THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DID THE BODY HAVE A COLD WAR?
GENDERED BODIES AND EMBODIED EXPERIENCES
IN LATE SOCIALIST CZECHOSLOVAKIA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

MICHAELA APPELTOVA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2019

Table of Contents

Abstract

Did the Body Have a Cold War? examines the central place of the gendered body in the construction of Czechoslovak socialism since the mid-1960s. Over the course of the 1960s, Czechoslovak society changed from a communist revolutionary project to a welfare, consumer society, whose primary unit was the nuclear family. My dissertation explores how this transformation affected discourses and practices related to the body. I argue that the so-called Czechoslovak normalization regime – called normalization to indicate the return to the socialist "normal" after the upheaval of the Prague Spring – rested in cultivating aesthetically pleasing, appropriately gendered, and thoroughly heterosexual bodies as tools of advancing a particularly Czechoslovak version of socialism and managing contradictions of the late socialist society. Essentialized ideas of gender difference, including different bodily capacities and demeanor, in fact, shaped the late socialist "good life" and were used to enhance the systemic uniqueness of socialism. Across five chapters, exploring different areas of body culture – dieting and obesity, beauty and cosmetics, military service, reproduction, and transsexuality – I follow different ways of mobilizing and embodying gender difference. In tracing the negotiations of authority and influence over the body among various actors, such as Party representatives, experts, media, and individuals, I show that the meaning of good life in late socialism was subject to constant (re)definition. The dissertation makes three major contributions. First, by focusing on expert discourse, it shows th prominent place of medical expertise in shaping Czechoslovak bodies, marginalizing the Communist Party. Second, it traces continuities and shifts across political watersheds, linking pre-socialist, socialist, and post-socialist periods. Finally, by showing that similar phenomena related to the body emerged on both sides of the Iron Curtain, it demonstrates that the Cold War produced both similarities and differences in body cultures, challenging the association of consumer body practices with western liberalism.

Acknowledgments

I have acquired many debts over the years of researching and writing this dissertation. My biggest is to my amazing dissertation committee. I am endlessly grateful for their enthusiastic support, steadfast advice, incisive comments in all matters of graduate student life in general and this dissertation in particular, and for their immense patience with my last-minute requests to read (unpolished) drafts. Tara Zahra has provided years of amazing guidance and inspiration, and I will always be in awe of her scholarship as well as mentorship. It was Leora Auslander who suggested that I write my dissertation about the gendered body, opening up years of interesting, hard work and a lot of fun. I do not have words to express how important her mentorship has been to me. Susan Gal has called me out for my sloppiness when necessary and graciously put up with my foolish attempts to argue against her work – only to see me do the sensible thing and change my mind (I hope!).

I am also incredibly grateful to the men and women, as well as surgeons and sexologists, who shared their stories, testimonies, and personal documents with me. Without them, this dissertation would not exist or would be much less interesting. Many sat with me more than once, answered questions that they found too intimate or frustrating, some had to recall unpleasant memories, but all engaged with my curiosity about their lives in late socialist Czechoslovakia. I hope I did justice to their stories.

This dissertation was generously supported by the Prochazka Funds, Kunstadter and Sinclair Travel Grants, and the T. Bentley Duncan Fellowship. Archivists all over the Czech and Slovak republics shared unprocessed material and put up with my requests to find more documents. I am particularly grateful to the archivists at the Czech and Slovak national archives, the archive of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Brno-Kanice, and Ostrava,

Bratislava, and Košice city archives. Many warm thanks to Jana Chlanová and Jana Komersová, librarians at the National Medical Library in Prague, who traced numerous references for me and made me tea during long days at the library.

The chapters of this text came together after a series of unexpected turns during my research. Christiane Brenner suggested that I visit the National Medical Library in Prague, for which I am thankful, and is largely responsible for my discovery of aesthetic surgeries and the dissertation's general focus on medical discourse (though the responsibility for the text itself is solely mine). A casual conversation with Kateřina Kolářová led to an article on anti-obesity discourses she invited me to write for a special edition of *Gender and Research*, which eventually turned into the second chapter. That I include disability studies concepts in that chapter is thanks to her, though I could have done much more in the rest of the dissertation. An archivist in the Opava regional archives shared material that I was not supposed to see, which led to my fifth chapter.

Members of the UChicago Transnational Approaches to Modern Europe Workshop; Interdisciplinary Approaches to Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia Workshop; Gender and Sexuality Workshop; and Disability Studies Workshop read unfinished chapter drafts, pushed me to better articulate my arguments and tighten my analysis. Phillip Henry, Cheryl Stephenson and Claire Roosien read more chapters than they probably wanted and formulated many of my arguments before me. Thomas Bertorelli, Leah Goldman, Daniela Licandro, Petr Roubal, Ilana McQuinn, and Caroline Sequin provided constructive feedback and helped edit chapters. My sister, Monika, Eva Hejzlarová and Ladislav Zikmund-Lender served as dispatch researchers when I needed to check references from abroad. Along the way, Jake Smith cheered me on with a vision for my project that far exceeded my capabilities.

I would not have been able to finish this dissertation without the steadfast friendships, both academic and personal, across continents. Warmest thanks to: Kateřina and Aly for their inspiring selves, writing sessions, and city hikes; Kristík for sharing her home, DIY shampoo recipes, and way too many wine bottles; Dita, Terezka and Filip for keeping our friendships going across decades and continents; Lucka and Saša for sharing their home and a broad circle of friends (and many interviewees!); Nick, Cheryl, and Kateřina for many delicious dinners and cheesy 1980s movies. In Bratislava, Zuzka and Petra provided wonderful company and shared their thoughts on my project. My UChicago family, now scattered all over the world, has been critical in keeping me sane and happy. Jonathan's quiet support and patience meant so much.

Finally, my parents have always supported me and my sister in our adventures around the world, though I am sure they never expected me to move thousands of miles away across the Atlantic. Over the years, they shared many stories about growing up in socialist Czechoslovakia, fueling my desire to understand the world they grew up in a bit more. This is the result. I am simultaneously excited and terrified that they are a part of this story, hoping that they recognize themselves in it, and immensely grateful for all they are.

Introduction

By the 1980s, practices of body transformations had become widespread in the Western part of the world. Mass media and advertising promised worldly success and boundless pleasures to those with youthful, attractive looks. Dieting and slimming industries, cosmetics, and newly emerging fitness exercises provided tools for individuals to work on their bodies; the increasing use of medical procedures, such as aesthetic and sex reassignment surgeries, allowed people to engineer them in ways they desired. Western consumer culture defined happiness in terms of looking slender, beautiful, fashionable, and well-maintained, and stigmatized the opposite. Women have always been at the center of consumer culture both as subjects of its disciplinary mechanisms and as agents, but men have not been exempt from it either. Reflecting the emerging politics of the body as a project, "makeovers and shapeovers" became among the most conspicuous features of late capitalism.[1]

Socialist Czechoslovakia, and the Eastern bloc more generally, are not usually associated with such bodily self-fashioning. Socialist body culture is often considered to have been guided by the needs of labor or defense, resulting in preventative health programs and the militarization of physical culture, or, alternatively, viewed through the prism of the suppression of conspicuous femininity. Whichever the case, the dominant understanding is one of a conservative, prudish system that guarded against the "excesses" of capitalist consumption. In popular memory, the body seems like an afterthought at best. 'We didn't care about what our bodies looked like,' many of my interviewees would say, adding that it did not matter much what one looked like and that there was nothing in the stores for bodily care anyway.

[1] Mike Featherstone, "Body in Consumer Culture," in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: SAGE Publications, 1991), 171.

Yet, the Czechoslovaks paid attention to their bodies and fashioned them, and, since the 1960s, were increasingly encouraged to do so in specifically gendered ways. The Prague *Institute of Cosmetics*, for example, targeted companies to give out slimming workshop coupons to their female employees, often at the occasion of the International Women's Day, and performed about six hundred aesthetic procedures annually. Women's and youth magazines, loyal accomplices in promoting beauty advice, taught Czechoslovak women to cover up bodily imperfections and emphasize their individualities through make-up, hairstyles, and fashion. Men, on the other hand, were encouraged to cultivate a look of rugged elegance and muscular strength. Attention to one's looks and demeanor, criticized as a bourgeois holdover in the 1950s, began to be directly promoted as part of the socialist lifestyle in the 1970s and 1980s. Healthy, slender, well-maintained, and recognizably feminine and masculine bodies, advice literature advocated, were not simply attributes of proper socialist citizens but also contributed to one's happiness and individual self-realization in the Czechoslovak society.

Did the Body Have a Cold War? examines the central place of the gendered body in the construction of Czechoslovak socialism since the mid-1960s. Over the course of the 1960s, Czechoslovak society changed from a communist revolutionary project to a welfare, consumer society, whose primary unit was the nuclear family. My dissertation explores how this transformation affected discourses and practices related to the body. I argue that the so-called Czechoslovak normalization regime – called normalization to indicate the return to the socialist "normal" after the upheaval of the Prague Spring – rested in cultivating aesthetically pleasing, appropriately gendered, and thoroughly heterosexual bodies as tools of advancing a particularly Czechoslovak version of socialism and managing contradictions of the late socialist society. Essentialized ideas of gender difference, including different bodily capacities and demeanor, in

fact, shaped the late socialist "good life" and were used to enhance the systemic uniqueness of socialism.[2]

Across five chapters, exploring different areas of body culture – dieting and obesity, beauty and cosmetics, military service, reproduction, and transsexuality – I follow different ways of mobilizing and embodying gender difference. In tracing the negotiations of authority and influence over the body among various actors, such as Party representatives, experts, media, and individuals, I show that the meaning of good life in late socialism was subject to constant (re)definition. This involved not just different visions of the proper socialist body that different actors advanced, but also the interplay between the individual, familial, and societal in relation to the shaping of the body. While in some chapters I argue that body discourses introduced individualism into Czechoslovak society, in other chapters I place greater emphasis on the (heteronormative) family or family obligations to the society.

The way in which Czechoslovak bodies moved and behaved were matters of expert intervention and individual agency, rather than – or not exclusively – the priorities of the Communist Party. While Communist authorities subscribed to the broadly modern notion of the body as a machine, they left it to various types of (mostly medical) experts to articulate and shape the conditions for its best functioning. Drawing on their training, Western knowledge, and popular practices, experts advanced essentialized notions of femininity and masculinity to legitimize and further support gendered divisions in society. The population sometimes followed expert advice, but often did not, and used the body as a vehicle of self-expression and articulation of their vision of a good life in socialist Czechoslovakia. This was particularly

[2] My formulation here is inspired by Gyorgy Péteri's claim that the introduction of consumerism during Khrushchev's regime created a "*fundamental tension of the state-socialist project:* the tension between the push for modernity and the profound need to steer modernizing developments so as to produce and reproduce systemic exceptionalism rather than to blur the distinction between capitalism and socialism" (emphasis original). Gyorgy Péteri, "Introduction: The Oblique Coordinate Systems of Modern Identity," in *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Gyorgy Peteri (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2010), 8.

evident during the years of the Prague Spring, but continued into the late socialist period, showing that efforts at managing the population often clashed with individual agency.

In addition to marginalizing the Communist Party, following expert ideas and practices of the body challenges established divisions between socialism and pre- and post-socialism. In tracing continuities and changes for the various "types" of bodies analyzed in this dissertation, the Czechoslovak political watersheds of 1948, 1968 and 1989 are sometimes present, but often other turning points emerge as more significant. I start the dissertation in 1965, rather than 1968, to highlight that the development of the Czechoslovak (late) "socialist lifestyle," often associated with the post-1968 normalization regime, developed over the course of the 1960s, significantly shaped by popular practices during the years of the Prague Spring. While my analysis of documents ends in 1989, many of my chapters trace the continuities of late socialist practices into the post-socialist period.

Did the Body Have a Cold War? shows that similar phenomena related to the body emerged on both sides of the Iron Curtain. This was not just a matter of the Czechoslovaks mimicking the West, or Czechoslovak experts importing Western medical practices, though some of that is true. Both capitalist and socialist authorities shared the belief that a disciplined, controlled body was an expression of individual morality, and both used the body as a tool in their rivalry: the standard of living was calculated not only in the number of washing machines and cars available to the population but also in body mass, birth rates, rates of infant and maternal mortality, and the strength of men's muscles. The competition over legitimacy and higher standards of living meant that socialist and capitalist authorities watched and compared each other, defining their body cultures through one another, which led to similar developments. This simultaneity – of aesthetic or sex change surgeries or anti-obesity rhetoric and rise of the slim body, for example – then calls into question their association with consumer capitalism and

democracy. In other words, a fuller understanding of the ways in which Czechoslovak body culture was shaped by the various influences will help us more fully understand the postwar body culture.

Czechoslovakia makes a particularly compelling case to study gendered body politics. The Czechoslovaks pride themselves on a tradition of gender equality and feminist activism, claiming a unique spot among Central European nations, that was "expropriated" by the Communist Party.[3] It also had a strong *Sokol* tradition, linking the health of the individual and national body. Its uniquely secularized and industrialized character within the context of Eastern Europe was comparable to that of East Germany but, unlike its German counterpart, Czechoslovakia did not have to reckon with its Nazi past. Finally, its postwar trajectory is similar to that of Western countries, with the late 1960s as a period of social upheaval.

By focusing on the body as a site of expert intervention and individual agency, I do not mean to invalidate experiences of repression and violence. Communist authorities restricted the movement of the Czechoslovaks, surveilled opponents and utilized tales of sexual promiscuity to discredit them, and destroyed their citizens' bodies. Dissidents in particular suffered at the hands of the repressive apparatus: philosopher Jan Patočka died after being severely beaten for his involvement in the Charter 77; Zdena Tominová, the spokeswoman of Charter 77, was knocked unconscious by masked assailants who were most likely the secret police; her husband was locked up in a psychiatric ward, as a result of which both "decided" to emigrate in 1981. All dissidents were subjected to frequent detentions lasting 48 hours or more. The threat of violence and restrictions on free movement were experienced by all citizens in ways that still shape the memory of communism and popular anti-communist discourse. Repression, however, did not encompass the entirety of individual experiences of socialism. This dissertation seeks to delve

[3] More on "expropriation" below.

into the more mundane experiences of the majority of the population as well as examine the attributes of the ideal social subject in a period in which the regime lacked the aspirations to capture the hearts of the citizens.

The gender culture of late socialism

Recent scholarship has challenged the narrative of women's emancipation in communist Eastern Europe. Over the course of the 1960s, socialist gender culture changed from an emphasis on equality to gender difference.[4] As it became apparent in the late 1950s that birth rates were falling, calls on women's reproductive roles increased. Rising divorce rates and reports of wayward youth in the late 1950s were blamed on women's participation in the labor market and strengthened discourses of women's domestic responsibilities. The nuclear family emerged as the backbone of the socialist state, with women at its center. As notions of gender became essentialized, to borrow Jie Yang's phrase, gender became "less grounded in labor than in the body."[5]

Various Czechoslovak regimes linked their legitimacy to ideas about gender equality. The interwar republic was founded on the promise of women's rights as a strategy to eliminate "backward" Habsburg past, declaring women's equality as a constitutional right and giving women access to employment in the Civil Service. However, as Melissa Feinberg has showed, equality did not extend to the sphere of family and marriage, where husbands retained their legally granted breadwinning roles. The notion that too much women's equality would

[4] Barbara Havelková, "Three Stages of Law," in *The Politics of Gender Culture*, ed. Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (London: Routledge, 2014), 31-57.
[5] Jie Yang, "*Nennu* and *Shunu*: Gender, Body Politics, and the Beauty Economy in China," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36, n. 2 (2011): 338.

destabilize families and the social order permeated interwar debates about citizenship, abortion, employment or divorce, and eventually won out over women's rights.[6]

When the Communist Party came to power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, it quickly disbanded women's organizations but adopted many of the reforms the interwar women's activists fought for: the Party eliminated gender hierarchy within the family, made divorce easier, and equalized legitimate and illegitimate children. Similarly to other countries around the bloc, the Czechoslovak Communist Party collectivized childcare facilities, services such as laundry rooms and canteens, and set up grocery stores in factories to aid working women. In 1957, the government legalized abortion, and in 1961 decriminalized homosexuality. Most importantly, the Communist Party mobilized women onto the labor market, though the transition was not as big in Czechoslovakia, where women's employment was already relatively high in the interwar period, as elsewhere. Presenting the female tractor driver as the symbol women's equality, it recruited women to traditionally male jobs.[7]

The Czechoslovak Constitution guaranteed equal access to all occupations, but communist leaders never abandoned the idea that women and men had different bodily capacities. Even in the Stalinist phase, Malgorzata Fidelis writes, "the communist approach to gender was rooted in pre-communist assumptions of women's biological destiny," with women defined as mothers and men as primary defenders of the nation.[8] Furthermore, throughout the bloc, the male-dominated leadership of the Communist Parties prioritized industrial production and left the collectivized services underfunded and understaffed; with the exception of childcare,

---

[6] Melissa Feinberg. *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2006).

[7] Women were concentrated in low-paying industries, however, and were paid roughly a third less than men throughout the socialist period. Havelková, "The three stages of gender."

[8] Malgorzata Fidelis, "Equality through Protection: The Politics of Women's Employment in Postwar Poland, 1945-1956," *Slavic Review* 63 (Summer 2004), 304. Protective labor legislation was loosened in the Stalinist period but never completely eliminated. As working conditions in industrial spaces dangerous for both men and women, despite workers' protests and appeals for better safety measures, and even women functionaries began supporting calls for the protection for women's bodies.

many of these services were unpopular or unused, in part because women distrusted them, but largely because there were too few of them. Those that were in operation were unavailable, did not offer quality services, or operated at unsuitable hours. Women soon began calling on the state authorities to ease their situation.[9]

As the de-Stalinization years revealed, moreover, legal provisions guaranteeing women's equality hid the continuation of patriarchal attitudes in everyday practices. The conflict between women's roles as mothers and workers was considered "socially destabilizing," permeating debates from the economy to childcare to prostitution.[10] Declining birth rates, the continuation of unsafe conditions in many workplaces, and the publication of research by pediatricians about "child deprivation" in nurseries in 1961 strengthened calls for women to stay at home with young children and for the protection of their bodies. Over the course of the 1960s and in early 1970s, Czechoslovak authorities extended maternity leave to three years for every child, creating one of the longest maternity leaves in the world, expanded protective labor legislation, and strengthened their control over abortion procedures, ushering in what Lynn Haney called the maternalist welfare state.[11]

Ideas about gender were rethought as well. Kateřina Lišková's analysis of Czechoslovak sexology discourse showed that amidst rising rates of divorce and extramarital affairs, sexologists questioned the possibility of equality among men and women, eventually finding it undesirable, and advocated for a hierarchically arranged relationship where a woman is led by

---

[9] Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
[10] Barbara Havelková, "Blaming all Women: On Regulation of Prostitution in State Socialist Czechoslovakia," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 165, n. 36 (2016): 165-191.
[11] Unlike other Central European countries, Czechoslovakia still misses a monograph discussing the early decades, and the 1960s debates, from a gender perspective written by a historian. The only work still is Hilda Scott's *Does Socialism Liberate Women?* published in 1974. On legal provisions supporting the Czechoslovak protection of women's bodies at work and reproductive roles see Barbara Havelková, "The three stages of gender." For the maternalist welfare state, see Lynn Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

her husband and supports his career ambitions. Over the next couple of decades, these attitudes animated not just sexology but also marital counselling and legal divorce practice.[12] Similarly, Petr Roubal found that late socialist *Spartakiads* turned away from previous abstract imagery to biologized portrayals of sexual difference. Working with images of masculine strength and feminine beauty, the symbolic depictions of the nation returned to a heteronormative family romance.[13]

But the 1960s were also an era of sexual revolution, supported from above and happening from below, that reverberated throughout the late socialist period.[14] The introduction of the contraceptive pill contributed to changing sexual behaviors; communist officials, too, shifted their attitudes towards sex, which now entered public space. Socialist erotica pictured naked bodies in explicit poses and taught citizens how to have satisfying sex. Sexologists opened their doors to homosexuals – if East German homosexuals found support from Protestant churches, their Czechoslovak counterparts in sexology offices – and some, as Věra Sokolová showed, even argued that homosexuality was not incompatible with marriage.[15] Nonetheless, heteronormative romantic love remained the ideal for citizens throughout the late socialist period.

