propaganda was the fear that another war could break out, which in the postwar period produced the required emotional reaction:

"Come and increase our ranks. Through your work you can ensure peace and protect your children from the horrors of war. For peace does

⁷ There was also a similar trend in Czech literature where women were marginalised and objectified, irrespective of the author's politics. These features can be seen in the works of unofficial authors such as Václav Havel, Bohumil Hrabal, Josef Škvorecký (Matonoha 2014).

not just fall into your lap and neither can we protect it by just sitting by the stove at home." (Vlasta 1953: 8/5).

Women's entry into the workforce, expanding the ranks of committed workers, was not only used in ideological texts as a defensive shield against external enemies, but with the trial of Horáková and others in 1950, it was also used against internal enemies (Feinberg 2012: 27–29). The workers at the Křižík factory in the small village of Čakovice enjoyed a certain popularity when "as a result of the upsetting impression from the trial of the 13 traitors to the nation, decided to up their output by 25%" (Vlasta 1950: 25/10), which was to contribute towards strengthening the socialist state.

Methods of recruitment

Ideology, combined with purely pragmatic motives, created the focal point for the propaganda activities. The attempts to successfully recruit women into the workforce could be seen both in the systematic level of argumentation as well as how to communicate those arguments. The ÚV KSČ produced a detailed and extensive list of propaganda methods which employed a wide range of institutions, from ministries to mass organisations.⁸ These methods touched on both the public sphere and private homes. The majority of them relied on media pressure from the daily press, magazines and radio. Radio broadcasts were to offer regular reports, the printed media was to popularise specific women employed in the workforce, including how much they earned. And during their leisure time, visitors to the cinema were also subjected to the ideological campaign. In the 1950s, several films were made both at home and abroad which had clear recruitment aims.⁹ Female employees who had newly joined the workforce were also favoured in connection with large celebrations such as May Day, International Women's Day, etc. Contracts which were concluded to "honour" these important days very often contained a section concerning the specific number of women newly recruited into the workforce. Other propaganda was aimed at direct contact and

⁸ These mainly included the ministry of labour and social affairs, the mass organisation the Czechoslovak Women's Association (later the Committee of Czechoslovak Women), the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement and the Czechoslovak Youth Association (Nečasová 2014).

⁹ Foreign films included the Hungarian film *Her Success* (1949), the soviet *Battle of the Seconds* (1947), and Czech films including *The Cat among the Pigeons* (1951) and *The Journey to Happiness* (1951).

consisted of meetings, lectures and recruitment within companies. For example, in 1951, female tractor drivers from Ostrava came to the village of Klimkovice to extol the virtues of their profession.¹⁰ Other methods of recruitment included interviews with housewives who were visited by teams of two based on a previously provided list.¹¹ From 1950 this category also included the establishment of recruitment centres called Services for Women, with 200 being established in the first two years across the whole of the republic.¹² By mainly cooperating with the local national committees the centres gathered information from factories about their needs and vacant posts, about the number of unemployed women in a given region, and the capacities of nursery schools, creches and work canteens.¹³ Women seeking employment went there for advice or direct recommendations for a specific job, while summarized regional reports point to satisfactory results. For example, the centres in Opava, Krnova and Ostrava began to work quickly, where from June to September 1950, 16,000 new female employees became part of the workforce. In Opava there were even more women seeking work than vacant posts.¹⁴

The women who entered the workforce as fervent builders of socialism, from economic necessity or for other reasons,¹⁵ were testament to the success of the mass propaganda activities and were subsequently the focus of media attention, with their faces on the pages of all the magazines. Their stories were not only good examples to be followed, but they also served as guidance for how to deal with problems in their new workplace. The modern "heroes of labour" did not have everything handed to them on a plate and they had to overcome a range of obstacles.

¹⁰ National Archive Prague, ÚV KSČ – women's commission (no. 22), also no. 69, Local and regional reports of the Czechoslovak Women's Association committee, 1951.

¹¹ National Archive Prague, ÚV KSČ – women's commission (no. 22), also no. 69, Plan to incorporate women into the workforce.