Key to the late socialist period was the advancement of "quiet life." The concept was promoted by Communist Parties across the socialist bloc and encompassed what authorities saw as a particularly socialist quality of life, contrasting with the stress and competitiveness of consumer capitalism: slow-paced yet stable and fulfilling work; steady, if limited, supply of consumer goods and affordable prices of staple goods; welfare provisions; expansion of private

[12] Kateřina Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style: Communist Czechoslovakia and the Science of Desire, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 157-227.
[13] Petr Roubal, *Československé Spartakiády* (Praha: Academia, 2016), 163-218.
[14] Dan Healy, "The Sexual Revolution in the USSR: Dynamics Beneath the Ice," *Sexual Revolutions*, ed. G. Hekma and A. Giami (London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2014); Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Lišková, *Sexual Revolution, Socialist Style*.
[15] Věra Sokolová, "State Approaches to Homosexuality," *The Politics of Gender Culture*, ed. Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (London: Routledge, 2014): 82-108.

life; lack of political extremism, and (heteronormative) social order and harmony.[16] The particularly Czechoslovak variant of the notion of "quiet life" included self-realization and self-fulfillment, two "catchwords" promoted by the Czechoslovak Communist Party for the pursuit of personal happiness. Self-realize the Czechoslovaks did, asserting it as a right and practice, often challenging authorities and the premises of socialism.[17]

"Quiet life" was both an aesthetic and gendered concept that symbolically elevated women to a central place in Czechoslovak society. Reevaluating earlier arguments about women's "double burden," scholars have asserted that the late socialist order was also one of women's seeming omnipresence. In addition to promoting their roles as mothers and workers, the Communist Party also charged women with the task of "political healing" in the aftermath of the suppression of Prague Spring, as Paulina Bren showed. Since women moved between the nuclear family and the socialist family, the Party leaders called on women's domestic and peace-making roles, and (t)asked them to employ their "natural qualities of warmth and kindness" and interpersonal skills to help create a harmonious and stable Czechoslovak society.[18] As Bren further showed, this call found its representation in popular Czechoslovak TV series, where women served as managers of relationships, both personal and professional, of consumption, and of domesticity.

There is no consensus among scholars on what the gender order of late socialism was. Most scholars argue that a "retraditionalization," or "embourgeoisment" took place across the Soviet bloc that brought back pre-socialist ideas about gender difference and strengthened

[16] Pavel Kolář and Michal Pullmann, *Co byla normalizace? Studie o pozdním socialism* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, ÚSTR, 2016); Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Padraic Kenney, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 399-425; Krisztina Fehervary, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
[17] I am drawing here on Paul Betts' notion of the private as practice. Betts, *Within Walls*.
[18] Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell Unviersity Press, 2010), 164.

patriarchal power.[19] In addition to pronatalist and protective policies, they point to the proliferation of socialist etiquette manuals, which promoted 19th century bourgeois manners, a "world where men adhered to the `old' values of discipline and work tempo above all else, while women preached the importance of delikatnost' and etiquette."[20] Libora Oates-Indruchová and Hana Havelková write that late socialism was an "amalgam of residual patriarchal discourse and the partially absorbed effects of the ideological authoritative discourse of early socialism."[21] Gail Kligman and Susan Gal have argued that the late socialist forms of femininity and masculinity were unique, different from both capitalist and previous bourgeois forms in that they presented women as "brave victims," both wielding excessive power and being inadequate, and men as "big children," having real power but being dependable.[22] In the end, there is perhaps more agreement among these scholars than this paragraph suggests, but the question of what was late socialism seems to be still quite open – in part because we are still lacking analyses on many aspects of the gender order across the bloc; particularly missing are studies of socialist masculinities.

In this dissertation, I seek to contribute to this ongoing discussion. I show that women's bodies were at the center of anxieties about late socialism. The performance of femininity came under scrutiny and women were redefined through their bodies; the performance of hierarchical heteronormative femininity and masculinity was used to manage the many tensions of late socialism. At the same time, however, I recognize that many Czechoslovak women understood both the expanded possibilities of private life and expressions (or promise thereof) of

[19] Betts, *Within Walls*; Malgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender From Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
[20] Kelly, *Refining Russia,* 325.
[21] Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, "Expropriated voice. Transformations of gender culture under state socialism; Czech society, 1948-89," in *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*, edited by Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (London and New York: Routledge, 2014): 15.
[22] Susan Gan and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 54.

conspicuous femininity as a liberating step.[23] The promotion of beauty and slenderness, as I show, were no simple "concessions" of the Communist Party or expert impositions; women actively pursued them. I thus complicate Oates-Indruchová and Havelková's notion of socialism as an era of women's "expropriated voice." In contrast with previous narratives of top-down imposition of women's emancipation, the concept of expropriation, according to them, "better captures the situation where the state took the women's movement's agenda from it with the object of managing it itself – and supposedly better." The sociologists explain that the term is "analogous to the economic expropriation by which the communist powers stripped property from its owners."[24] While they usefully emphasize the role of experts in setting gender agenda in post-Stalinist Czechoslovakia, the concept of expropriation aligns with the notion of top-down imposition of emancipation more than the authors care to admit, and circumvents individual agency.[25]

I also show that the promotion of essentialized notions of gender had a liberatory potential. Transsexuality[26] and sex change surgeries (now called gender confirmation procedures) would not have been accepted by the Czechoslovak authorities had transsexuality been founded on fluid understanding of gender as it is today. Precisely because experts advanced biological theories of gender identity and essentialized differences between feminine and masculine bodies, qualities and behaviors, they created the space for transsexuals to be granted transition. While still founded on strictly heteronormative notions of gender complementarity,

[23] I take that argument from recent feminist approaches to consumer culture. See Victoria de Grazia and E. Furlough (eds.), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Shari Benstock and Susanne Ferriss (eds.), *on fashion* (Rutgers, 1994). For older arguments of the pernicious and controlling effects of consumer culture on women's bodies see Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weigh Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991).
[24] Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, *The Politics of Gender Culture*, 10.
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] I will be using the term transsexuality instead of transgender for two reasons: first, because the term transgender did not come to use until 1990s both East and West. And second, sexologists and their transsexual "patients" used the medical diagnosis of "transsexualism," not the term transgender.

the possibilities of sex change for Czechoslovak transsexuals complicates easy assessment of a conservative (re)turn.

Finally, I draw on studies that place the East European gender order in a broader context. The persistence of heteronormativity was not unique to socialism. While Lynn Haney and Alena Heitlinger have argued that Hungary and Czechoslovakia, respectively, were similar to West European welfare states, Paulina Bren has likened late socialist Czechoslovakia to Reagan's USA. Invoking Lauren Berlant's notion of "privatized citizenship," she claimed that Czechoslovakia was only "quantitatively but not qualitatively different from the capitalist West."[27] This dissertation shows that, owing to the mutual definition of capitalism and socialism through each other, Eastern Europe was both similar and different. Expert exchanges and popular practices drew the two systemic rivals closer together, yet at the same time notions of gender difference promoted since the 1960s operated in a new economic and social context. In other words, this dissertation attempts to draw the Czechoslovak gender order into the literature of gender in the postwar period but not lose sight of its difference.

Cultivating bodies

The idea that bodies could be mobilized for political purposes and shaped by expert intervention was not new to Czechoslovak socialism. Since at least the mid-19th century, aided by the emergence of new disciplines and medical technologies, states across Europe measured and compared bodies of their populations, launched public health campaigns to manage diseases, increase immunization, and improve sanitary conditions, and expanded maternal care to stem high infant and maternal mortality rates. Nationalist movements, linking exercise with "the physical and moral strengthening of the nation," saw in fitness a powerful tool or the

[27] Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, 190.

rejuvenation of the national body, and called on individuals to exercise.[28] Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the notion that the state has an interest in the health of the population, and had the right to intervene, permeated Europe.[29]

The Czech body culture emerged within this broader context. The Czech nationalist movement found support in the *Sokol*, a popular gymnastic club that encouraged Czechs to exercise and rallied them under the banner "Every Czech, Sokol!"[30] Similarly to its European counterparts, *Sokol* was primarily a male organization, but welcomed young girls and inspired the establishment of women's gymnastics organizations. Unlike the German *Turnen*, *Sokol* focused less on military and more on the aesthetic overtones of gymnastic movements, an emphasis that would find its expression in *Sokol* and socialist *Spartakiad* mass exercises long into the 20th century.[31]

Situated within the "nearly universal obsession" with physical culture in the interwar period that continued to link individual and national bodies, the new Czechoslovak state increased its efforts to shape the physical and mental vigor of its population.[32] The support of the Rockefeller Foundation helped set up the State Health Institute in 1925, whose purpose was to research, monitor, and propose policies to improve the health of the population, though as Bradley Moore recently showed, the Depression era and WWII left the public health system

---

[28] Miroslav Tyrš, the founder of the 19th century Bohemian gymnastics movement Sokol, quoted in Claire Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 99. See also Dáša Frančíková, "'A Matter of Physical Health and Strength'": Disciplining the Female Body and Reproducing the Czech National Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Women's History* 23/4 (Winter 2011): 59-81; Mike Cronin, "Projecting the Nation through Sport and Culture: Ireland, Aonach Tailteann and the Irish Free State, 1924-32," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 3, (July, 2003): 395-411; P.F. McDevitt, "Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports, 1884-1916," *Gender &* History, Vol. 9, No. 2 (August, 1997): 262-284; Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuven (eds.), *Emancipation Through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe* (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Todd S. Presner*, Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007)

[29] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999): 77.

[30] Nolte, *The Sokol*.

[31] Roubal, S*partakiády*.

[32] Barbara Keys, "The Body as a Political Space: Comparing Physical Education under Nazism and Stalinism," *German History*, Vol. 27, Issue 3, 1 (July 2009): 396.

"limited and institutionally weak."[33] *Sokol* finally opened its doors to all women,[34] and its efforts at promoting exercise linked to patriotism were complemented by similar activities by the YMCA. Physicians implored the population to watch for obesity and eat healthy; sex reform movement found strong proponents among the country's experts. The plastic surgery clinic and the Institute for the Study of Sexual Pathology in Prague in 1921 (later renamed to the Sexological Institute) served as training centers for experts from around the world.

When the Communists took over power in 1948, they not only strove to transform the society but also offered (some) experts unprecedented opportunities to reshape the society. The Communist interventionist policies have so far been discussed primarily as a matter of ideological control over the populations, but as David Hoffmann's work on the Stalinist USSR recently showed, refashioning society was enthusiastically embraced by what he called non-Marxist experts as well. As he put it, "transformational ambitions and interventionist practices were mutually reinforcing."[35]

Ideological preferences of the 1950s steered expert attention to changing environmental and social conditions to improve citizens' health, lives, and their productivity. The Czechoslovak state set up a system of research institutes to study nutrition and health, conducted large-scale epidemiological studies and mandated immunization. It charged experts with the task of drafting procedures to rationally manage the bodies of the Czechoslovak population. Bradley Moore writes,

> Everything from mining machinery to residential buildings, from clothing to prefabricated furniture, had an ideal level of hygienic and physiological influence on the human body. In addition, physical routines had to be fashioned such that somatic or neurological damage and fatigue were eradicated, communal meals

[33] Bradley Moore, "For the People's Health: Ideology, Medical Authority and Hygienic Science in Communist Czechoslovakia," *Social History of Medicine* 27, no.1 (Feb 2014): 127.
[34] Petr Roubal, *Spartakiády*.
[35] David Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 13. See also Martin Franc, *Řasy, nebo knedlíky? Postoje odborníků na výživu k inovacím a tradicím v české stravě v 50. a 60. letech 20. století* (Praha: Scriptorium, 2003).

> needed to meet strict nutritional and calorific requirements based on occupation and microclimatic conditions such as heat, humidity, ventilation and air pressure in industrial and educational environments demanded close control to either enhance or protect physiological response.[36]

Not surprisingly, the implementation of many of these ideas did not materialize for reasons ranging from the lack of political will and divergent economic priorities, to insufficient coordination among various institutions. As experts realized that the environment could not be shaped, their attention shifted towards emphasizing "healthy lifestyles" as a matter of individual responsibility.[37] Cemented in the 1966 Health Care Act, the notion of health as an individual right and obligation was marshalled throughout the following two decades, accompanied by the emergence of advice literature on how to best arrange one's private and familial life to maximize one's happiness. This was not, as scholars have argued and this dissertation corroborates, simply an exercise in managing the population. Body shape, size, and demeanor were also "central to the political imagination" of both East and West, and experts were at the helm of shaping them.[38]

The crisis years of the 1960s brought all kinds of experts to the forefront of the Czechoslovak reform project and set the stage for what historians have called "technocratic socialism" in the later decades.[39] Situated within a broader trend of the rise of expertise in the postwar period, from economists to demographers, experts were involved in proposing solutions to the problems of the Czechoslovak society.[40] Previously marginalized fields such as sociology and psychology were rehabilitated to help research the underlying causes of unfavorable

---

[36] Bradley Moore, "For The People's Health," 134.
[37] Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010), 287.
[38] Alice Weinrib, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 235.
[39] Vítězslav Sommer, Matěj Spurný, Doubravka Olšáková a Jiří Janáč, "Technokratischer Socializmus in der Tschechoslowakei," *Bohemia*, vol. 57, n. 1 (2017): 13.
[40] Martin Kohlrausch, Katrin Steffen and Stefan Wiederkehr (eds.), *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I* (Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2010).

demographic trends and articulate what kinds of gender arrangements and family hierarchies would be appropriate for Czechoslovak socialism.

The pro-natalist turn of the late socialist societies was both shaped by and accompanied by changes in expert discourse on gender. Kateřina Lišková and Věra Sokolová's analyses of the Czechoslovak "sexpertise" revealed that late socialist sexology was largely permeated by "deep-seated gender stereotypes," asserting that girls "play with dolls, enjoy domestic housework, like dressing in mother's or sister's dresses, and dislike aggressive sports" while boys do "enjoy aggressive sports, crafts and rogue behavior."[41] While in the 1950s, sexologists advocated egalitarian relationships, in the 1970s and 1980s they highlighted that healthy reproduction and sexual happiness was only possible in a hierarchically structured gender order, in which women safeguarded the safety of the home and supported their husbands' career ambitions.[42] Both scholars corroborate findings of the East German scholar Josie McLellan about a more open space for debates about sex in late socialist society but simultaneous persistence of heteronormativity. They also demonstrate the intertwining of the public and private sphere and continued intervention into reproductive and intimate lives of the Czechoslovaks.

Indeed, the mobilization of women's reproductive functions across the Eastern bloc in the 1970s renders older arguments about the retreat of the late socialist state from the private lives of its citizens untenable. Throughout the socialist period, Czechoslovak authorities maintained their control over childbirths. In the early 1950s, in an effort to eliminate infant and maternal mortality, they banned midwives and mandated that all women give births in hospitals. But along with the rise of the "quality" population discourse, interventions into reproductive behaviors increased. The state strengthened abortion access in 1962, 1968 and 1973 – loosening its grip on

[41] Sokolová, "State Approaches to Homosexuality," 89.
[42] Lišková concluded that sex experts suggested that "[u]nless sexual positions reflected gendered power positions, neither society nor the family would properly function." Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style,* 226.

abortions only in 1986 – and tacitly encouraged, though never instituted in law, involuntary sterilizations of Roma women. The sterilizations were largely performed as an initiative of gynecologists themselves, which strengthens arguments about expert agency.[43]

To be sure, historians have recently demonstrated that late socialist states strove to shape the private and intimate sphere of its citizens through financial incentives, improvement of living standards, and proliferation of advice literature. Experts, they argue, became "mediators between political goals and people's everyday experiences,"[44] governmental collaborators in key demographic decisions, and relatively autonomous scholars. As this dissertation shows, they served not only as guardians of proper (sexual, psychological, biological) health but also as lifestyle coaches. Most of the advice literature, whether in the form of books or magazine articles, was authored by experts rather than magazine editors. Obesitologist Josef Mašek had regular column on diet and body weight in *Vlasta*, dermatologist Olga Knoblochová regularly cooperated with women's magazines on cosmetic and aesthetic advice for women, and Miroslav Plzák became a regular guest on TV shows. The prominent role of medical experts in shaping the bodies of the Czechoslovaks has been noted by scholars working on other socialist countries, and have suggested that socialist citizens had a highly medicalized understanding of their bodies.[45]

Not all experts were members of the Communist Party, and not all their ideas and practices must necessarily be understood as *socialist*. Many of the experts discussed in this dissertation were educated in the interwar period and started their careers before WWII or in the immediate postwar period. As I show below, doctors fought for and possessed a relatively large

[43] Věra Sokolová, *Cultural politics of Ethnicity: Discourses on Roma in Communist Czechoslovakia* (Stuttgart, Hannover: ibidem Verlag, 2008)
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] David Hoffmann, Alena Heitlinger and Sean Brotherton made similar observations for USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Cuba. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses*; Sean Brotherton, *Revolutionary Medicine: Health and the Body in Post-Soviet Cuba* (Duke University Press, 2012); Alena Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine & the Socialist State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).

autonomy to act, as well as negotiated with communist authorities, effectively shaping policies and measures. Aesthetic surgeons performed procedures throughout the period, first in defiance of official ideology, later somewhat within its limits, negotiating the limit to their earnings and the number of procedures they would perform. Sexologists singlehandedly pushed transsexuality to become an acceptable diagnosis, created a set of conditions for transsexuals to undergo sex change and had the exclusive power to enforce them. In other words, the goals of experts often aligned with those of the communist authorities, sometimes had to be negotiated, but were not simply under the control of the Communist Party.

Furthermore, while scholars have demonstrated that the socialist institutional infrastructure was largely copied from the Soviet model, recent studies have shown various similarities with Western states.[46] They have revealed Western influences in expert discourse and practices;[47] experts were knowledgeable of both socialist and Western literature, often used data from both to measure and compare the Czechoslovaks against them. They also implemented practices copied from or inspired by West. Kateřina Lišková found that couples' sex therapy in the 1970s and 1980s was modeled after American sexologists William Masters and Virginia Johnson, emphasizing open communication of feelings and sensations. My dissertation shows that sexologists adopted another American model – that of treating transsexuality. While sexologists discussed other approaches, they ultimately turned to biological theories of Harry Benjamin and modeled treatment on his practice at Johns Hopkins University.

The emphasis on expert autonomy and influence over the bodies of the Czechoslovaks, however, should not be overestimated. Historians studying socialist campaigns against smoking and alcohol have demonstrated their futility, not only because citizens simply refused to abide by

[46] Haney, *Inventing the Needy*; Heitlinger, *Reproduction*.
[47] Johanna Bockmann, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Lišková, *Sexual Liberation*; Sokolová, "State Approaches to Homosexuality."

them but also because communist governments found it difficult to ban them due to their association with working-class lifestyles.[48] In Czechoslovakia, sex therapies were attended by a minority of the population, and while marital counselling was popular, it did not stem the tide of divorces.[49] Anti-obesity efforts are futile everywhere and socialist Czechoslovakia was no exception; and despite heavy encouragement for more exercise, physicians found that army conscripts were progressively heavier and less fit. Nonetheless, the discourse of "natural" qualities of the femininity and masculinity advanced by experts animated both public discussions and practice, and shaped the Czechoslovak society.

The Gendered Body and Consumption

In consumer capitalism the body manages contradictory forces between hedonism and discipline, indulgence and ascetism. Individuals are targeted to both consume ever more and maintain a slim, desirable body promoted by the advertizing industry and mass media.[50] In consumer socialism, this dissertation argues, the body served the purpose of managing different kinds of tensions: those between the continued push to modernize socialist societies and the need to maintain the systemic uniqueness of socialism.[51] For socialist citizens the body was no less a vehicle of self-expression and pleasure related to consumption or subject of disciplinary practices to counter hedonistic tendencies, but was more directly, or perhaps more explicitly, tied to the state.[52] Curiously, while subject of one of the most cited texts that ever came out of

[48] Neuburger, "Inhaling Luxury: Smoking and Anti-Smoking in Socialist Bulgaria 1947-1989," and Narcis Tulbure, "Drink, Leisure, and the Second Economy in Socialist Romania," both in *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley, Susan E. Reid (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010).
[49] Lišková, *Sexual Liberation*, *Socialist Style*.
[50] Michael Carolan, "The Conspicuous Body: Capitalism, Consumerism, Class and Consumption," *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, 9/1 (2015): 93. F. Trentmann, Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption. *Journal of Contemporary History*, *39*(3), (2004): 373–401.
[51] Peteri, *Imagining the West*, 8.
[52] Neuburger and Bren, *Communism Unwrapped*.

Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel's *Power of the Powerless*, consumption in socialist Czechoslovakia is a blank slate; save for a couple of analyses of the Czechoslovak fashion industry and Paulina Bren's representations of consumption in normalization-era TV series, there are virtually no studies of Czechoslovak consumption.[53] My argument in the dissertation, and the reminder of this section, thus largely relies on studies of consumption in other national contexts.

East European consumerism is associated with the period after 1956 and the shift of socialist societies towards light industries. Symbolized by the "kitchen debate" between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev, socialist modernity was to consist of a supply of high-tech household appliances and goods. This was not the first time that modernity and consumption were linked in the region. Since the 19th century, department stores opened and textile, fashion or tobacco industries were developed. In Czechoslovakia, the Bata shoe factory and a number of fashion salons made their name in the interwar period; the country was also not immune to the phenomenon of the fashionable flapper girl. But for postwar socialist countries, consumption was linked to the legitimacy of the socialist system over capitalism. The image of a happy family sitting in a modern household among the latest designer goods came to be mass-produced as the embodiment of prosperity and the level of advancement of socialist society.[54]

This is not to say that the socialist mobilization of consumption to support its legitimacy was unique. David Serlin's *Replaceable You* shows how US medical procedures, such as plastic surgeries or prosthetics and hormonal treatments, were entangled with national reconstruction and Cold War competition; health care, indeed, became a "weapon in the global fight against Communism."[55] Across the Atlantic, Kristin Ross's *Clean Bodies, Fast Cars* examines the

[53] Konstantina Hlaváčková, Móda za železnou oponou: *Československo 1948-1989* (Prague: Grada, 2017); Zuzana Šidlíková, *Stratená (m)óda* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2016).
[54] Betts, *Within Walls*.
[55] David Serlin, *Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004)*, 5.

cultivation everyday habits related to bodily hygiene and cleanliness as a matter of constructing Frenchness in the postwar period; this Frenchness, characterized by a discourse of quality, differed from both perceived reckless American consumption and Soviet uniformity.[56] The body, in other words, served as a locus of "civic goals and national imperatives, of material form and ideology, of private possibility and public responsibility" throughout the postwar period on both sides of the Atlantic and across the Iron Curtain. In contrast to socialism, the post-1960s capitalist consumption acquired its current association with identity politics.[57]

This association of consumption with individualism is a reason why for socialist authorities consumption represented such an "ideological juggernaut." While promoting consumer desires, the command economies were unable to satisfy them, undermining their own promises of prosperity and abundance. Consumption was also both necessary and "endlessly problematic" because it threatened to turn into reckless accumulation and individualism.[58] Historians have shown how authorities emphasized values of moderation, durability, and longevity as particular attributes of socialist consumption in order to manage popular desires and inculcate rational consumer behavior.[59] And as Paul Betts and Paulina Bren showed, the task of steering desires into rational and moderate channels fell onto women. Their centrality in late socialist households as well as their concentration in textile and food industries reinforced their association with consumption (while men continued to be associated with production).

---

[56] A particularly French discourse of "quality" – including products of body care – came to represent the middle ground between extreme American individualism with its uninhibited consumption and Soviet mass culture. Kristin Ross, *Clean Bodies, Fast Cars: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1995).
[57] Serlin, *Replaceable You*, 1.
[58] Neuburger and Bren, *Communism Unwrapped*, 6.
[59] Betts, *Within Walls*; Paul Betts, Katherine Pence (eds.), *Socialist Modern*: *East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (eds.): *Communism Unwrapped*: *Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds.), *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010); Patrick H. Petterson, *Bought & Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

Ideas about the (consuming) body were gendered in other ways as well. Fashion and cosmetic industries appealed primarily to women. Judt Stitziel showed that state authorities strove to create a particularly socialist fashion industry by rejecting the capitalist practice of seasonal changes and cultivating durability and functionality of clothing instead, though by frustrating desires for fashionable clothing, socialist states undermined attempts to create a specifically socialist consumer culture. Fashion officials also wanted to cater to all women and included a range of body types in the promotion material. However, by labeling well-rounded bodies as "different" or "special," they ended up promoting the norm of the slender body, preparing the ground for the post-1989 developments.[60] Anti-obesity discourses and beauty industry promoted similarly slender, youthful femininity as an ideal all the while assuring women that all body types could be beautiful. Youthful femininity was sexualized, but even young women, as Yulia Gradskova shows, were at the center of the tension between the promotion of cultivated, modest, if fashionable, femininity and its sexualization.[61] While the gendered order associated sexualized femininity with promiscuity, the disruption of bodily norms by men, on the other hand, were associated with political dissidence or homosexuality. Men sporting long hair and beards were banned from bars and movie theaters, and surveilled by police; those with interest in fashion were considered homosexual.[62]

Class is usually not a concept used in socialist studies, but scholars have shown that class-like differences emerged in all East European countries. *Kulturnost* was one of the ways in which class was part of socialist societies, and shaped ideas about the body. *Kulturnost* was a bourgeois notion of a sophisticated, well-behaved individual, which contradicted the notion of

[60] Judt Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005.
[61] Yulia Gradskova, "We Were Upset If We Weren't Fashionable," *Gender, Equality and Difference During and After State Socialism*, ed. by Rebecca Kay (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[62] Pospíšil and Blažek, "'*Vraťte nám vlasy!*';" Sokolova, "State Approaches to Homosexuality"

socialist countries as workers' states. A large part of its rules, as Catriona Kelly's examination of Soviet etiquette manuals showed, related to embodiment: "Conspicuous behaviour of all kinds (staring, pushing, talking or laughing too loudly, wearing striking clothes, making conversation about personal problems, appearing nervous or irritable, using `crude words') was held to be a sign of a person's `low culture'." Not incidentally, she writes, the types of behaviors that were associated with the working class were labeled as vulgar.[63]

The tensions between the ideological support for working classes but promotion of middle-class values and behaviors became apparent in public health campaigns against smoking, alcohol, and obesity. Mary Neuburger has shown the futility of public health campaigns against smoking. Tobacco was understood as a workers' right and associated with leisure and entertainment. It proved impossible to ban, particularly in the 1980s when socialist leaders were losing legitimacy. Analyzing anti-obesity discourses, Alice Weinrib argued that they were meant to curtail high consumption of meat and flour but clashed with continued subsidies of working-class consumer preferences to maintain legitimacy. Ironically, while striving to manage obesity, the East German state introduced low calorie products, expanding consumer choices and educating consumers about them.[64] Consumption also introduced class-like distinctions. Through the preferential treatment of Stakhanovite workers or Party members, consumer goods were distributed in an unequal manner. While Anna Tikhomirova showed how different types of furs were associated with social status as well as gender, Larissa Zakharova examined how *haute couture*, brought by actresses and elite Party women from Paris to Moscow, trickled down through Party members to lower-rank women.[65]

---

[63] Kelly, *Refining Russia,* 325.
[64] Weinrib, *Modern Hungers*.
[65] Anna Tikhomirova, "Soviet Women and Fur Consumption in the Brezhnev Era," and Larissa Zakharova, "Dior in Moscow: A Taste for Luxury in Soviet Fashion Under Khruschev," both in Crowley and Reid, *Pleasures in Socialism*.

By consuming too much or wrong things, wearing skirts deemed too short, or smoking Western Marlboros, the population used the body as a vehicle of self-expression, often against both state and expert efforts at their management. Jeans and miniskirts spread throughout the socialist bloc like a wildfire as a symbol of freedom; historians of socialist (youth) subcultures demonstrated that various groups, from Moscow's *stiliagi* through hippies to punk fans, used facial and hairstyles and fashion. Josie McLellan's study of nudism illuminated the acts of "civil disobedience" nudists staged throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and, by couching their arguments in the language of health and "naturalness" of the naked body, prompted East German authorities to redefine nudism as a legitimate pastime and a sign of the progressiveness of the regime. By the end of the 1980s, naked bodies were part of East German consumer culture.[66]

The socialist consumer "golden age" was all but gone by the 1980s, when serious economic problems sent the communist consumer experiment into a tailspin.[67] In Poland, women sparked a nation-wide strike on bread, and empty shelves in Romania resulted in the reinstatement of rationing. Other countries did not experience such drastic measures, but all across the bloc citizens had to tighten their belts. Paradoxically, however, the 1980s were a period in which Czechoslovak magazines began promoting highly individualized approaches to adorning one's body, schools stopped controlling the length of girls' hemlines and make up, and (more slowly) allowed boys to grow their hair. Low calorie milk products as well as bright colored clothes appeared in stores, expanding consumer choices. By 1989, socialist citizens were skilled and thrifty consumers, already versed in the ideologies of body maintenance that were to come.

Sources and methodology

[66] McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*.
[67] Mary Neuburger and Paulina Bren, *Communism Unwrapped*; Crowley, Reid, *Pleasures in Socialism*.

Frustratingly little archival material for the late socialist period has been processed by Czech and Slovak archivists so far.[68] Archival material beyond that of state, regional and city administration and mass organizations seems to have been lost. Documents of the Prague and Bratislava cosmetic institutes are gone, lost in a flood and in the chaotic years of relocations after 1989, respectively. The Medical Society of J. E. Purkyně, an umbrella organization for the medical fields discussed in this dissertation, did not have relevant documents, and individual experts did not leave much archival trace either. Collections of state organizations such as Čedok, a travel agency and one of the sponsors of the 1960s beauty pageants, had reportedly been handed over to the National Archive, yet archivists do not know anything about it. In one case, on the other hand, an archivist gave me access to a few boxes of personal petitions for various medical procedures – boxes I should not have seen. Chapter 5 would not exist without such a "mistake."

The paucity of official documents meant that I was unable to reconstruct internal discussions – if they took place at all – among experts, and between experts and state officials, about some of the more controversial themes in this text. We do not know what controversies, if any, there were around issues that were not aligned, or at least not straightforwardly, with political priorities and ideological pronouncements, such as the development of cosmetic industries, aesthetic surgeries, or sex reassignment surgeries.

The bulk of primary documents for this dissertation consists of magazines, both popular and expert, and advice literature. I read through years of women's magazines *Vlasta* and *Slovenka*, the family oriented *Květy*, and the popular and exciting *Mladý svět*, written mostly for young people but considered "progressive," and read by all generations in all parts of the country. I also took notes on the army-specific *Československý voják* and *Obrana lidu*, even

[68] Sadly, that is true almost ten years after the publication of Paulina Bren's *The Greengrocer and his TV*, which analyzed TV series specifically for this reason.

though I did not end up using much of its material in this dissertation, and spent weeks bent over medical expert journals such as *Výživa lidu, Československá gynekologie, Československá psychiatrie, Časopis lékařů českých*, and *Věstník ministerstva zdravotnictví*.

I engaged expert discourse and considered expert arguments on their own, apart from the interventions of the Communist Party. The Communist Party was obviously never too far; the minister of health care was a Party member and political priorities of the Communist Party determined the amount of financial, technological, and human resources allocated within the resort. But going through expert journals made me realize that experts pursued their own agendas and strove for legitimacy, engaging in practices that were not always, or not explicitly, supported by the Communist Party, and in some instances even ran against ideological pronouncements. Following medical expertise also led me down the path of expert knowledge production and exchanges across the Iron Curtain, deepening my suspicion that the curtain was made neither of iron nor nylon, wondering whether it existed at all. Familiarizing myself with expert names also made me alert to how much of the content of women's and lifestyle magazines was written by, and drew on, physicians.

In addition to reading magazines, I conducted about 20 interviews with "ordinary people," both men and women, several interviews with plastic surgeons from around the country, and two interviews with sexologists. Most of the "ordinary" interviewees were born between mid-1950s and mid-1960s, their individual trajectories dovetailing with state campaign against obesity, structural changes to promote mass sports in order to increase the fitness of the population, or international tensions that (supposedly) led to stricter military drill, all of which allowed me to ask for the relevance of these campaigns in their personal lives. While I selected interviewees from both the Czech and Slovak parts of the country, regional differences did not make it into the final text of the dissertation.

I would start interviews by asking my interlocutors for their life stories and proceeded to ask more detailed questions about several themes that form the basis of this dissertation: beauty and cosmetics, food and cooking, experiences of mandatory military service, sport as a leisure activity, and pregnancy/childbirth. I wanted to know whether they dieted at any point of their lives or changed the meals they cooked based on anti-obesity advice; I asked women whether they wore make-up and miniskirts and how they felt about it; I was curious about men's experiences of army drill. I wanted to know to what extent my interlocutors saw these themes through political lens.

Many of my interlocutors would get surprised, even annoyed with my questions. Some of them thought that my project was not political enough: they thought I should study political repression, censorship or, if I wanted to focus on something related to the body, the restriction to travel. Politics, I have been told time and again, was *the* story to tell about late socialism. Others thought I asked about politics too much. Sport, aesthetic surgeries or sex change, they claimed, had nothing to do with the Communist Party. In their view, sport was their pastime that was neither politicized nor militarized; aesthetic procedures and sex reassignment surgeries were matters of health, and thus an exclusive rein of medical experts, not the Party. Whatever side my interviewees came from, all had one thing in common: they considered matters of the body private and free from the interference of the communist ideology, at most expressed frustrations about the poor central planning and shortages of consumer products for body-care.

These assertions have to be taken seriously. Many people experienced late socialism as a period of greater autonomy in their private lives and with opportunities to escape from politics. Sport, sex, camping, or village pig-roast festivities were areas that offered reprieve from politics. And yet, as scholars have shown, private activities were not far from the state's oversight. The retreat from revolutionary politics paradoxically led to the increased scrutiny of the private

sphere. From home decoration to family arrangements to social etiquette, socialist regimes engaged in a careful cultivation of citizens' everyday routines, behaviors and deportment.

For feminist scholars, the body is always political. It is never just flesh, it is always inscribed with political and social meanings, shaped by and embodying them. Feminist scholars have pointed out the gendered duality of flesh and mind, where the body is associated with femininity and masculinity with the mind. The female body, in this binary, has been rejected, understood as "abject," because it is thought to be filled with dangerous fluids and substances that threaten the male order. Not contained within the boundaries of the skin but "leaking, seeping, uncontrollable," spilling out at unexpected moments, leaving stains, women's bodies pose a threat to the (masculine) idea of purity and boundedness.[69] This is not necessarily an ontology of women's bodies but a cultural construction of order that renders women's corporeality marginal. This cultural construction of male and female bodies as different in a hierarchical order, and the political ramifications thereof, were similar across the capitalist/socialist binary. As this dissertation shows, the ideal of the body in Czechoslovakia was one of a contained and bounded body that was fully under the rational control of the individual. Unsurprisingly, then, not only were fat – uncontained – bodies stigmatized, femininity was more strongly associated with emotionality and irrationality in part due to the supposed hormonal composition of female bodies. At the same time, while menstruation and childbirth were framed as natural aspects of women's lives, they were veiled as taboo topics in the media.

Feminist scholars have also been at the forefront of intersectional approaches to social analysis. Ever since the pathbreaking analysis of discrimination of and violence against black

[69] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Elisabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1994; Emily Martin, *Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 (1987).

women as a matter of gender as well as race and socioeconomic status by Kimberlee Crenshaw, feminist scholars have examined the plurality of bodies in the population and their status within the social hierarchy. In the following text, I draw on these analyses and explore both the construction of the ideal Czechoslovak body in discourse and material, everyday experiences of individual bodies: female and male, Czech and Slovak, transsexual and straight. Wherever possible, I am attentive to the ways in which normative constructions of the body marginalized and stigmatized its opposite, such as in the case of the Roma, whose experiences were shaped by the construction of their "otherness."