¹² National Archive Prague, Central Action Committee of the National Front (no. 357/2), c. 68, ČSŽ activities report from 1951.

¹³ National Archive Prague, ÚV KSČ – women's commission (no. 22), and no. 69, Plan for incorporating women into the workforce.

¹⁴ National Archive Prague, ÚV KSČ – women's commission (no. 22), and no. 123, Incoming letters 1950.

¹⁵ In the post-February months there were many different reasons why women joined the workforce, which merits its own study. The tens of thousands of women who joined the workforce in these years had both personal and ideological reasons for doing so. One basic reason was economic necessity, when the levelling out of salaries meant that two earners were required in the family to cover their basic needs. (Rákosník 2010: 140–175).

One stereotypical story which appeared in the press, on the radio and in cinemas involved a woman starting her new job, which causes much mirth among her male colleagues, with distrustful comments often peppered with spiteful remarks. The new worker is surprised and disappointed by the attitude of her colleagues. The magazine *Vlasta* ran a story about Zdeňka Kodadová from Motorlet who had a similar start to her new job: "I cried a lot and there were so many times when I just wanted to run away from my machine. But I wasn't for giving in when the men said that a woman couldn't manage it." (*Vlasta* 1955: 4/12). According to these colour-print stories, the brave, hard-working woman shrugged off such welcomes. And not only did she remain at her workplace, but she also carried out her tasks with even greater zeal. At the end of the month, she fulfilled her quota or even surpassed it. Her success was often crowned by offering a plan for improvements and her surprised colleagues realized that they had behaved badly and remorsefully admitted their mistake. The happy end saw a rejection of past prejudices and the acceptance of the new female colleague with open arms. There is an identical narrative line in a letter from a shock-worker, Františka Blábolilová, who described her experiences at the Plzeň Škoda plant and ended with the words: "Today the factory is ours and we want our children to have a better life than we had...and so it seems rather pointless to spend too much time considering whether some type of work is suitable for a woman or not." (*Vlasta* 1950: 17/11). However, the writer's view represents more how she would like to see the world than the way it actually was. As was indicated by the stereotypical story about the worker starting her new job, there were always obstacles which not only had the function of making a narrative more dynamic and describing moral growth, but they also highlighted the real conflict between the traditional views of gender roles and the transformation of femininity and masculinity.

Female workers in male collectives

The most obvious focus of the disputes was the acceptance of female workers by the male collective. Much of the mistrust of women, or even the direct refusal to accept them, was based on ideas about their lack of ability and their working day could be arranged "more suitably". The traditional role of women went back to bourgeois ideas of the 19th century, which were still held by the majority of male workers in terms of the "typical" characteristics and interests of women, such as handicrafts, cooking or working in education or health. In a speech on International

Women's Day in 1956, the deputy prime minister, Václav Kopecký, spoke about women's "natural" qualities. Amongst other things he mentioned their gentleness, good taste, skill and sense for cleanliness and tidiness, which in no way differed from old-world ideas about the female character (Vlasta 1956: 12/3). Within this context the recruitment drives for women to do primarily male work were somewhat problematic, based as they were on emphasizing different characteristics. Gentleness, good taste and a sense for cleanliness were probably not very useful when working in a foundry, a building site or when processing metal. In an archive report about the shortage of women in the construction industry in 1950, one of the reasons for the lack of success was even marked down as for "moral reasons". Apparently women had a bad reputation amongst the builders on the site and it was necessary first of all to change public opinion and make the labourers behave politely in the presence of their female colleagues, and not shout at them or insult them.¹⁶ According to these reports, a female bricklayer on the building site represented an inappropriate, foreign element that the other workers felt a need to strongly differentiate themselves from, through behaviour transcending the usual norms of social interaction between the two sexes.