Chapter outline

The first two chapters focus on bodily aesthetics and the interlocking discourses of and beauty, slimness, and health. **Chapter 1** examines discourses and practices surrounding beauty. I start by examining the 1960s beauty pageants, showing how the process of political liberalization was entangled with the sexualization of women's bodies. I push the beginning of the Prague Spring back, claiming that the process of liberalization began earlier – with the first beauty pageant at the 1965 Majáles. I argue that the suppression of the Prague Spring did not completely end these practices – drawing on lifestyle magazine and expert discourses, the chapter examines the increasingly commercialized rhetoric and practices of body beautification and accessorizing over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, including the little known but surprisingly existent practice of aesthetic surgeries. The chapter explores the tensions thus created between notions of health and beauty, modesty and sexualization, care and discipline, showing that the ambivalence about beauty seemed to express fears about sexualization rather than "westernization." It argues that the late socialist period's intensifying aesthetic discourse prepared the ground for the open sexualization of women's bodies in the post-1989 period.

Continuing the focus on bodily aesthetics, **chapter 2** explores anti-obesity discourses and dieting practices of the population. Arguments about obesity "epidemic" in Czechoslovakia caught on at the start of the post-Stalinist transformation in the early 1960s as experts' sought to assert the legitimacy of their expertise and control popular practices, and became linked with anxieties about socialist modernization. Over the next two decades, anti-obesity and slimness discourses were promoted to manage socialist consumption and cultivate appropriate bodily habits - fit, healthy, able, and aesthetically pleasing bodies became attributes of socialist subjects, and symbols of the Cold War competition with the West. Targeted largely at women, the anti-obesity discourse both acknowledged women's interests in appearance and essentialized it, furthering the heteronormative framework of Czechoslovak late socialism. This focus also demonstrates the particularly gendered politics of body appearance and obesity discourses, especially when compared to the anti-alcoholic and anti-smoking public health campaigns.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the question of who male and female bodies belonged to, exploring reproduction and mandatory military service, but I also zoom in on a more intimate level of embodied experience. Utilizing interviews and personal letters that men sent to their wives, **Chapter 3** examines men's experiences of mandatory military service. The chapter shows the failure of the Czechoslovak military to construct male soldierly bodies and prepare them for fight, one of the quintessential male roles. What is more, while the army, a "school of the nation," is supposed to create a patriotic sense of unified masculinity transcending class and racial hierarchies, the Czechoslovak military seems to have exacerbated divisions along lines of nationality, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. However, army service encouraged men to use their bodies as a site of agency, made men aware of their bodies and bodily limits, and sometimes made them experience their bodies in new, unexpected ways. While men resisted military services in part owing to the presence in the country of Soviet occupying forces, the chapter

ultimately suggests that not much about the Czechoslovak men's experiences of army service is particularly Czechoslovak or even socialist. Rather, the problems were those of an army in peacetime; men's embodied experiences similar to those of men elsewhere.

The number of babies born to Czechoslovak women showcased the legitimacy of the socialism and served as one of the tools of competition with the capitalist West. Much has been written on the shift toward pronatalism over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, which led the state to adopt policies supporting young families and restricting, or even completely denying access to abortion (but also sterilize the Roma population). Czechoslovak authorities boasted one of the lowest rates of mother and infant mortality, but conveniently did not mention that – despite high expert concern – the rate of premature births was high relative to Western countries. Together with the emphasis on the "quality of population" since the 1960s, efforts to manage individual pregnancies and births increased. Analyzing expert literature and in-depth interviews with four Czech and Slovak women, who were pregnant and gave birth to children in the course of the 1980s, **Chapter 4** examines women's varied experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. It contends that despite the ubiquitous imagery of motherhood, pregnancy was highly medicalized and women's experiences of both pregnancy and childbirth were much more complicated than public discourses suggested. This was, I claim, in part due to a focus on the child rather than the pregnant or laboring mother, ignoring the women's right to control matters of their bodies.

Aesthetically, femininity may have been under an increasing scrutiny over the late socialist period, but as **the last chapter** argues, the socialist project of emancipating women from sexualized notions of femininity granted female bodies a greater range of gendered expression. The chapter explores the phenomenon of sex transitions in socialist Czechoslovakia. Analyzing expert literature and individual petitions for sex reassignment, it shows that since the late 1960s, as elsewhere in the Western part of the Cold War divide, Czechoslovak transsexuals

were able to undergo hormonal treatment and sex change surgeries as well as change their legal sex. Drawing primarily on US theories of transsexuality, Czechoslovak experts understood transsexuality as a medical condition that required treatment, and transition. By insisting that the transsexual individual perform the role associated with the desired sex, they strove to create governable and legible bodies, and normalize their difference, which indirectly buttressed the stability of the late socialist gender order. The chapter shows that experts rather than the Communist Party were agents of disciplinary power.

Beauty for the Masses: Cosmetics and Aesthetic Surgery

In sexy T-shirts their cute bodies were yum-yum.
Holky z naší školky[1]

Do not forget, the Czech woman,
that you have only become a human today
so make the effort to stay pretty for the future, better world.
Dáma na kolejích[2]

In the fall of 1970, the women's magazine *Vlasta* ran a series of articles entitled "For a more beautiful woman" (*Za ženu krásnější*). Clearly inspired by the recent translation of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* into Czech, the author, TV editor and writer Eva Štolbová, commented on what she called the "uncritical return" of the "myth of the eternal feminine." According to her, the return of traditional notions of womanhood, including feminine beauty was inevitable, considering the Stalinist era's asceticism and its "abstraction from womanhood." Even though the years of construction of socialism did not make women "de-feminized," in her view they created the impression of a general denial of womanhood – and so under the guise of the "rehabilitation of woman's specificity" the society saw the resurgence of feminine beauty as one of the main features of womanhood. Štolbová criticized media for their "abuse of natural sensitivity" that women held for bodily beauty, trying to turn women into sexual and decorative objects. Beauty, she wrote, was being promoted at the expense of the value of woman as a human being, worker, and even mother.[3]

Štolbová was directly responding to a phenomenon that had started a decade before but intensified over the previous few years of Prague Spring. Couched in the language of healthy

[1] The quote is part of the lyrics of a song called "Girls from Our Kindergarten" that came out in 1983 and became the biggest hit of the socialist era pop music.
[2] *Woman on the Rails* (1966).
[3] "Za ženu krásnější," *Vlasta* 47 (1970): 15, *Vlasta* 48 (1970): 15; *Vlasta* 49 (1970): 15; *Vlasta* 50 (1970): 15, and *Vlasta* 51 (1970): 15.

skins, women were increasingly encouraged to use "all options" to enhance their looks and beauty.[4] Magazines and TV programs promoted women's use of creams and lotions, taught women how to use make up, and adorn their bodies with fashion and jewelry. When the Prague Spring came around, women donned miniskirts, put on make ups and glued eyebrows, and some participated in one (or more) of the omnipresent beauty pageants. In short, the general climate of openness and excitement during the Prague Spring created possibilities for freer self-expression as well as expression of femininity but simultaneously helped (re)define women through their bodies.[5]

While feminist scholars have noted the link between beauty and the production of femininity in virtually all societies, scholars of socialism from USSR to Eastern Europe to China have all observed that the period of communist revolutionary asceticism and criticism of beauty as a bourgeois holdover was followed by the return of discourses of feminine beauty linked to consumption.[6] Those working on Czechoslovakia generally concede that the suppression of the Prague Spring put an end to these "unleash[ed] desires, both serious and playful," only for them to return after the collapse of communism.[7] This chapter demonstrates that, on the contrary, in the couple of decades of normalization, these desires were both supported and checked so as to ensure that feminine beauty remains part of the socialist landscape but does not get out hand. Beauty was asserted as a right, defined as an inherent part of femininity, but its corollaries, consumption and sexualization, were tempered.[8]

---

[4] *Eva*, "V Košicích má krása číslo 22850," July-August, 1985.
[5] Malgorzata Fidelis, "Are You a Modern Girl? Consumer Culture and Young Women in the 1960s," *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, edited by Shana Penn and Jill Massino (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
[6] Gradskova, "Women's Beauty"; Fidelis, "Modern Girl"; Olga Gurova, "Ideology of Consumption in Soviet Union: From Asceticism to the Legitimating of Consumer Good," *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 24, n. 2 (2006): 91-98; Hua Wen, *Buying Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013); and Yang, "*Nennu* and *Shunu*.
[7] Paulina Bren, "Women on the Verge of Desire: Women, Work, and Consumption in Socialist Czechoslovakia," *Pleasures in Socialism*, 181.
[8] Michal Petrov, *Retro ČS: Retro ČS: Co bylo (a nebylo) za reálného socialismu* (Brno: Jota, 2013), 145.

This was not just a matter of matter of managing tensions between socialist morality and popular desires for or imitations of "Western" practices. Malgorzata Fidelis showed how young women moving from villages to urban centers to work in newly established factories in postwar Poland were as eager to work as they were to "put on makeup, attend dance parties, and pick up boys on the street…blend[ing] urban and rural values," their wok in urban factories prompting fears of sexualization.[9] Yulia Gradskova's analysis of beautification discourses in postwar Russia argues that they are best characterized as a combination of Western (modern), Soviet (collective and egalitarian), and village – traditionally patriarchal, encouraging both modesty and sexuality, cultured as well as fashionable looks.[10] As socialist countries incorporated western fashion styles and redefined them as part of East European socialism – miniskirts, jeans – the ambivalence about beauty seemed linked more to sexualization than westernization.

The normative notions of beauty promoted through lifestyle, fashion and women's magazines excluded Roma girls and women. There were no visual representations of Roma women in magazines and virtually no textual representations except when discussing themes of delinquency. In addition to labeling Roma practices as uncultured and untasteful, ethnographic studies more explicitly association beauty with the majority population. The normalization-era beauty discourse was thus not simply an exercise in promoting a new version of socialism but also constructing a particular racial identity as well.

In this chapter, I draw on the generations of scholars who have analyzed beauty discourses and their normative impulse: from Naomi Wolf 's exploration of the then $20bn cosmetic and $300bn aesthetic surgery industries that through mass media and advertizing promoted "unrealistic images of beauty" to keep women in check in time of the radically

[9] Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Poland*, 17.
[10] Gradskova, "We Were Upset."

expanding feminist movement[11]; to analyses of scholars such as Kathy Davis that center on women's agency, noting that women are acutely aware of the disciplinary powers of mass-produced imagery and informed about their pernicious effects, yet still choose to engage in slimming and aesthetic practices – and engage in them for various reasons.[12] I also draw on the most recent explorations of beauty industry that have zeroed in on "agency and pleasure, embodiment, and intersectionality […] decolonizing and transnationalizing beauty studies."[13] By exploring the Czechoslovak cosmetics and beauty industry, I bring socialist and capitalist beauty cultures into conversation.

I first explore the emergence of beauty pageants in the mid 1960s as a movement from below. By showing that women's bodies on stage were linked to liberalization, I push the start of the Prague Spring to the first student May celebrations in 1965. The 1960s were not only a decade of the Prague Spring but also a development of the Czechoslovak cosmetic industry; I thus move on to examining the development of cosmetics industry and services, and Czechoslovak beauty discourses. Part of the socialist beauty culture was aesthetic surgery, which I discuss based on interviews with surgeons in the following section. Finally, I suggest that we think about late socialism through the link between the promotion of aesthetically pleasing bodies and "quiet life" as an aesthetic category.

"No Miss Compromise"

In May 1965, as thousands of students marched through Prague in their first *Majáles* (First May celebrations) in over a decade, they crowned not only an unlikely King of May, Allen

[11] Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 17. Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*.
[12] Kathy Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[13] Ana S Elias, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharf, *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 10-13.

Ginsberg, but also a beauty queen.[14] It was a chilly night; the young women were shivering in their swimsuits as they were measured, quizzed about the pros and cons of being married, and promenaded on the podium, but the event was a huge success.[15] Jitka Vodňanská, one of the prominent dissidents in the 1980s, participated in the first round of the contest, it was her friend, Marie, won the contest. Vodňanská remembered that after the pageant she "cried all the way home that she wasn't there [on the podium], that she was too short and all."[16]

While Allen Ginsberg was promptly arrested and sent out of the country, beauty pageants were to stay. Before they were banned again in 1970, the Czechoslovaks crowned *Miss Academia, Miss Diorling, Miss Motor, Miss JZD (agricultural collective), the girl 66, 67, 68, Miss Czechoslovakia 1969 and 1970*, and numerous other beauty queens on both local and national level. Some of these pageants had just a few contestants (ten in case of Miss Film, for example) while others, such as the national "girl," attracted hundreds of applicants, but all shaped a new vision of (young) femininity and helped usher in a new gender configuration of socialist Czechoslovakia.

Organized from below and against official ideology that criticized the objectification of women, the Czechoslovak beauty contests tapped into and helped express popular desire for sexualized femininity as well as entertainment.[17] Historian Martin Franc claims that it was held at a time when the membership of the Czechoslovak Youth Organization was declining, and the organization's leadership was looking for a way to boost its numbers.[18] If that was indeed the case, the fact that a communist organization understood modernization through exposed

[14] Simultaneously, students in one of Bratislava's dorms organized a beauty pageant.
[15] For a short film about the 1965 Czechoslovak *Majáles*, including the beauty contest, see "Majáles 65," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5pX_gD5r2E, especially 2-5min, last accessed October 25, 2018.
[16] Jitka Vodňanská, *Voda, která hoří* (Torst, 2018): 81.
[17] Jane Nicholas, *The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 123.
[18] Martin Franc and Jiří Knapík, *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948–1967* (Praha: Academia, 2011): 1024.

women's bodies on stage reveals the shifting social climate in Czechoslovakia. The pageants provided women the space to express femininity in ways previously unavailable, pushing the limits of political oversight. But they also helped solidify the sexualization of young femininity and the association of women with the pursuit of beauty. In short, with the 1965 *Majáles* the Prague Spring began.

After the success of *Majáles*, a call for the first national beauty pageant went out in the fall of the same year. It was organized by the youth magazine *Mladý svět*, in collaboration with the *Park kultury a oddechu Julia Fučíka* (Parks of Leisure and Relaxation) and *Made In…(Publicity)*, a Czechoslovak advertizing agency created in 1964 to promote foreign products in Czechoslovakia. Called the "girl [of the year]", the goal of the contest was to find an all-rounded representative. The organizers insisted that they were "*not looking for a 'sexbomb,' an empty poster beauty*,"[19] but rather intended "to find a girl whose beauty and intellect would allow us to call her 'ideal'."[20] In addition to being beautiful, the contestants were supposed to embody the combination of "taste, social manners, and general knowledge of political and cultural affairs," and they had to have a talent for singing, dancing, drawing, reciting, or have another skill that they could impress the jury with.[21] The contestants had to be between 18 and 26 years old, could be married, and while body measurements were not announced, they were expected to be slender.

The contest was immediately criticized. Not only by those who thought that comparing women based on bodily beauty was unsuitable, but also by those who thought the organizers did not go far enough and were too prudish. A poem entitled *Miss kompromis* ("Miss Compromise") appeared in a popular magazine *Student* and was quickly picked up by daily newspapers.

---

[19] *Mladý svět,* "Hledá se dívka roku 1966," February 10, 1966 (emphasis original).
[20] *Lidová demokracie*, June 24, 1966.
[21] *Lidová demokracie*, February 10, 1966.

Acknowledging the widespread frenzy of pageants, the author wrote that while previously only "true madmen" could organize a beauty contest, they now took place as if "on a conveyor belt." He mocked the organizers for wanting to eat the cake and have it too. Beauty, he wrote, was new to Czechoslovakia but "It has got to be kept on leash/Lest it gets out of hand," and undermines socialism.[22] With every further national pageant, however, organizers dropped one more reference to the difference of the Czechoslovak pageants from the capitalist contests; the test from political and cultural affairs, included in official score in the first year, was dropped, making the voluntary skill presentation and swimsuit competition more important. In 1967, *Mladý svět* proudly announced that the invitation for the "girl 67" to participate in the Miss World contest stated that the Czechoslovak contest "exactly corresponds to the rules of the Miss World."[23] After three years of experimentation, the call for the 1969 pageant quietly changed the name to Miss Czechoslovakia.[24] Ironically, the change happened only after the Warsaw Pact armies crushed the Prague Spring.

With numerous pageants taking place all over the country, some women soon began travelling the pageant circuit. Miss Motor tried her luck in the "girl 67" pageant, and some of the "girl 68" contestants had participated in several local pageants before. Miss Economia Veronika Miklošíková, claimed the contests "did not have practically any meaning, they were all a joke," yet participated in five different pageants anyway.[25] What drew them in? They had a variety of motives: one contestant was "in favor of all new things," another was hoping it would launch her acting career, and yet another had missed a deadline for a singing talent competition, so she

[22] "Ta krása v minimálním šatě / Je pořád u nás nezvyklá. / Nutno ji držet na špagátě, / Aby se z rukou nevymkla. ... Hle – vyzráli jsme na peklo, / Jen tak, aby se neřeklo. / Je spokojena jura bdělá: / Duch nemusí být vadou těla, / Jen koza musí zůstat celá." *Student*, "Miss kompromis," March 30, 1966.
[23] *Mladý svět*, "Jak se volí Miss World," October 10, 1967.
[24] The change was based on the previous "three-year development of the contest", particularly the organizers' experience with foreign pageants. MS 28/1968.
[25] *Student*, "Mumraj kolem Miss," April 10, 1967.

signed up for the "girl 67" contest (she did sing in the talent competition). Most claimed that their boyfriends, husbands or colleagues sent their applications in, so they participated to "make him happy."[26] Since beauty pageants offer entertainment and promise glamor, it is perhaps safe to say that many had a similar thought to Dagmar Silvínová, the beauty queen of 1966, who had won a pageant in Israel a year before: "I wanted to experience this on my own skin."[27]

Scholars argue that the variety of motives women have for participation suggests that standardized body beauty per se is not at stake in beauty pageants; in their view, women are no dupes of the beauty myth. That the Czechoslovak beauty contests took place in a country whose political regime had in the previous fifteen years mobilized a powerful discourse of women's emancipation and decried objectification of women's bodies makes this argument perhaps even stronger. Some women participated in them because beauty pageants allowed them to *finally* embody and perform femininity and display their bodies. As well, the very notion of a competition among women as well as the search for a unique, however all-rounded, personality was a novel idea. This was not the search for socialist role models in the style of Stakhanovite workers-builders of socialism and representatives of socialist values. Rather, these contests supported and publicly sanctioned individualism and uniqueness. Yet at the same time, they helped define the ideal Czechoslovak (young) woman's body for the first time in twenty years, literally so by announcing the measurements of beauty queens' candidates.