The very act of entering into a masculine environment, often described as "man's work" and other variations, was enough in itself to give a negative evaluation of the new female workers. This relates to the historical creation of the traditional image of a masculine man, who knows how to use his skills, which are not gifted to everyone, especially not to women. A specific example is the attitude of workers to their new female colleagues in 1955 at the aforementioned Motorlet. Their work had been generally thought of as "explicitly male to the accuracy of one millimetre". When it was time to teach the new women workers, there was a strong resistance to pass on their skills and experience: "Do we have to teach these women from the kitchen to do in a couple of days what has taken us years to learn?" (Vlasta 1955: 4/12). According to the American researchers Deborah David and Robert Brannon, the variation on this type of masculinity resting on exclusive skills and competencies represents one of four traditional male ideals constructed and reinforced over the years in folk as well as modern mass culture (David, Brannon 1976) The arrival of the new female workers denied their male colleagues this aspect of specificity and singularity. It threatened their exclusive standing and consequently their traditionally understood masculine identity.

¹⁶ National Archive Prague, ÚV KSČ – Marie Švermová, organisational department (no. 1261/2/5), and no. 80, Recruitment of women into the construction industry.

A report from a female tram driver from 1949 explicitly described this precise development when the male conductors made a joint agreement not to cooperate with her. The author of the article introduced her story with the words: "Well, you probably won't even believe how petty and childish people can be, wounded by their own vanity." (Vlasta 1951: 15/3). The concern of male workers that their own space would be disrupted by the entry of new female employees to the workforce was not only on a purely symbolic level. There were many publications at the time which mentioned male employees' fear of losing their job and being replaced by women, which represents an age-old problem accompanying the issue of female employment that had also been present in previous centuries. The problem of accepting the new female workers, referring to the clear threat to gender identity, was further exacerbated by the fact that the heroic shock-workers in these stories did not disappoint in their posts. Not only did they keep to the established work performance and fulfil the given quotas, but they usually surpassed them. Instead of abject failure and a repentant return to the "kitchen", there followed the appreciation associated with a certain social satisfaction.

This is wonderfully observed in the film *Štika v rybníce* [A Cat Among The Pigeons] from 1952 about a group of young female bricklayers defending the legitimacy of working on what used to be seen as a "man's" construction site. They are led by the self-confident Mařka, who will not be discouraged by the open mistrust of her male colleagues or the demanding tempo of the work. She even introduces changes to how the bricks are laid, leading to increased efficiency. The energy of her approach is reflected in the title of the film and it is also explicitly expressed here: "Mařka works on the building site like a nimble pike and soon puts the other lazy carp in their place." (Vlasta 1952: 6/7). This comparison, highlighting the character of Mařka, places the traditional gender characteristics in a completely different light. The female element is represented by a dynamic active strength which bravely overcomes all obstacles, whilst the dyadic element of the passive and reconciled is embodied by the males in an unflattering analogy with lazy carp. Therefore, this case is not only about the "dangerous" incursion of a foreign element, threatening the sovereign waters of a masculine pond, but more about the complete overturning of existing male and female values on a symbolic level. Here, the traditional concept of masculinity loses its usual positive characteristics, which from the logic of the ruling order's binary opposition removes it from the exclusive throne of power. The danger of such an overturned order is exacerbated by the final evaluation of power: "Mařka is a hero for today, who with her new attitude towards

work and optimistic outlook on life reflects the status of women in today's society." (Vlasta 1952: 6/7).

Limits of gender transformation

However, for the new female workers, who overcame the initial chilly reception from their colleagues, and at the end are even warmly accepted by them, not all of the pitfalls were avoided. Other dangers lay in wait which threatened their own identity. Work which was viewed by the wider public as being mainly carried out by men concealed within it the great risk of suppressing or disrupting their femininity (Halberstam 1998). Women's latent fear of losing their femininity appeared in many of the propaganda texts of the time. This can be seen in a report by an official for the Provincial National Council from 1948, aptly titled *A Woman in a Man's Place*: "And that is the wonderful thing. That it is not a mannish woman but a real woman (...) who takes on such an important role in our public life." (Vlasta 1948:13/9). Why in this given context is femininity assumed to be threatened? It is possible to find a concretization of these abstract doubts in some tendentious articles. In addition to constantly highlighting equality by referring to men and women's similar abilities, performance and opportunities, there was a need to draw attention to aspects of the lives of female workers which, according to traditional gender models, were linked with femininity. One article about the first trained female bricklayer in Czechoslovakia, sixteen-year-old Eliška Horáčková from Teplice, reported in a similarly stereotypical way on the twists and turns on the path to her new vocation. Despite her hard work and ridicule, the girl glorifies the beauty of her work: "And when I think that I'm building a home for people who have none or who live in poor conditions, then that brings me great joy! And if it's for children, well then, that really is wonderful!" (Vlasta 1950: 28/10). Even when carrying out hard "man's" work, these young female workers do not lose their family and social values. It is much better for Eliška Horáčková to build private homes and premises for pre-school children than shops and factories. It is in this that she sees the beauty of her work. The exhausting daily "man's work" does not cripple her or take away the "natural" priorities pertaining to her sex.

The same principle was applied in articles about older married women living at home with their family. They too, almost unwittingly but practically without exception, did not forget to mention their roles as mothers, wives and housewives. The famous shock-workers, covered in

the black soot of the factory, gave readers insight into their home lives, emanating cosiness and cleanliness. Here their happy children play energetically, showing no signs of neglect. The image of an active woman working in traditional male professions or posts is saved this time. Despite the fact that female employees work all day within a collective with skill and efficiency, they are still able to show themselves as loving, caring mothers, and at the same time as a good housewife creating warmth for the family home.

The emphasis on the cosy home and the maternal, or matrimonial, role of women in propaganda material did not merely serve to present women in their traditional feminine forms, but it also contained an educational element therein. Concerns about threats to women's femininity due to their "inappropriate" employment went hand in hand with fears in some sections of society about the breakup of the family, or household neglect by these female workers. The disruption to individuals' gender identities, which could be seen in the aforementioned squabbles and strains at the workplace, also spilled over into the private sphere. The public sphere of paid employment was certainly not closed off to the intimacy of the home. On the contrary, both areas intertwined and any pressure from a change in gender roles in one had to be reflected in the other. In a speech in 1954, President Antonín Zápotocký also talked about the fear in society surrounding the destruction of the stability of family relationships: "You have often heard, and still hear today, the complaint that having women at work is destroying the family." (Vlasta 1954: 11/2). The increased number of female employees and their recruitment into the "non-traditional" professions caused a disruption to the existing habits in everyday family life. The female partners, most of whom carried out the most substantial part of the house work, including the practical aspects of looking after the children, found themselves in a new situation where they could not rely on the support of their male partner. This particular nostalgia associated with the "proper" running of the family can be seen in an article about working women, where Božena Slunková did not make a secret of her disagreements with her husband because of her decision to switch from her less-demanding job in terms of hours as a cleaner to the position of machine operator: "He was worried that everyone would starve at home, that the kitchen range would always be cold, the children would be grubby and neglected, and he was certainly worried that he himself would lose out." (Vlasta 1954: 34/3).

The images at the time of resolute female workers, convinced that they are in the right despite the indignation surrounding them, end in optimism and with mutual agreement. These working women not only

win over their previously sceptical male colleagues at work, but also their husbands in the family. A perfect example is a film from 1950 from the ÚV KSČ which could be used as a guide about how to resolve mutual conflicts, while at the same time it confirmed that these conflicts were still a current issue. A fairly banal storyline takes the viewer into the household of a tired woman and her bad-tempered husband, who in the spirit of traditional stereotypes does nothing to help at home. The woman decides to go to work at the factory, where, however, she is met mainly with ridicule from her colleagues. The heroine of the film is unbowed, and together with a female colleague creates a device which increases work productivity. On the basis of this success she earns the respect of her fellow workers and is also promoted. Her example also inspires her bad-tempered husband, who quits his administrative job and also goes into manufacturing where he finally finds job satisfaction: "The factory gates lead them to a more joyful tomorrow."¹⁷ In this story the family happiness of the young couple is not destroyed by the wife entering employment, on the contrary, thanks to this both partners gain new inspiration and personal fulfilment. The final quotation shows that the initial state of their lives, characterised by descriptions of tiredness and bad-temperedness, has now been transformed by the vision of a happier future.¹⁸