Beauty pageants provide a site where visions and ideas of community are defined.[28] Far from simply staging gender norms, pageants help to define them, and "evoke passionate interest

---

[26] *Mladý svět*, June 19, 1967.
[27] *Mladý svět*, June 6, 1966. On glamor and entertainment see Jane Nichols, *The Modern Girl*.
[28] Stephen A. Fielding, "The Changing Face of Little Italy: The Miss Colombo Pageant and the Making of Ethnicity in Trail, British Columbia, 1970-1977," *Urban History Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Special Issue: Encounters, Contests, and Communities: New Histories of Race and Ethnicity in the Canadian City, Part 2 (Fall 2010): 45-58. Masako Nakamura, "Miss Atom Bomb" Contests in Nagasaki and Nevada: The Politics of Beauty, Memory, and the Cold War," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, No. 37 (2009): 117-143. Neville Hoad, "Miss HIV and Us: Beauty Queens Against the HIV/AIDS Pandemic," *The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (spring 2010): 9-28.

and engagement with political issues."[29] Studying the interwar beauty contests in Canada, Jane Nicholas claims that they "demarcated wider cultural, social, and generational shifts as Canadians found themselves confronted with a new type of modern femininity," symbolizing a new culture of consumerism, entertainment and glamor.[30] Linked to ideas of modernity and progress, pageants stage global aspirations of local communities and help bridge the distance between local and global levels. As competitions for a representative of a local or national community, they also foster the creation of a group identity, "showcas[ing] values, concepts, and behavior that exist at the center of a group's sense of itself."[31] In doing so, however, they may also expose fractures within communities—here, the separate contests held for white and black American women in the first half of the 20th century, are an example. The Czechoslovak 1989 pageant, which took place in a Czech city and in which a Slovak winner was booed and shouted at, revealed and renewed the tensions between Czechs and Slovaks. While the tensions flared up during the Prague Spring (leading to the federalization of the country), they were suppressed during normalization, and found an outlet in the first renewed national contest.

The pageants placed Czechoslovakia on the world beauty map, which for many symbolized the opening of the country to the West. Miss Diorling was a Czechoslovak contest sponsored by the French Christian Dior company, its winner went to the company's Paris studio for a week. Miss Economia was an international pageant held in Prague, with participants from at least nine countries.[32] While "d 66," Dagmar Silvínová, was not allowed to travel to Miss Universe because, as she was told by the Office of the President, the "US was an enemy because

[29] Ballerino Cohen, Colleen, Richard Wilk, Beverly J. Stoeltje (eds.). *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*, (New York: Routledge, 1996): 2. See also Etwood Watson and Darcy Martin (eds.), *There She Is, Miss America: The Politics of Sex, Beauty and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant* (London: palgrave macmillan, 2004).
[30] Nicholas, *The Modern Girl,* 123.
[31] Ballerino et al, *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage*, 2.
[32] From among socialist countries, Bulgaria, East Germany, and Poland participated as well. *Lidové noviny*, "Miss Economia Europe je z Bratislavy," April 3, 1967.

of the Vietnam war,"[33] the winners of the 1967, 1968 and 1969 contests participated in Miss Europe, Miss World and Miss Universe.[34] Indeed, Štrkulová's participation in the pageant in London prompted the magazine to affectionately call her "our queen Elisabeth."

However, the contestants reportedly did not fully adhere to the expectations of pageant participants, exposing what the jurors called "provincialism" of the events.[35] The participants in the 1968 pageant, for example, allegedly did not have the appropriate bodily posture, nor did they have much sense of appropriate fashion choices so the "jury mistook them for regular visitors." One of the participants reportedly wore "a pink dress with ruffles," which, a member of the jury claimed, was "appropriate only for confirmation," definitely not for a beauty contest. Blushing contestants were advised to wear light powder, and all were warned that even if they mess up during their talent competition, the jury did see what they were doing on the stage.[36] By disciplining women's unruliness and their inappropriate staging of femininity, critics strove to educate women about the rules of glamorous, sexualized beauty, and standardize both bodies and behaviors. Through the staging of women's bodies, the jurors also hoped to mark the Czechoslovak place on the world's stage.

While a desire for all things "Western" is well-documented for the Czechoslovak 1960s, thinking of the beauty contests as imitation would be wrong. Czechoslovakia itself had a long tradition of pageantry. One of the first contests was organized in 1912, the Bohemian queen was sent as a representative of the Czech lands to the celebrations of Mardi Gras in Paris. Pageants

---

[33] *Retro*, "Rok 1966," https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10176269182-retro/213411000360022/titulky (accessed April 15, 2019).
[34] Although not without difficulties: Dagmar Silvínová (1966 winner) was banned from traveling to Miss World and even Alžběta Štrkulová's (1967 winner) trip to Miss World was not without complications. Reference to the Denver newspaper note.
[35] One of the jury members in the d 68 contest, actor and singer Jiří Suchý, criticized the audiences for inappropriate behavior: "I enjoyed the contest. But I do not envy those women. It is no fun to display themselves in this big hall and see that people are slurping a beer…I think that the final round should be stripped of all provincial character…" *Mladý svět,* July 8, 1968.
[36] *Mladý svět,* "Vážená Miss 1969," July 8, 1968.

continued to be organized in the interwar period and renewed after the end of WWII. In fact, Věra Chytilová, who would later become one of the prominent film directors in the 1960s Czechoslovak New Wave, was a runner up in a beauty contest in 1948, the year of the communist takeover. Moreover, the Czechoslovak pageants were not the first beauty contests in socialist Eastern Europe. Poland organized beauty pageants for three years between 1956 and 1958, ending them after a series of scandals, including the emigration of the 1958 Miss to the USA and a suspicious death of the runner up.[37]

The Czechoslovak pageants were also immediately associated with the liberalization of the society (Figure 2). According to the chair of the east Bohemian regional round of "the girl 66," for example, the contest represented "a step towards eliminating stiff opinions in our social life."[38] Daily newspaper *Lidová demokracie* wrote that beauty contests changed the previously chaotic world into one of order and rule of law.[39] Re-establishing the availability of women for public viewing helped reestablish the social order after the Stalinist experiment with gender hierarchies. Indeed, several contestants claimed that they were excited that the competition allowed them to express femininity. Among them was Alžběta Štrkulová, winner of the 1967 pageant, who years later remembered that the pageants made it possible to "finally appreciate women's beauty."[40]

With the election of Miss Czechoslovakia in 1970, beauty pageants disappeared for the next nineteen years. Rumor has it that it was either on a Soviet order or else it was Gusta Fučíková – the widow of the author of *Notes from the Gallows*, which became an important propaganda text, and a high-profile woman in the Communist hierarchy – who convinced the

[37] *Pogoda na życie*, "Fatum nad Miss Polonią - Konkurs Miss Polonia, Śmierć i dziewczyny," May 2, 2015, http://pogodanazycie.pl/pogodanazycie/7,149887,20009356,fatum-nad-miss-polonia-konkurs-miss-polonia-smierc-i-dziewczyny.html (accessed November 3, 2018).
[38] *Mladý svět,* "Hledá se dívka roku 1966," February 10, 1966 (emphasis original).
[39] *Lidová demokracie*, June 24, 1966.
[40] AČT, "Miss ČSSR 1989" (1989).

Party leadership to ban the pageants. But even though beauty contests disappeared in the form of public parades of bodies in swimsuit, magazines did not give up on the idea of beauty competition. After a couple of years of hiatus, no doubt caused by an uncertainty about what was permissible to publish, contests for the most likeable woman (of a work collective or school) (re)appeared in magazines and would be periodically published until 1989. This is not to claim that beauty pageants and likeability contests were commensurate. But physical beauty did not cease to be part of these contests, based as they were on evaluating both life stories *and* photographs of women; moreover, ubiquitous summer camp or school contest for a "Miss wet shirt" and the likes dropped any pretention of assessing anything but women's bodies. Disguised, more or less explicitly, beauty contests continued to flourish throughout the normalization period.

Cosmetic industry

The Prague Spring involved much more than beauty pageants. Twiggy, with her skinny legs, painted on eyelashes, and mini dresses, made a splash in Czechoslovakia, with thousands of women, young and old, enthusiastically following the phenomenon. The streets were filled with colorful dresses and fashionable flip hairstyles. Hippies, too, were part of the Czechoslovak landscape, men sporting long hair and full beards without fearing repression. While men would go back to short hair and shaved faces and women, temporarily, "normalize their hemlines," adorning one's body through accessories and make up would continue to be part of late socialist lifestyle.

Cosmetic and beauty care had already become part of the market. Rehabilitated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was defined – and legitimized – as an issue of medical science, a tool in preventing skin diseases and keeping the population away from products that may cause skin

damage. In these early years, the development of cosmetic care was presented as evidence of the advancement of Czechoslovak medical science and dermatological necessity. The first book on skin care for women, published in 1961, had a dermatological focus, advising women how to protect their skin from the elements and industrial or agricultural chemicals, and showing the ways in which to take care of acne or various blemishes.[41] The *Institute of Cosmetics*, the main beauty center in socialist Czechoslovakia, presented itself as a medical institution, called visitors "patients" and had staff providing services in white medical gowns. The promotion of natural looks as well as the notion of beauty as an issue of health would remain a strong part of the beauty discourse throughout the socialist period, but the emphasis on dermatological approaches would decrease in the 1970s and 1980s.

The *Institute* was founded in 1958, reportedly due to the enormous effort of physician Květena Čermáková.[42] The *Institute* remained in operation throughout the socialist period and beyond, providing a complex care for visitors and training for cosmeticians; its services ranged from hairdressing, facial masks and massages, to corrections of various dermatological problems and tattoo removal, to slimming programs and aesthetic surgery.[43] When I met the founder's daughter, Marie Nováková, she told me that her mother was "such an aesthetician!" Born into the family of the postwar minister of internal commerce, educated in the best schools, speaking French and German, she "would often say that the era of women in scarves should end."[44] Cosmopolitan, urban, and decidedly un-proletarian notions of feminine beauty (and body care) that Čermáková grew up around would become the basis for the work of her *Institute*.

---

[41] Ladislav Polák, *Péče o pleť: pro ženy v zaměstnání i v domácnosti* (Praha: Státní zdravotnické nakladatelství, 1961).
[42] A similar beauty institute had opened in Moscow a year before, which probably made it easier for Čermáková to convince Czechoslovak authorities to open a beauty institute in Prague.
[43] The Institute also sold its own cosmetics products. These, former employees told me, were not distributed to regular shops because they did not contain any artificial ingredients to prolong its durability. The store of the Prague Institute alone earned reportedly about 6.5 mil Czech crowns in 1988.
[44] Interview with Marie Nováková, Prague, Nov 2, 2015.

It was located in Palace Adria, a magnificent building in the very heart of Prague (today best known as the headquarters of the Civic Forum in 1989). It was a luxurious space, richly decorated with Venetian mirrors and Persian carpets as well as modernist art (Figure 1). The Palace was originally built in the early 1920s for an Italian insurance company, housing a range of prominent fashion salons. After WWII, it held a Film Club and the original backstage of Laterna Magika theater; in 1958, it became a protected national monument. The luxurious venue of the *Institute* thus represents one of the "imps of perversity", as Slavoj Žižek would put it, literally materializing "that which [was] ostensibly repressed."[45] It demonstrates that beauty services from the *Institute* carried a sense of grandeur and glamor, giving the visitors a sense of exclusivity.

In the first years of the *Institute's* operation, Nováková recalled, "women didn't want anyone to see them there. [They] were embarrassed to be seen there because it was [considered] a capitalist holdover."[46] And yet, about 35,000 people used its services in the first couple of years alone, roughly fifty per day. Not all were women, about a fifth of the visitors to the *Institute* in the early 1960s were men, coming for nose and ear adjustments, tattoo elimination, and other procedures.[47] A third of the visitors were clerical workers, manual workers comprised 13%, 12% were students, 2% of visitors worked in agriculture, and 23% of various other types of jobs (teachers, actresses, shop assistants, etc.).[48] Women from other parts of the country requested that the *Institute* opens branches. And it did: one was opened in Ostrava in 1966 – the branch soon had to start offering its services in two shifts because of the high demand – and another in Bratislava in 1969; there were also branches in Karlovy Vary and Košice, though

[45] Žižek qt. in Crowley and Reid, "Introduction," *Pleasures in Socialism*, 9.
[46] Interview with M. Nováková, Prague, Nov 2, 2015. The *Institute's* cosmetician Olga Knoblochová made a similar observation in *Retro*, "Kosmetika," http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10176269182-retro/208411000361112/ (accessed April 16, 2019).
[47] *Zdravotnické noviny,* "Umění nebo věda? (kosmetika)" Vol. 27, no. 23 (1978): 4.
[48] *Vlasta*, "Zdraví a krása," April 10, 1961.

these did not last throughout the entire socialist period.[49]

The number of visitors to the Prague *Institute* alone would triple by the end of the 1970s to about 600 per day. The largest group of visitors consisted of women between 35 and 45 years of age, about 11 percent were men between the ages of 20 and 30.[50] By then, the *Institute* employed staff of 70 people and performed about 600 cosmetic surgeries a year (four to six a day). Throughout the 1980s, the staff would complain that the space of the *Institute* was too small to accommodate the ever-increasing number of visitors, and utterly unsuitable for its purposes but whether for logistical or other reasons the *Institute* did not move to a larger space. Curiously, for all the late socialist ambiguity about beauty, in 1977 the Prague National Committee (Pražský národní výbor) and the Prague Trade Union Committee (Pražská odborová rada) awarded the *Institute* a prize for an exceptional fulfillment of its (business) plan.[51]

In addition to the *Institutes* in Prague and Bratislava, cities and smaller towns would open hairdressing, pedicure and cosmetic services as part of their "Houses of Service" (*Dům služeb*).[52] While growing in number, these services were not always fully available – being too few for the high demand, they had long wait times or their opening hours were not always suitable for working citizens. In Košice, for example, women complained that hairdressers and pedicurists closed at 4pm, when they just barely got out of work.[53] Smaller cities, especially in Slovakia, did not have any such services long into the 1970s, inspiring creative solutions for basic grooming, such as travelling hairdressing buses (image). Throughout the late socialist period, the opening of new businesses, including services of bodily care and beautification, and adjusting their opening

[49] Knapík and Franc, *Průvodce kulturním děním,* 988.
[50] *Zdravotnické noviny* "Umění nebo věda? (kosmetika)," Vol. 27, no. 23 (1978): 4.
[51] *Ibid*.
[52] These "houses" opened and quite radically expanded in the late socialist period because the elimination of small businesses during the Stalinist phase of socialism left the population without vital services – such as plumbing, locksmiths, shoe repair, etc. – that the Party was unable to substitute. In the latter half of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the types of services offered in these "houses" were an important point of election campaigns and legitimacy of local politicians.
[53] AZK, KNV, Odbor MH, i.c. 57, škatula 12.

hours to the needs of the population were a permanent feature of local election campaigns. Some factories and organizations set up hairdressing and cosmetic salons on their premises in response to requests by their female employees, allowing women to get a perm or facial massage during their lunch break.

Of course, not all services related to body maintenance necessarily were and were sought after for beautification per se.[54] They were certainly no beauty salons that we know today that would offer to transform women into Cinderellas. On their part, women used cosmetic services not only for beautification but also to give themselves some body pleasure, get some quiet time away from childcaring or household duties, or catch up with friends and acquaintances. But the shifting status of feminine appearance and the naturalization of women's interest in them meant that their numbers and significance grew.

In reaction to women's letters from various regions across the country who wrote that they could not come to the Prague or Bratislava *Institute of Cosmetics*, the magazine *Vlasta*, the official loudspeaker of the Czechoslovak Women's Union, decided to bring cosmetic services to women directly. For ten years, between 1978 and 1988, a team consisting of a cosmetician ("Lady Dermacol" Olga Knoblochová), a fashion designer and a hairdresser travelled to various parts of the country, or more specifically to factories and non-industrial work places, to offer women fashion advice and help transform their looks. *Vlasta's* team did not go just anywhere, however, it only provided cosmetic transformation to members of work brigades associated with the magazine.[55] Engaging in productive labor was a prerequisite to getting exclusive access to

[54] For beauty salons as spaces of socializing, relaxation and regular grooming, as well as beauty, see also Paula Black, *The Beauty Industry: Gender, Culture, Pleasure* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[55] These work brigades would have been members of the Czechoslovak Women's Union.

beautification services; beauty, in turn, was a reward these women got for their contribution to the Czechoslovak production.[56]

In addition to the growing number of services, interwar cosmetic companies that were confiscated or nationalized in the postwar period renewed their production, expanding the market for both women's and men's cosmetic products: Slovak AB cosmetics, Prague-based Astrid hand lotions, the North Bohemian Elida soaps. Elida quickly made its name on the market: soaps were made in various forms, from ordinary to very luxurious ones, which were packed in leatherette boxes and offered to women as gifts on International Women's Day. New companies sprang up, too. Olga Knoblochová, a cosmetician from the *Institute of Cosmetics*, worked together with the film studios in Barrandov on a product that would cover various skin rashes and marks. The make-up that the Barrandov chemists developed was so effective that, after founding the company Dermacol, they sold the make-up license to the Hollywood film studios in 1969. Traveling around the world to sell Dermacol's products, Knoblochová would come to be known as Lady Dermacol. The company's profits skyrocketed to whopping 120mil. Czechoslovak crowns per year and over the following couple of decades reportedly helped finance the production of Czechoslovak movies.[57]

Over the 1960s, Czechoslovak companies also received licenses to produce Western cosmetic products for domestic markets: Austrian Schwarzkopf, French Christian Dior, and German Nivea, the most popular lotion used daily by men and women long into the post-socialist period. During the 1970s and 1980s the beauty market expanded even more, both due to further

[56] Olga Kravets and Özlem Sandıkçı, who examined advertizing of Soviet cosmetics in the 1930s conclude that to emphasize women's labor obligations to the Soviet society, the beauty industry used Stakhanovite models or women laborers to advertise its products. Olga Kravets and Özlem Sandıkçı, "Marketing for Socialism: Soviet Cosmetics in the 1930s," *Business History Review* 87, no. 3 (Autumn 2013), 484.

[57] These are unverified words by Knoblochová herself and will need to be checked once archival material is made available. See for example, Lenka Petrášová, "Olga Knoblochová – Lady Dermacol," *Vital*, January 21, 2013, https://vitalplus.org/olga-knoblochova-lady-dermacol/ (accessed April 15, 2019).

licenses from the West (Dove, Pond's, Rexona, and others) and products imported from the East. Some of the products from other socialist countries were extremely unpopular, such as Soviet "duchi" or Bulgarian rose perfumes, whose smell was so unmistakably strong that many women chose to go without perfume altogether; other products were, on the contrary, desired very much – apple-scented Bulgarian shampoos and perfumes, East German aftershaves, and Hungarian moisturizers.[58]

That Western products were most popular was not simply because of the allure and idealization of all things western but, perhaps more so, because domestic products lacked quality and allegedly did not smell or look as nice.[59] When Taft started being distributed in Czechoslovakia in the early 1970s, women immediately switched from domestic Lybar (the first aerosol product available in Czechoslovakia): Lybar was so perfectly water-resistant that it could not be washed away.[60] They also preferred any other make-up to Dermacol's because its covering qualities were so strong that they created a thick mask on one's face: Eva Kotvová, the first female TV news anchor in Czechoslovakia, remembered that each time she smiled wearing Dermacol, she thought she "would crack like an old painting or an earthenware vase."[61] As a news anchor, she had the privilege of traveling often and widely, and was thus able to buy Western make-up products. Most men, however, were loyal to the Czechoslovak aftershave Pitralon, so much so that city trams reportedly smelled the same every morning.

Despite this longish list of companies having their products licensed in Czechoslovakia, the actual availability of body care products in stores was limited, as numerous memoirs and personal testimonies demonstrate.[62] Kotvová recalled that in the early years, finding appropriate

[58] Petrov, *Retro ČS*, 144-174.
[59] *Retro*, "Kosmetika."
[60] Petrov, *Retro ČS*, 156.
[61] *Retro*, "Kosmetika."
[62] Many remember socialist Czechoslovakia through sensory memory: the ubiquitous smell of sweat, particularly in packed trams in the summertime. And while none of my interviewees remembered any antiperspirants available in

make-up was "an adventure." Like thousands other women in the country, she would use burnt matches to paint her eyebrows; while eyeliners were available, not only did the packaging look "like a box of shoe cream," the eyeliner was also that thick and heavy. She would thus "spit into the box" to create the consistency she needed; and since there were no applicators for make-up, she used her father's (a painter) brush for inpainting.[63] Those who had resources or connections would get products "under the counter" or in one of the Tuzex stores. Others, "magicians who created beauty out of nothing," would find other solutions:[64] applied cucumbers on eyelids to freshen up their eyes and mixed oatmeal and honey to create a facial mask, used sugary water as a substitute for hairspray or body hair depilation solution (even though, until the late 1980s body hair depilation was practiced by a rather small group of singers, actresses and professional sportswomen; the practice spread mainly among young women in the late 1980s, becoming a phenomenon only after 1989).[65]

According to Slavenka Drakulic, the lack of products from make-up to hygiene to sanitary products made just being a woman a 'humiliating' experience, let alone allowed women to be beautiful.[66] Unable to buy body care products, tired of their responsibilities as mothers, workers and caretakers, looked older than they were and were "overdressed, with too much make up, match colors and textures badly," not because they would not want to be fashionable or would not read beauty advice, but because there was simply nothing to buy. Women certainly spent the majority of their time on work, household duties, standing in the ubiquitous lines; fashion and beauty, many of the married women I interviewed claimed, was among the less

---

the shops, they existed. The popular Prague Spring duo Jan Vodňanský and Petr Skoumal sing about a fictitious Dezodor in their song "Tell me, Darling" but their expansion came in 1980s, though they allegedly "stuck terribly to the skin." "Pověz, miláčku," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRBaN-QTpM4, particularly 2-3min (accessed May 14, 2019).

[63] *Retro*, "Kosmetika."

[64] Slavenka Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 22.

[65] *Ibid.*, 21-33.

[66] *Ibid*., 31.

important things. Yet, in his analysis of East German fashion, Judt Stitiziel found that the problem with the socialist fashion market was not so much that there was nothing to buy as that there was too much of what people did not want to buy.[67] Part of the claims women make about the lack of beauty products in Czechoslovakia will probably be similar – what was available was undesirable. But beauty, both in discourse and in practice, was part of the late socialist landscape.

Beauty discourse

Women had the right and duty to engage in beautification of their bodies:

> The absolute majority of women today – from schoolgirls to contemporary young grandmothers – like to be elegant and look pretty. If a woman does not care for her appearance, or does not care about being clean, it is usually a signal that she is having some psychological problems. She may suffer from a complex that she is not beautiful…[68]

The discourse, as this quote reveals, sought to simultaneously legitimize women's interest in beauty, encourage them to engage in beautifying practices, and moderate their interest in them by highlighting notions of hygiene and good taste. Women's appearance had to reveal work and care but not too much care, it was supposed to be elegant yet modest, show femininity but not an excessive interest in the body. All were encouraged to look desirable, but signaling sexual availability was reserved to young women only. Looking good, women were taught, enhanced their self-confidence; those women who were satisfied with their looks were also happier in life, less anxious and snappy, more effective in maintaining harmonious relationships at home and at work. Ultimately, women's good looks were presented as the foundation of a harmonious Czechoslovak society.

[67] Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism.*
[68] Marie Majorová, *Dámy a pánové, život začíná* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1980), 28.

The discourse in magazines and etiquette books advanced, above all, "natural" beauty. Natural beauty was primarily a matter of health and hygiene, two codewords that persisted in beauty discourse since the early 20th century.[69] Their clothes, body, and hair were to be regularly washed, their nails clean and without dirt, their skins moisturized. They were encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle, with proper sleep, regular and modest food intake as well as regular exercise, all in the name of looking good.[70] Natural beauty, experts claimed, required a good amount of bodily discipline and "organization of the daily regime."[71]

Natural look was a "cultured" look. Drawing on 19th century notions civilizing efforts directed at lower classes, the (Russian) concept of *kulturnost* encompassed education, dress, looks, good social manners and politeness. As a combination bourgeois and intellectual values, historians of the Soviet Union have argued that the ideology of *kulturnost* brought to the socialist system bourgeois practices and a (re)appraisal of high culture.[72] Women were told to cover their "imperfections," and use cosmetics and fashion in a way that masked their bulges and wrinkles. And while youthfulness had always been an important part of the socialist discourse, over the course of the 1970s and 1980s fashion and cosmetic advice made it an imperative for women to look younger than their age: "Women around fifty should, as a principle, look forty years old," an article asserted; with another imploring women to "even in a significantly older age…wear whatever suited you when you were forty."[73] Underneath the notion of *kulturnost* and the acceptance of all body shapes lurked the increasing influence of youthful and slender femininity.

[69] See also Helena Bělinová, *Ideál ženské krásy před a po roce 1989 - analýza diskurzu v časopise Vlasta* (Prague: FHS UK, 2013. Unpublished MA Thesis.)
[70] Vlado Burian, *Ideální člověk* (Prague: Merkur, 1978), 53.
[71] Material of the *Institute of Cosmetics*, personal archive of Marie Nováková.
[72] Vadim Volkov, "The concept of kul'tumost': notes on the Stalinist civilizing process," *Stalinism: New Directions* London: Routledge, 2000), 216.
[73] *Vlasta*, "Jaro pro každý věk a postavu," July 4, 1975.

What *kulturnost* did not encompass was sexuality. While women's looks were to be neat, they were not to be provocative. Inevitably, everyone remembered that one woman whose skirt was too short, blouse cut too deep, or make up too bright. Beata recalled that "what was important were eyelashes, lips, and a gentle eyeshadow. No vulgar make up, only something gentle…."[74] Iva recalled that when she put on a bright red lipstick in a store – the only one available at the time – she "felt like a whore." She explained it away by saying that bright red does not go with her type, but it suggests the incorporation of standards of *kulturnost*.[75] Sexualization was only permissible in young women, their desirability promoted in magazines and displayed through the types of dress, music and exercise choices made for *Spartakiads*.[76] But even young women felt caught between the promotion of attractiveness and fears of sexualization. Especially in many regions in Slovakia, young women were forbidden from wearing short skirts and make-up in high schools long into the 1980s. While girls always tried, they would be sent to washrooms and instructed not to wear miniskirts.

Naomi Wolf has argued that the beauty myth "always actually prescribe[es] behavior and not appearance."[77] While her argument that beauty practices are a tool of patriarchal culture that keeps women in check has been reassessed, her emphasis on beauty as a vehicle of managing behavior is useful. The Czechoslovak beauty discourse developed in a context of anxiety about demographic trends, and women were blamed for them. Sexual behavior of the population was rapidly changing especially after the introduction of the pill, with more people having extramarital sex, women were not having enough babies and were filing more divorce petitions than men. The beauty discourse associated women's good looks with the maintenance of

[74] Interview with Beata S., Velký Šariš, July 11, 2015.
[75] Interview with Iva H., Hradec Králové, June 22, 2015.
[76] Gal and Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*, 54; Roubal, *Spartakiády*
[77] Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 14.

(heteronormative) familial and social harmony, and implied that too much beautification led to promiscuity.

The way in which men disrupted the norms of a cultured look, on the other hand, was associated with disloyalty to the communist regime and subculture identity of rock and punk music circles. Etiquette dictated that men wear their hair cut above their ears, shave their facial hair regularly, and cultivate beards, if they have them. Their look was supposed to display rugged elegance, conveying care but not overly maintained look, which was associated with femininity. Just like with young women, teachers labeled long hair as untidy and uncultured, and sent young boys with long hair to principal's office or a barber's to have it cut. They were banned from pubs, movie theaters, and even public transportation. Men sporting a look with long hair and beard acquired the label "mánička" and became the targets of police or secret service surveillance as a.[78]

The norms promoted by the Czechoslovak beauty discourse were not simply those of heteronormative femininity but heteronormative femininity of the majority population more specifically. By not portraying any Roma girls or women, magazines excluded them from representations of acceptable and desirable femininity. The Roma were also directly racialized. Ethnographic and psychology studies portrayed Roma practices and demeanor as uncivilized, lacking in hygienic standards and social norms that were supposed to belong to properly cultured, socialist citizens. Despite the fact that magazines lamented the lack of style all Czechoslovak women displayed by wearing mismatched clothing and unsuitable hairstyles (often reportedly those that were in fashion rather than those that would suit them) – and despite the fact that most Roma women wore mainstream clothing – it was the Roma women who were

[78] Pospíšil and Blažek, "'*Vraťte nám vlasy*!'." For fashion and subcultures see also Mark Edele, "Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945-1953," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50 (2002): 37-61.

singled out as inappropriately habituated into the norms of appearance. Their hygienic habits and appearance were constricted as inadequate and "backward." One study, for example, claimed that Roma women had a "primitive sense of [fashion] style," and were unable to sew properly. The study asserted that "even good clothes look neglectful on gypsy girls. Even though they allegedly spend a great amount of time and care on their hair, their usually long, curly hair looks sloppy."[79] Another study very explicitly echoed racialized, colonial tropes:

> in some cases, it was [scientifically] proven that when proper hygiene and skin care is applied [to the Roma], it is possible to achieve *normal skin color*. As evidence I cite an example: in Rokycany, there are two gypsy women who have *beautiful white skin,* achieved by proper attention to personal hygiene.[80]

I have not found any soap advertisements that would actually depict whitening effects of soaps or which would promote whitening creams. But as scholars of Roma in socialist Czechoslovakia write, such opinions were by no means exception. Ethnographic studies in turn became the basis of state measures and training materials for educators, social workers, and state officials pursuing assimilationist policies.[81] The ways in which Roma bodies were defined in opposition to the normative (majority) Czechoslovak bodies underscore that the beauty discourses promoted in late socialist Czechoslovakia defined modernity both as a socialist and a nationalist project.[82]

If in the 1950s and 1960s, cosmetics was mainly defined as a matter of keeping Czechoslovak bodies healthy, over the course of the 1970s, cosmetic experts started urging individual women to find their "type" in order to enhance their individuality and uniqueness.

---

[79] qt. in Věra Sokolová, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity*, 186. (emphasis orig.)
[80] *Ibid.* Some early 20th century advertisements for soap and toothpaste that circulated in Bohemia used the same racialized tropes, indicating continuities in racialized imagery.
[81] Sokolová, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity*; see also Celia Donert, *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[82] Awaiting further research is how the normative Caucasian whiteness affected everyday experiences of Czechoslovak Jews (there is some indications of nose jobs done by plastic surgeons), members of immigrant communities, such as Greeks or Romanians, who were often mistaken for the Roma; and of visiting students and laborers from various Middle Eastern and African countries, Vietnam and Cuba.

Young women were encouraged to "construct their personalities around their body type."[83] In order to radiate an attractive, charming beauty, a woman was to know herself well and create her own unique style, magazines wrote. "Every woman is a strange being, who, first and foremost, has to maintain her originality," *Vlasta* began one of its articles. Blonde women's skin was pale and delicate, women learned for example, and thus needed to be enhanced by make-up, women learned in the magazine. These women were to wear clothing in various shades of red, turquois, golden green, and blue. "But careful! So called warm colors, such as orange, yellow and brown, are not at all suitable…because a woman dressed like this is too eye-catching [sic!]."[84] As wearing a pair of glasses was redefined as a fashion accessory in the late 1960s, women were advised on how to choose and wear glasses in a way to underscore their uniqueness and beauty. So, for example, a "sport type with a smooth hairstyle will look good in softly shaped, slightly rounded glasses, tempering an otherwise stern look."[85] In short, beauty advice contributed to the growing individualism, encouraging women to find their unique self and express it through their bodies.

The promotion of individualized approaches included transformation narratives: in an article entitled "Learn, Woman, To Be Pretty" showed the transformation of three selected women, from hairstyles to make-up and clothing, over the course of their day-long visit to the *Institute of Cosmetics*. The article lamented the perennial problem of women using simple soaps for their daily facial cleaning, and strongly suggested that they use skin lotions. It recommended massages and the application of a facial mask every two or three weeks to fight wrinkles and preserve a youthful look. After their day at the *Institute*, all three women are portrayed walking through the streets of Prague "conscious of the fact that they are looking good; they were

[83] *Encyklopedie mladé ženy* (Prague: Avicenum, 1978), 34.
[84] *Vlasta,* "Co se hodí pro blondýnky?," June 15, 1970.
[85] *Vlasta*, "Brýle jako doplněk," June 2,1969.

awarded with not a few admiring looks."[86] The magazine periodically displayed pictures of before/after, explaining the types of skin care, make-up, hairstyle, and fashion choices they made for every particular woman based on her body type and personality, encouraging readers to follow this advice. Nurturing desires for beautification and making explicit that women's bodies were meant for public consumption, this transformation narrative, accompanied by pictures before and after – a classic beauty industry trope - appeared in magazines periodically throughout the late socialist period.

Some of the beauty advice was certainly produced domestically, in part as continuation of interwar beauty discourse.[87] But just as women used foreign magazines to copy fashion, make-up and beauty advice, Czechoslovak magazines often, and rather explicitly, took their beauty advice from Western magazines. With the increasing number of Western cosmetic products on the Czechoslovak market, magazines used Western advertisements, which, in turn later inspired Czechoslovak advertising: Taft used images of women with flowing, blow-dried hair that covered the entire space of the ad, Nivea displayed large, colorful pictures of smiling (West German?) faces of both women and men to sell its products. Magazines often did not acknowledge their sources, but youth magazines in general reported on trends in the West and copied articles; the Slovak magazine for young women *Eva* overtly translated articles on beauty and fashion from the Hamburg-based magazine *Für Sie.* What was socialist and what was Western beauty and bodily aesthetics became increasingly blurred.

Throughout the 1980s, Czechoslovak beauty experts became increasingly ambiguous about their own support of beautification practices. The director of the *Institute of Cosmetics* in Prague, Otokar Feřtek, published a somewhat angry article in *Eva* in 1985, criticizing both

[86] *Vlasta,* "Uč se, ženo, hezkou býti!" June 27, 1972.
[87] Eliška Ručková, *Představy o kráse ženského těla ve veřejném prostoru první republiky* (Prague: Charles University, 2015, Unpublished MA thesis).

women and the beauty industry. Just as much as cosmetics industry had been manipulative in the previous decades, he wrote, women had been "irresponsible" in their understanding of beauty. He noted that women often wrote to him complaining that beauty was only reserved to those who had access to the *Institute*, and asked for advice how to look youthful, slim and beautiful based on what was presented to them by media. Feřtek reminded these women that beauty did not have a firm definition. Above all, he wrote, beauty depended on symmetrical proportions of the body no matter the actual body weight; "we cannot reject a woman of full shapes, with wide hips and round body," he wrote, and adhere only, as was the popular norm of the day, to the sport type. This article is striking for its coexistence of the adherence to the norms of symmetry as well as support of rounded shapes, as well as his denial of any responsibility he and his colleagues had over the promotion of slenderness in media over the past forty years (while, simultaneously, claiming that all body types were accepted). But it is by no means isolated in its criticism of popular practices – over the course of the 1980s, primarily physicians and psychiatrists expressed concerns over drastic slimming and dieting practices of young women in the name of physical beauty.

Such criticism suggests that desires and practices of many Czechoslovak women not only followed expert beauty advice but went much further. Women's letters to magazines published in regular advice columns demonstrate the increasing anxiety women felt over their bodies and skins – these letters ranged from questions on how to treat acne and blemishes, where to remove freckles, how to rectify asymmetrical, small, or sagging breasts, whether there were any creams or procedures to remove body fat. Even if some or many of these letters were fabricated by editors, they do indicate some of the preoccupations of the population as well as increasing openness with which body matters were discussed in media over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. What emerged is that underneath official discourse, the beauty myth was alive and well.

Aesthetic Surgery for the Masses

The beginnings of the Czechoslovak plastic surgery date to the first decades of the 20th century and the work of František Burian, who is widely regarded as one of the founding figures of modern plastic surgery.[88] Burian started his career during the Balkan wars when he treated wounded soldiers and continued his work at the plastic surgery clinic by the *Jedlička's Institute for the Disabled* in Prague, treating injured adults and children with congenital "deformities." He also trained a number of both domestic and international surgeons there. When the first Clinic of Plastic Surgery at the hospital of the Charles University in Prague was founded in 1937, he was appointed its first head. His students headed clinics of plastic surgery in Brno (opened in 1948), Bratislava (1949) and Košice (1953), and Burian himself oversaw the beginnings of the international journal of plastic and reconstructive surgery *Acta Chirurgiae Plasticae*, based in Czechoslovakia and published in English since 1959. He was convinced that aesthetic surgery would be utilized more in a socialist society than elsewhere, both because the health care system of socialist countries was mandated to improve the health of individuals and because all individuals had the *right* to be rid of any "cosmetic defect" that prevented them from the "full participation in the joys of life."[89] In other words, plastic surgery, in his opinion, would liberate individuals from the confines of their bodies.