However, this example only describes one of the elements resulting from the Communist leadership's attempts to transform gender roles in post-February society. It focuses largely on the positive acceptance of the new reality – working women – on the part of her husband and the reassertion of family tranquillity. It did little, though, to address the issue of housework and how to reconcile it with full-time employment. The majority of the texts and portrayals of this topic have very little to say about the involvement of both partners in this work. Appeals to husbands to become more involved in household chores and looking after the children were the exception, while the norm was to focus these activities on the mothers and wives. Stories in the colour magazines of the time showed working women as characters who could manage everything. One excellent example of this trend was the article 'Women who have learned to live new lives': "Jiřina Bajerová has managed to organise her

¹⁷ National Archive Prague, ÚV KSČ – women's commission (no. 22), and no. 123, idea for a feature film.

¹⁸ As has been mentioned above, propaganda films of this type filled cinema programmes even in later years. Here the issue of employment was often linked to household chores and partners' relationships. The individual stories displayed the superficiality and similarity of the interpretive models (Hanáková 2005).

work in such a way that she can look after the household - consisting of a kitchen and two rooms, where there is no gas or central heating, she washes and mends the clothes, discusses various issues with her husband, goes to the cinema and reads a good book... Then in the factory she exceeds her quota and earns on average four-and-a-half thousand crowns." (Vlasta 1951: 49/5). In this story the heroine is able to carry out these almost superhuman tasks due to her ability to organise her work and in particular thanks to the socialist system which allowed her to become a new person.

However, the Communist leadership did not only offer solutions to the problem of household chores in the form of propagandistic appeals to the goodwill of working women: they also began to gradually set up a large number of nursery schools, creches, as well as laundries and dry cleaners. All of these elements were supposed to make it easier for women to make the transition to employment, while removing a large amount of the worry about the family and household. Marxist-Leninist ideology much preferred individuals to be active in the public sphere as they considered the energy and time spent on activities in the "bosom" of the family as ineffective in terms of contributing to the greater good of society. In connection with the recruitment of women into the workforce, the Communist leadership's interest in the family appeared to be one of the important factors for success. However, the number of pre-school facilities,¹⁹ as well as the quality of the services on offer,²⁰ did not meet the demands of most families. The result was that women suffered under a double burden. However, the sociological term referring to the majority women having to cope with both their job and the family, which is usually known as the second shift, did not begin to be discussed until much later (Havelková 2015: 146–162).

¹⁹ Demands to establish nursery schools and creches were not only the prerogative of communist ideology and they can be found in earlier periods and in other countries, but the increase in working women after February 1948 led to those demands being fulfilled. In Czechoslovakia in 1948 there were 268 creches catering for 1.2% of children of that age group. By 1967 their number had risen to 1,649 with the regular attendance of 10.3% of children. There were many more nursery schools in Czechoslovakia, in 1948 there were 4,664 schools for 3.9% of children. Less than 20 years later that number had risen to 7,915 providing pre-school education to 53.8% of that particular population (Hašková 2007).

²⁰ In relation to dry-cleaners, laundries, dye-houses, the most frequent criticisms were the slowness in dealing with orders, orders being frequently confused, the high price, and the low standard of work in particular. For these reasons, these facilities were not a decisive factor in minimalizing domestic chores.