Helena Pešková, the head of the clinic of plastic surgery in Prague, and the only woman in the history of Czechoslovak medicine who was awarded the title Professor, continued Burian's mission both in further developing Czechoslovak plastic surgery and aiding "suffering"

[88] Czechoslovakia is reportedly the first country in the world to have legally recognized the field specialty of plastic surgery, in 1932. Burian developed several surgical techniques, such as "suspending the ptotic eyelid, correcting chordae in hypospadias, lining a newly made vagina with a full-thickness skin graft and contour remodeling of the facial bones with cartilage." David Tolhurst, *Pioneers in Plastic Surgery* (London: Springer, 2015): 65.
[89] František Burian, *Plastická chirurgie* (Prague: ČSAV, 1959): 84.
[89] Helena Pešková, *Plastická chirurgie kosmetických vad* (Prague: Státní zdravotnické nakladatelství, 1968), 19.

individuals. In her 1968 book *Plastické operace kosmetických vad* (Plastic Surgeries of Cosmetic Defects), Pešková devoted an entire chapter to aesthetic surgeries, asserting that their goal was to "place an individual in an aesthetic middle and rid him (sic!) of both physical and psychological problems, including their sense that they look different, which is often accompanied by destructive feelings of inferiority."[90] According to her, surgery was not meant to enhance the "patient's" individuality or allow them to sculpt their body according to individual wishes, but rather to eliminate any signs of noticeable difference. The goal was to eliminate the person's marginalization or exclusion, so they could fully contribute to the society. In other words, she rejected the notion that anyone could simply choose their body and instead highlighted the rehabilitative aspects of aesthetic surgery.[91]

The claim of an individual's full realization in the Czechoslovak society served as a legitimizing narrative put forward by experts. It often came up in my interviews with aesthetic surgeons, whose careers began before 1989, many of whom claimed that they would not operate on just anyone, but only on those who, in their view, would benefit from it.[92] When I asked Dobroslav Šiška, surgeon and director of the Bratislava *Institute of Cosmetics* between 1982 and 1987, how to reconcile the official rejection of aesthetic surgery as capitalist extravagance and the existence of the practice in the country, he brought up this notion of self-realization, couching it in the language of ability: "Well, you know, a young acne man, he wouldn't go to the disco [because] he was all pimples, [and] would be introverted and full of complexes. The poor

[90] *Ibid*.
[91] Her book suggests that aesthetic surgeries were performed in the years before 1968. Indeed, while there is no archival trace, it seems that they were performed even during the Stalinist phase, the most virulent period of anti-beauty propaganda. Movie star Božena Obrová is said to have had her breasts reduced during the shooting of a movie *Katka* in 1949. While we do not know why she decided to do so, her colleague wrote down in his diary that this top star had her breasts reduced to the chagrin of the Minister of Culture, only to see in the following years the ascent of "lolobrigida's type of breasts." This also tells us that Czechoslovakia was not immune to either movie star cult or Western cultural trends in what shape of women's bodies was "in." See Václav Macek, *Jan Kadár. Režisér* (Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 2008).
[92] Interview with Tomáš Kydlíček, Plzeň, November 3, 2015.

lad suffered. But when you treated [acne], a self-confident young human being [emerged]... *They had to accept it*, it was for the healthy development of the youth. We had slogans like that back then: everything for the healthy development of the youth."[93] What Šiška suggested was that instead of being contradictory to, aesthetic procedures aligned with the goals of socialist leaders. By using the phrase "they had to accept it," he also asserted that aesthetic surgeries were practiced by medical experts and desired by citizens (as indeed they were), emerging from below.

Šiška's colleague at the Prague *Institute of Cosmetics*, by all accounts the most innovative Czechoslovak aesthetic surgeon Karel Fahoun wrote that Party leaders tolerated the practice because they wanted his services both for themselves and their family members: "They all needed me, all the Kapkas and Colotkas,[94] I also performed surgeries on their women. But they weren't all annoying, I called them all *Madame* [and] even the biggest comrade among them did not mind."[95] Beauty business, conducted within the space of the *Institute*, seemed to have a flare of luxury and exclusivity, providing a temporary space for a type of subjectivity unrelated to socialist ideology. Fahoun himself claimed that he not only called his clients Madame but also literally shaped a particular type of femininity through his practice:

> I remember one of the surgeries. She was an apparatchik from the Ministry of Health Care, who came in dressed as a mouse. Not only did I perform a surgery on her but I also tried to change her image. And I made a woman out of the apparatchik, she was incredibly grateful to me, and valued my advice. I mainly just told her to forget all the functions and become a woman, not Anna Proletářka [a female communist hero of a popular socialist realist novella]. And she listened. I told her how to dress, to do her hair, to do make up, and so I provided her with *a complex cosmetic and ideological care*.[96]

[93] Interview with Dobroslav Šiška, Bratislava, June 9, 2015.
[94] Prague Party leaders.
[95] Soňa Štroblová a Karel Fahoun, *Tvář* (Prague: Somix, 1998): 48.
[96] *Ibid.*

Fahoun may have joked about his "ideological" advice but his statement shows that in his view femininity was not something innate and natural, but constructed – Czechoslovak women needed to be taught how to be feminine and literally shaped as such by beauty experts; femininity, in his, words, were as much an ideological construct to be embodied as communism.

Not all aesthetic surgeries are linked to notions of bodily beauty per se, however, or even women's bodies. Breast augmentations sometimes are but where the breasts are too large or too heavy, women may want to have them reduced either because of back pain or because their breasts are an obstacle in everyday activities or sports careers. Other procedures, like facelifts and eyelid surgeries, are meant to enhance a youthful look; nose procedures are usually linked to ethnicity.[97] But most expose normative standards of the body. For the Czechoslovaks, that meant classically shaped bodies.[98] None of the Czechoslovak texts on plastic surgery explicitly notes, for example, whether any of the nose procedures were done to transform a "Jewish nose" into a "Czech nose," but the expression "eagle nose," which is a cultural reference for a Jewish shape, was listed among the motives for why individuals came for a surgery.

Procedures enhancing youthful appearance were reportedly the most common among Czechoslovaks – not only due to the association of beauty with youthfulness but also because, as I learned from the surgeons, facelifts had to be performed repeatedly, though at most three times, in order to keep the face continuously youthful while not turning it into a "mask." We do not have much insight into the breakup of other surgeries, however.[99] What we do know is that when in 1970 Ludvík Hasman became the main surgeon of an aesthetic surgery clinic in Františkovy

[97] Sander Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Gilman demonstrates that the development of modern-era plastic surgery is linked to anti-Semitism.
[98] Interview with Tomáš Kydlíček, Plzeň, November 3, 2015.
[99] K. Fahoun, "Estetické operace," *Prakický lékař* 59, no. 1 (1979): 14-18.

lázně spa town – a spa that was dedicated to treating "women's illnesses" – he supposedly performed about 150 breast augmentation surgeries there between 1970 and 1973.[100] The Prague and Bratislava *Institutes of Cosmetics* each performed about 600 various procedures a year, which is a rather high number for an Institute that did not advertise its services, let alone aesthetic surgeries, but the overall statistics likely includes the elimination of skin blemishes and birthmarks.

Further procedures, for which we do not have any data at all, were performed at hospitals; they were probably fewer in numbers, performed as they were to "fill the gaps" in between other medical surgeries.[101] In the late 1970s, experts expected that the interest in aesthetic surgeries would rise as "the increasing living standard and care for an individual will result in aesthetic surgery as a social need," as surgeon Jana Ambrožová wrote in a journal for expert audiences. Testifying to the changing nature of late 20th century societies both East and West, she added that "the art of aging is becoming ever more important."[102]

The procedures, according to the surgeons I interviewed, were very popular. "We had terribly long waiting lists," said Dušan Záruba, whose career as a cosmetic surgeon began at the Prague *Institute* in the mid-1980s, vividly remembering a scene from before 1989:

> One day at the beginning of September when we started accepting orders again [the *Institute* did not perform surgeries during the summer months], I was walking to work and at the corner of Adria, through the entire passage inside the palace, well, it was the time of lines, right?, there was a line from Národní třída all the way through the passage to our door on the second floor; all because we just started booking for consultations. People would book a consultation a year in advance, then they would come, we would tell them what could be done and what could not, and booked the surgery two or three years in advance.[103]

[100] "Slasti a strasti našeho života," *Vlasta*. I have been told that the number is likely inaccurate, that Hasman probably performed many more augmentations at the spa.
[101] Interview with Vlastimil Bursa, Plzeň, November 9, 2015.
[102] J. Ambrožová, "Chirurgická a psychologická problematika léčby stárnoucího obličeje," *Rozhledy v chirurgii*, 57, no. 2 (1978): 167-170.
[103] Interview with Dušan Záruba, Prague, November 13, 2015.

The long wait is all the more surprising because neither the *Institute* nor its services were widely advertised, the surgeries not at all, though they were (very infrequently) recommended to women in some Slovak magazines. The procedures were surprisingly inexpensive. In the mid-1970s, a complicated nose job cost 3000 Czechoslovak crowns, a facelift was between 1500 and 2000 crowns, and even the most expensive type of breast enlargement, an implant from a muscle from the buttocks, cost 4000 crowns. To provide a comparison, an average salary was around 1500 Czechoslovak crowns, a cheap new sofa would cost 7000 and a new car would cost at least 60,000 crowns, if one did not settle for a Trabi, the iconic socialist car, in which case one would pay around 40,000 crowns. The almost absurdly low cost of surgeries was also one of the reasons why foreigners came to get their surgery in Czechoslovakia, even though there is no record of these visitors – according to the surgeons, they were often relatives and friends of Czechoslovaks.

Perhaps because of the popularity of their services, there was reportedly a cap on how much money the *Institutes of Cosmetics* could earn. "We had to earn enough [to sustain the financial operation of the Institute] but not too much," Dušan Záruba of the Prague *Institute* told me, adding that if they went over the plan, they did not get bonuses.[104] The surgeons were unable to tell me why the cap existed, it is also unclear what other punishment there was besides not getting salary bonuses. But if the information about a cap is correct, it would fit into a larger story of the Communist Party's efforts to keep consumption as well as bodily beautification under control, maintaining the socialist emphasis on moderation.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Czechoslovak cosmetic surgeries is that members of professions requiring good looks would get their procedures covered by health insurance. Though I have not found any written evidence, I have been told by several surgeons

[104] Interview with Dušan Záruba, Prague, November 13, 2015.

that there was a list of such professions circulated possibly by the Ministry of Health Care, which included actors and actresses, TV anchors, sportspeople, shop assistants, perhaps secretaries, teachers and, as I was told, scientists representing the country at international conferences.[105] Because of the unavailability of sources, I do not know how the Czechoslovak insurance company would make the decision to cover the costs of a given procedure, but it seems to me that the professional indications point to two things: first, the Czechoslovak regime acknowledged that good looks were important at least for some professions. One could also interpret them, secondly, as a list of "ambassadors" of bodily aesthetics, role models that the rest of the population could emulate to demonstrate – perform – proper subjectivity. According to Albín Kipikaša, aesthetic surgeon in Košice, aesthetic surgery had "an important role to play in the socialist society's care for the healthy development of the young generation, for working women, for citizens engaged in public activities, for members of those *professions which require authority and personality appeal (pedagogues, actors)*. In those occupational categories aesthetic operations are seen as part of general health care."[106] Female teachers reportedly used cosmetic services a lot, some complaining that if they did not get rid of the hair above their lips or on the chin, their students would laugh at them.[107] The lack of respect for a teacher led to questionable respect for communist authorities, and needed to be prevented.

Breast augmentations

There were only a handful references to breast augmentation in the Czechoslovak magazines, and even those do not provide much more than short questions about how to make small breasts bigger or asymmetrical breasts symmetrical. But they do reveal that many women

[105] Another way of getting the surgery covered by health insurance was to get an evaluation from a psychiatrist that but considering the stigma a psychiatric diagnosis carried, I do not imagine many people choosing this route.
[106] "Reflections on Aesthetic and Functional Reconstruction in Plastic Surgery," *Acta Chirurgiae Plasticae*, 21, no. 4 (1979): 204 (my emphasis).
[107] *Retro*, "Kosmetika."

had a problematic relationship to their breasts, feeling that their breasts were either too small or too big but never good enough. Almost all of the women I interviewed told me that as they were growing up, they watched the growth of breasts among their friends, compare and contrast each other's size, and envy the first girls in the classroom who began wearing a bra. "There is no other way than either reconcile oneself with the situation or undergo a plastic surgery," *Vlasta* wrote in response to one such letter in one of the rare articles.[108] The author advised adolescent women to wait with augmentation until they have had children because breastfeeding would change their breasts and wrote that older women should consider sagging breasts a "natural sign" of aging. But she did advise women to massage their breasts, exercise to firm up their chest muscles, and use pads. Breasts were supposed to be visible and firm.

Iris Young writes that women, and especially those in adolescence, have a particularly vexed relationship to their breasts because they are often judged and evaluated according to their size. Is *she* a B-cup or a C-cup?, Young comments on the process through which women literally become their breasts, objectified through a phallocentric gaze.[109] Since breasts are symbols of female sexuality, they are supposed to be firm and pointed, sitting high on the chest, enveloped in bras that keep their shape. Young writes about breasted experiences in the US, with a robust advertizing infrastructure that radically intensified standardized images of women's bodies as well as shaped their relationships to them, but her analysis is also apt for a socialist context. Not least because the models of breasts Czechoslovak surgeons worked with were just as pointed, elevated, and with centered nipples.

The first material used for breast enhancement was called hydrogel. It was invented by chemist Otto Wichterle in 1961 (the material is mostly known for its use in the first soft contact

[108] *Vlasta*, June 30, 1969.
[109] Iris Young, "Breasted Experience: The Look and the Feeling," *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice*, Philosophy and Medicine 43, edited by D. Leder (Springer, Dordrecht, 1992): 215-230.

lenses), but surgeons started using it as a breast implant, radically increasing the number of performed surgeries. Wichterle's hydrogel was not very suitable, however, and was very painful: over time, it grew into the surrounding tissue and calcified, so surgeons gradually stopped using it (one of the last hydrogel implants was used in 1984). Silicone implants, that were developed in the mid to late 1970s, were banned in Czechoslovakia, but women smuggled them into the country. As long as they bought the right size and custom officials did not open the box, surgeons would implant them. One of the surgeons I interviewed recalled that once during a surgery "the silicone burst open, but we didn't have any extra ones, you know. So [the patient had to call] to Germany, they ran to the airport, threw the box with the silicone under the arm of the first pilot that went to Prague."[110] Another surgeon remembered that he had to write a letter to the customs officials urging them not to open that box that was carrying "sensitive medical supplies." "I told them that they could open it but if they did so they could keep [the box] there."[111]

The lack of suitable breast implants posed a problem not only for cosmetic surgeries but also for those women who had, for one reason or another, lost their breast(s). While techniques for breast reconstruction from the skin on the woman's back had been known and used for decades, they were not always possible. Moreover, surgeons would simply tell women to be happy that they survived and rarely offered breast reconstructions, leaving women to struggle with their bodies on their own.[112] It was only in mid-1990s that attitudes towards breast reconstruction of cancer survivors gradually started to change.

The previous pages do not mean to overstate the prevalence of aesthetic surgery in socialist Czechoslovakia. The vast majority of those I talked to when doing research,

[110] Interview with Dušan Záruba, Prague, November 13, 2015.
[111] Interview with Vlastimil Bursa, Plzeň, November 9, 2015.
[112] *Ibid*.

interviewees and historians, were stunned to hear that there would be aesthetic surgery available in socialist Czechoslovakia. When pressed, however, three people, all from various parts of the country, remembered someone in their environment who had a procedure performed on them. This suggests that while aesthetics surgeries were not a common knowledge or practice among the Czechoslovaks, they were not infrequent either.

Aestheticization

I would like to propose that the Czechoslovak promotion of aesthetically pleasing bodies could be understood as an aspect of a late socialist *discursive* aspiration for an overall aestheticization of the Czechoslovak society. I write discursive because the idea is based on ideological texts and programmatic documents.

The late socialist concept of "quiet life" include aesthetic notions of order and harmony. Analyzing both speeches by the normalization President Gustáv Husák and the programmatic documents of the Communist Party issued in 1969 and 1970, which set the tone for the normalization period, Michal Pullmann and Pavel Kolář write that the "[n]ormalized society was supposed to reflect an idyllic, beautiful day, where people work without internal or external interference."[113] The frequent references to "quiet, sunny days" in these documents served to reject the alleged violence and disorder of the Prague Spring and establish the normalization regime as a calm, orderly society, creating a binary between the two periods. They also echoed older articulations of the communist utopia and its image of a harmonious and abundant society. While Pullmann and Kolář discuss the rejection of violence and promulgation of "cultivated manners and quiet, nice life" within the context of changing nature of state violence, the aesthetic impulse of the normalization regime permeated all aspects of society. And as I show in

[113] Pullmann and Kolář, *Co byla normalizace?*

this dissertation, found its expression in the promotion of a heteronormative gender order based on "natural" differences between men and women.

That aesthetic concerns linked to socialist governance were on the agenda of Communist authorities resurfaced later. In the mid- to late-1980s, the Czechoslovak Ministries of Culture and Education began discussing a project that would bring aesthetics to everyday lives. The material of the project criticized what it called a narrow understanding of aesthetics as limited to fine art, confined to galleries and museums, and debated promoting aesthetics as the foundation, and goal, of socialist lifestyle. The proposed program included nurturing aesthetic tastes of the population, supporting the creation of aesthetically pleasing objects that represented socialist lifestyle, and infusing public spaces and celebrations with aesthetic stimuli.[114] Beauty was to permeate both the public space and everyday lives.

It is perhaps no coincidence that such a project would be proposed in the perestroika years of the mid-to late 1980s, when social ills of all kinds became publicly debated. Representatives of the Communist Party turned to the idea that beauty would not only restore harmony but also help bind the population to the socialist project.

Conclusion

When one after another, Eastern bloc countries started organizing beauty pageants in the very late 1980s, Czechoslovakia picked up where it ended in 1970. "The nonexistence of Miss in the seventies and eighties was absolutely unnatural… It is natural to admire a woman's body and so it has worked in the entire world for more than 50 years," Miloš Zapletal, producer and impresario of a ten thousand-seat arena in Ostrava and the man who organized the first beauty pageant in 1988, said why he thought reviving the pageant would work in Czechoslovakia,

[114] Moravský zemský archiv, fond G 566, ka 110, i.č. 118.

adding jokingly that he was the first president in the country.[115] While the 1960s pageants triggered a debate about the dignity of displaying women's bodies, this time *Slovenka* just laconically commented: "we should neither overestimate nor reject these contests. We simply have pretty girls, why could they not try to win even in worlds' contests?" Huge spectacles of entertainment, pageants became the most widely watched TV program for the next few years.

At the same time as the first pageant was being announced, Jiří Korn came out with a song Miss Moscow that became an immediate hit. The lyrics started "I have recently had a strange dream/I would not wish it upon you/I alone was the jury, I was to elect Miss Moscow./Look, it is no fun when you are flooded with so much beauty," with the refrain "Girls, girls, girls, girls, sweet lovely girls."[116] Jiří Korn was an already established popstar, both a great singer and an amazing dancer, utilizing both in song clips. Miss Moscow's clip, which people still vividly remember, features a very stern-looking policewoman, with a stick in her hands, supervising her subordinates. One of them, dashing young man, is telling his dream. The policewoman watches over the pageant, bringing one woman after the other in front of the jury, rejecting them all and pushing them aside, only to take up their position in the end. Having a slim figure and turning into a seductive being, she wins the contest. The song, then, is just as much about the sexualized bodies, as it is about the transformation of women's bodies – a transformation in which women willingly participate – for their public consumption.