There were many interesting aspects to the issue of the post-February targeted and systematic recruitment activities, stemming from the importance the Communist Party leadership attached to moving this new workforce, which required a transformation in traditional ideas about female and male professions. However, the images and stories of working women at the time largely reflected the aforementioned elements and issues. Meanwhile, the age-old stereotyped images of working women and their stories were dominated by the aforementioned problems. For example, the issue of low representation in senior positions, lower qualification levels, or poorer pay in comparison with male colleagues only appeared marginally and were not part of the mainstream.²¹

Conclusion

The mass recruitment of women into the workforce in the post-February period contained a paradox within it. The dominant argument based on the emancipation of women, the equality of skills and abilities, and the overall position of both sexes, was confronted by a completely contradictory argument. The recruitment propaganda also contained, albeit to a lesser extent, the need to move male workers to positions presented as more physically demanding, particularly in heavy industry, who would then be replaced by women. Statements on the legitimacy and need for female workers in traditionally "male" professions, as with calls to break down gender stereotypes, stood in marked contrast to the division of labour based on what was suitable for men and women.²² Seen from this perspective, calls for female bricklayers and tractor drivers lost their impetus.

The ideological images of female workers, characterised by an obvious recruitment subtext, point to the more general characteristics of the period. Although the post-February declarations of the Communist Party outwardly called for changes to traditional roles, these were significantly

²¹ For this reason the text does not examine these aspects. It is also interesting to look at the overall benefits of the recruitment drives, because a clearly positive evaluation from, for example, an economic perspective relativizes the frequent absence of women due to children's illness, high costs for a child at a pre-school facility, a certain fluctuation in female workers, etc. (Rákosník, Šustrová 2016: 196–199)

²² There were even attempts to centrally draw up lists of professions for men and for women. However, due to the different conditions in individual workplaces, these were not considered to be applicable across the board, and so were unsuccessful. (Jechová 2008: 106–107).

limited.²³ In addition to the aforementioned inconsistency in the gender aspect to individual professions, there was also a certain degree of one-sidedness, as there was no recruitment of male workers into the health service or nursery schools – areas mainly linked with femininity. The pragmatic motive of filling vacant work positions in heavy industry was clearly more important than the ideological motive of an equal approach to both sexes, which most of the arguments in the recruitment campaign were based on. Women once again became objects of a discursive strategy and social engineering and not autonomous subjects. The traditional gender order and stereotyped gender roles proved to be very durable, and the paradigm of the period was dominated by similar signs of masculinity as during previous eras (True 2003: 32; Studer 2015: 46–58). Despite the fact that women were presented more often within the official discourse and there were official declarations of the need for equality, I would assert that there were no fundamental changes in femininity and masculinity. The Communist Coup did not represent a radical break in this important area, separating two distinct eras, but rather one smaller milestone in long-term continuity. A gender analysis of Czechoslovak recruitment drives also relativizes the "omnipotent" influence of the Communist Party affecting each member of society, and thus also the classical totalitarian paradigm of contemporary history.

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²³ The internal conflict between gender roles and identities, which pitched the transformation efforts of the new Communist leadership against traditional ideas, has also been analysed in different countries of the former Soviet bloc (Fidelis 2010, Harsch 2007, Kay 2007, Ilič, Reid, Attwood 2004, Fodor 2002, Ashwin 2000)

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w latach 50.**

Abstrakt

Niniejsze opracowanie zawiera analizę płci kampanii rekrutacyjnych mających na celu wprowadzenie kobiet do szeregów siły roboczej w Czechosłowacji w latach 50. XX w. Okres ten był czasem szczególnej intensywności kampanii rekrutacyjnych i kreowania nowego wizerunku pracownicy, który wyraźnie kontrastował z tradycyjnymi ideami kobiecości. W późniejszych latach, gdy kampania straciła swoją intensywność, konstrukcja dyskursu częściej odzwierciedlała inne obrazy nowej socjalistycznej kobiety, szczególnie w sferze ich życia prywatnego. Metodologicznie zaproponowano w artykule badanie kulturowo-historyczne oparte na analizie płci i krytycznej analizie dyskursu. Materiał badawczy stanowią źródła zastane – czasopisma z epoki i broszury instruktażowe dla kobiet. Analizie poddano również materiały archiwalne z Komitetu Centralnego Czechosłowackiej Partii Komunistycznej i organizacji masowych dla kobiet.

Słowa kluczowe: płeć, komunizm, Czechosłowacja, siła robocza