"At the time, I had a feeling of something very important," a woman remembered the first pageant.[117] Milada Karasová, a model agent, made the link between the 1960s and 1980s directly: "Of course, it was a total bomb, everyone enjoyed it… It was high time to bring back

---

[115] Miloš Zapletal, Drbohlav, Jan, *20 let s Miss aneb říkali mi presidente* (Brno: Jota, 2008).
[116] *Miss Moskva*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsPuVX2PjTs (accessed July 29, 2019).
[117] Zuzana Kepplová, "Čo ma Ivana Christová naučila o kráse," http://komentare.sme.sk/c/7112080/co-ma-ivana-christova-naucila-o-krase.html#ixzz4Q8WcbLqC (accessed July 29, 2019).

something that had begun in 1968," she said. According to her, since pageants were a symbol of the West, the population wanted it in home.[118] The magazine *Mladý svět* reported that "[p]eople talked about the beauty contests even in trams. For the first time in twenty years – articles were published everywhere. In halls, covered by various political mottos and appeals, audiences understood the contest as a symbol of the coming of *better, liberal and freer times*."[119] Perhaps even more so than during the Prague Spring, democratization assumed the shape of a slim, young woman's body in swimsuit.[120]

[118] *Radiožurnál,* "Jak se volila první Miss Československa? Publikum pískalo a novináři nevěřili," http://prehravac.rozhlas.cz/audio/3097570 (accessed July 29, 2019).
[119] *Mladý svět*, "Před ostravským finále," April 2, 1990 (emphasis mine).
[120] *Rudé Právo*, "Ráj proporcí," April 11, 1990. The argument that the sexualization of women's bodies was linked to the post-1989 discourse of freedom and democracy was first made by Věra Sokolová in her article "'Don't Get Pricked!': Representation and the Politics of Sexuality in the Czech Republic," *Over the Wall/After the Fall: Post-Communist Cultures through an East-West Gaze*, ed. Sibelan Forrester, Elena Gapova and Magdalena Zaborowska, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004): 251-267.

The Fat Socialist Body: Anti-Obesity Discourses and Gendered Embodiment

In February 1968, seventeen-year-old Helena wrote a letter to the Czechoslovak Television asking for more information about a whipped-cream slimming diet that she had read about in the TV's news bulletin. She was hoping to lose weight because, as she wrote, "Slavic shapes had long ago gone out of fashion. And I hope no one will reproach me for my desire to be attractive at my age."[1] Helena was one of over two hundred women, and a few men, who inquired about the wonder diet that reportedly led to a twenty-pound weight loss within a couple of weeks while not prohibiting such delicacies as whipped cream. Other women wrote that their colleagues laughed at them behind their backs, husbands were getting impatient with their repeated failed attempts at losing weight, many wrote that they had gained weight during their pregnancies and were unable to shake the kilograms off.

The letters may sound unremarkable today, but they demonstrate a change in public discussions about and attitudes towards the body over the previous few years. Since the late 1950s, Czechoslovak endocrinologists and nutritionists were calling attention to the fact that obesity was becoming a widespread problem in Czechoslovakia. Criticizing traditional cuisine and sedentary lifestyle, they warned the population against the increasing incidence of cardiovascular diseases and decreasing life expectancy. Rising living standard of the Czechoslovak society in the postwar period, these experts claimed, the shift away from heavy, manual work to sedentary employment, and the lack of physical activity resulted not simply in a lifestyle change but also in an alarming dynamic of obesity rates. "Public enemy number one," as

[1] Archiv České televize, inf.152, i.č. 909: Redakční pošta – šlehačková dieta.

one of the prominent anti-obesity campaigners labeled the situation at the beginning of the 1970s, was neither capitalism, nor dissidents, but obesity.[2]

"Slavic shapes" did, indeed, seem to have been going out of fashion. The Prague Spring opened up the space for the association of modernity with beauty pageants and the popularity of the Twiggy-like slenderness. On their part, experts pointed to the figures of robust women in romanticized images of Bohemian countryside depicted by 19th century painters to disparage any potential attractiveness of curves and robust figures. They also argued that the famous *Věstonická Venuše* (Venus of Dolní Věstonice), a paleolithic statuette of a nude female found in south Moravia in 1925 and thought to be an old Slavic erotic ideal, would have been profoundly unhealthy, no matter how attractive and fertile she may have been. Both popular trends and expert discourse suggested that modern, desirable, and healthy Czechoslovak woman would be slender.

With extremely popular books such as *Nebezpečný svět kalorií* (The Dangerous World of Calories), *Za štíhlou linii* (How to Be Slim) or *Řekni mi, co jíš (a já ti řeknu něco o vztahu mezi náladou, vzhledem a potravou člověka* (Tell Me What You Eat (and I will tell you something about the relationship between mood, appearance and human diet); numerous TV and radio programs; and magazine articles, medical experts became the leading figures in the biopedagogical task of educating the Czechoslovaks about the dangers of obesity.[3] Crucially, even though modern, slender figures appealed to women in both parts of the country, the anti-

[2] Jiří Šonka a kol., *Za štíhlou linii* (Praha: Merkur, 1971). Rajko Doleček was one of the most important obesitologists in the postwar period and the media face of the public health campaign against obesity. He had a long-standing, successful cooperation with the Czechoslovak TV. His book, *Nebezpečný svět kalorií* (The Dangerous World of Calories), was published in five editions between 1969 and 2015, and translated into Bulgarian, Serbian and Russian. Rajko Doleček, *Nebezpečný svět kalorií* (Praha: Olympia, 1977).

[3] For the concept of biopedagogy see Jan Wright, "Biopower, Biopedagogies and the Epidemic of Obesity," *Biopolitics and the 'Obesity Epidemic': Governing Bodies*, ed. J. Wright, V. Harwood (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-14.

obesity message had a much stronger uptake by Czech lifestyle magazines and the Czech public, owing most likely to the long and popular *Sokol* tradition in the region.

Existing scholarship on obesity has focused largely on the "West." The historical roots of public concern with obesity are connected to 19th century rise of medical authority, the emergence of nationalist movements, and the development of fashion industry, but anti-obesity discourse was dramatically accentuated by the influence of consumer culture in the postwar period.[4] By exposing the lack of scientific data linking ill health and increased weight, scholars have argued that obesity is a moral panic, having to do more with "preconceived moral and ideological beliefs about fatness" as well as an expression of anxieties of modernity.[5] Showing the interconnections between medical professions and slimming and advertizing industries, they have also demonstrated that these fields have a long-standing economic interest in the continuation of the discourse of "obesity epidemic." At stake are millions of dollars spent on public health campaigns, power in defining the limits of normality, and the boundaries of experiencing one's body.[6]

That the public health concern about obesity emerged in the socialist part of the world challenges arguments linking the cult of the slim body to capitalist consumerism. It demonstrates that socialist and capitalist body cultures had common roots in modern ideas of a disciplined, able body, considered an expression of individual morality. Czechoslovak experts may have couched their arguments within the language of labor productivity and economic losses to

[4] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 95. See also D. Oddy, P. J. Atkins, V. Amilien (eds.). *The Rise of Obesity in Europe: A Twentieth Century Food History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), but also Victoria De Grazia, *Sex of Things*; Featherstone, "The Body in Consumer Culture.
[5] Gard and Wright 2005: 3.
[6] There is an immense amount of literature on the social constructions of obesity, the "obesity epidemic," and the stigmatization of fatness. For texts written from the cultural studies perspective see for example: Sander Gilman, *Fat: A Cultural History of Obesity* (Polity, 2008); M. Gard and J.Wright, *The Obesity Epidemic. Science, Morality and Ideology* (London and New York, Routledge, 2005); K. LeBesco, *The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004); M. B.McCullough, J.A. Hardin, *Reconstructing obesity. The Meaning of Measures and the Measure of Meanings* (New York, Oxford: Berghan, 2013); Rothblum E., S. Solovay (eds.), *The Fat Studies Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

strengthen the legitimacy of their arguments for the Communist leaders, but the understanding of obesity as a "civilization disease" and a problem of "modern lifestyle" was a notion held by scientists East and West.[7] Meeting at conferences and within international organizations,[8] East European experts discussed diet and nutritional issues with their Western colleagues and compared research findings. The shape and size of Czechoslovak bodies became part of the Cold War competition between socialism and capitalism.

The anti-obesity discourse shifted over the course of late socialism, from its primary focus on eating habits in the 1960s, to supporting healthy lifestyles and exercise in the late 1970s. In this chapter, I argue that it was a moral panic that had three interrelated goals: first, it strove to cultivate modern socialist subjects. Defining bodily fat as backward and unappealing, experts asserted slenderness and health as attributes of proper socialist citizens. In contrast to the early socialist period, when experts thought that transforming appropriate material conditions for the healthy development of the Czechoslovaks – from encouraging them to eat communal meals to changing work conditions – the emergence of anti-obesity arguments helped shift this emphasis to one, in which individuals were held responsible for their own health. Second, decrying hedonism and excessive indulgence in food, the campaign strove to manage socialist consumption. And third, expert mobilization of gendered arguments mediated popular practices as well as reasserted ideas about gendered difference, deepening essentialized notions of femininity and masculinity as part of late socialism. The cult of the slim (female) body is thought to have come to the country in the post-1989 period along with the flood of Western mass media and slimming products into the country. But this chapter shows that the normalization period

[7] Doleček, *Nebezpečný svět*; Stanislav Hejda and Kateřina Ošancová, *Problém otylosti u obyvatelstva* (Praha: Avicenum 1974); Jiří Šonka, *Boj proti otylosti cvičením a dietou* (Praha: Olympia, 1981).
[8] The first world obesitology congress took place in London in 1974, with the participation of a Czech delegate, Kateřina Ošancová. Several other experts were members of various WHO working groups.

prepared the ground for its emergence and, therefore, that there is much more continuity between the socialist and post-socialist periods.

The rise of obesitology

For centuries, a robust figure was understood as a sign of wealth, status, and beauty, but over the course of the 19th century, both medical developments and changing beauty standards brought rounded bodies into question. Many Bohemian women and girls kept various diets and watched their weight, various spas in Bohemia offered treatment of obesity among its procedures.[9] Most of these treatments were based on the idea of reducing body liquids, and involved a combination of massages, sweating, and drinking salty spa water. One the most popular spa diets included drinking red wine instead of water during the day; despite its questionable health effects, the diet was used until the 1960s when it was pronounced unsuitable and changed for a no less radical but much more nutritionally balanced diet by endocrinologist Josef Charvát (which became the standardized diet for obesity treatment included in the spa regulations issued by the Ministry of Health Care in 1982).

It was not until the interwar period, when the health of the individual and national body was at the forefront of state and expert intervention all over Europe, that obesity became a serious concern for Czechoslovak physicians, who warned against negative health effects of excessive weight and promoted healthy lifestyles through moderate diet and exercise. The 1920s flapper generation promoted the ideal of a slender, youthful, fashionable body. Entrepreneurial pharmacists all over Czechoslovakia strove to profit from the changing body standards,

[9] Scales were installed in various railway stations around Bohemia, and on town squares, which people used to weigh themselves. Milena Lenderová, "Tělo estetické: péče ženy o sebe," *Tělo mezi medicínou a disciplínou: proměny lékařského obrazu a ideálu lidského těla a tělesnosti v dlouhém 19. století*, Milena Lenderová, Daniela Tinková a Vladan Hanulík (Praha: Nakladatelství LN, 2014). V. Hainer et. al, *Základy klinické obezitologie*, Praha: Grada, 2011 (2004).

advertising various magic creams, formulas and pills to reduce body weight.[10] The interwar anti-obesity discourse equally disparaged excessive slimness, however. The lack of bodily fat was associated with emotional volatility, anxiousness, and asexuality; physicians advised young women in particular to maintain enough body fat to protect their pregnant bodies (prompting the same pharmacists to advertise magic pills and creams to help women gain weight).[11]

Postwar governments put the population's health high on the agenda, initially to overcome war-time malnutrition. They set up institutions to study how food and nutrition could be used to increase both health and labor productivity of various age, gender and professional groups, and recommend nutritional plans for collective canteens: *Společnost pro racionální výživu* (The Society for Rational Diet), established in the wake of WWII, which published the biweekly magazine *Výživa lidu* (People's Nutrition);[12] and *Ústav pro výzkum výživy lidu* (People's Diet Research Institute), set up in 1951.[13] When in the late 1950s daily calorie intake reached the level of 3000, a group of medical experts centered around the People's Diet Research Institute and the First Medical Faculty at the Charles University in Prague began to issue statements warning against the rising weight of the population.[14] Czechoslovak diet, according to them, "contrasted with the development of food consumption in the majority of developed

[10] Barbora Havlová, "Móda 20. let na stránkách prvorepublikových časopisů: životní styl a odívání žen v době 'zlatých dvacátých'" (Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2016, unpublished BA Thesis)
[11] Eliška Ručková, "*Představy o kráse ženského těla ve veřejném prostoru první republiky"* (Charles University in Prague, 2015, unpublished MA thesis)
[12] "Rational" in this context means: according to the scientific criteria developed for the best possible nutrition of a given individual.
[13] See Franc 2009 for a discussion of the power struggle between various experts who had different views on what the Czechoslovaks should ideally eat. It is also worth noting here that milk featured prominently in the Czechoslovak anti-obesity discourse as well as healthy diet recommendations. In part, incentives to increase the consumption of milk were motivated by what experts considered a low intake in comparison with Western countries (add stats), but it may also have been because of milk overproduction.
[14] It is important to note that not all doctors thought obesity was a medical problem. For example, in his talk at a congress of internists in 1964, a doctor working at the Institute of Cosmetics Jindřich Žák quotes from a letter written by one of his patients. She had wanted her former physician to treat her obesity but was "dismissed" by a comment "you should be content that you are healthy." Žák criticized such an approach, saying "not everyone and not everywhere...understands that obesity needs to be treated before it becomes a cause of other health malfunctions," and called for education of his colleagues. Archival material of the Institute of Cosmetics, personal archive of Nosková.

Western countries."[15] In particular, the population allegedly ate too many "empty" calories, since the "national" cuisine was heavily based in pork, fat-soaked poultry, dumplings, and *koláče* (sweet pastries).[16] Coronary diseases, thought to be linked to excessive weight, were on the rise as well. By the mid-1960s, they became the most frequent cause of death (causing over 50% of deaths),[17] and by the mid-1970s, three percent of Czechoslovaks would be diagnosed with diabetes, a disease that experts called "a punishment for obesity."[18] At the 1960 congress of internists, obesity was defined as a disease to be fought by a large-scale public health campaign.[19]

The new health care law adopted in 1966 reflected the growing concerns about the population's health. It defined "healthy living conditions" as both a right and an obligation of individual citizens, and mandated the state apparatus to create conditions for the population to enjoy this right.[20] It obliged all regional school authorities to increase children's consumption of milk, vegetables, fruit, legumes and potatoes, and decrease that of flour, sugar, and fatty meat on the assumption that if children ate healthy food, they would become less inclined to illness and obesity.[21] Indeed, the Czechoslovak president at the time, Antonín Zápotocký, is said to have pronounced that the country had "too many fat children," and so the Communist Party needed to adopt anti-obesity measures."[22] Factory canteens were to follow similar guidelines (Figure 2). Simultaneously, the Society for Rational Diet launched what would become an annual campaign

[15] Vladimir Melkes, "K problémům struktury naší výživy," *Výživa lidu* 21, no. 6 (1966).
[16] *Ibid*. The data published in the magazine shows, however, that while the population did seem to eat too much flour, in comparison with some Western countries (Denmark, Scandinavian countries, Austria) vegetable consumption was, in fact, higher.
[17] J. Zahálka, *100 a 1 jídel pro štíhlou linii* (Praha: Merkur, 1982), foreword by Rajko Doleček. According to experts, obesity contributed to such medical conditions as higher incidence of heart and kidney diseases, problems with joints, even eczema.
[18] Doleček, *Nebezpečný* svět, 12. It is about 9% of the population today.
[19] Josef Mašek, "Pro štíhlou linii: Otylost proti tělesné kráse," *Výživa lidu* 26, no. 2 (1971).
[20] Zákon č. 20/1966 Sb., o péči o zdraví lidu.
[21] SNA, fond Ústav pro výživu ľudu, Usnesení 69 ze dne 24.2.1965, materiál zasadanie Komisie pre školstvo povereníctva SNR pre školstvo 18. júla 1968.
[22] Martin Franc, "Socialism and the Overweight Nation. Questions of Ideology, Science and Obesity in Czechoslovakia 1950–70," *The Rise of Obesity in Europe,* 193–205.

called *Výživa a zdraví* (Health and Diet), co-organized with public health officials and regional authorities. This week-long series of public talks, educational exhibits, popular shows of innovative trends and cooking classes, took place in every region of the country. The campaign had a different theme every year – e.g. "Good Performance Requires the Right Diet" (1966), "Good Diet in Youth, the Basis of Health in Adulthood" (1972), "Health is in Moderation" (1983) – but its overall mission of educating the public on the connection between proper diet and health remained unchanged throughout the following decades.[23]

Critical obesity studies demonstrate that research linking higher bodily weight and ill health is not as conclusive as obesity fighters make it.[24] Scholars therefore argue that more than a public health issue, obesity is a moral epidemic expressing anxieties about modernity, and gender, class, and aesthetic concerns. To a large degree, the panic about obesity had similar undertones in Eastern Europe (I will explore gender and class connotations below). Historian Martin Franc notes that the anti-obesity discourse emerged at the time of the crisis of legitimacy of the communist regime, when, in order to shore up their legitimacy, Communist leaders turned to science as the basis of socialist governance.[25] (Eastern Europe is perhaps the only region in the world where obesity treatment turned into a science. Obesitology, coined around the time of popularization of anti-obesity campaign in the early 1970s, became an officially recognized medical science in the Czech Republic in 1993.) The rise of the Czechoslovak obesity discourse could arguably be interpreted not only as the expression of the political crisis but also a sign of a shifting socialist subjectivity from labor to the body.

---

[23] Obesity was not just a Czechoslovak concern. The GDR allegedly had an even higher percentage of obese citizens. In 1967, research on obesity was included in the COMECON agreement on the cooperation of health care ministers, particularly because of the "economic aspects of obesity: shorter life expectancy of the obese is reflected in economic losses in labor force (roughly about 1.4 to 1.8 bil. marks in the GDR)." Experts found that the 300 extra calories the Czechoslovaks ate equaled circa 6 to 7bn Czechoslovak crowns annually. For more about similarities and difference in the East and West Germany, see Ulrike Thoms, "Separated, But Sharing a Health Problem: Obesity in East and West Germany 1945-1989, D. Oddy, Atkins, and Amilien, *The Rise of Obesity in Europe*.
[24] See especially Gard and Wright, *The Obesity Epidemic*.
[25] Franc, *Socialism and the Overweight Nation*.

Body fat, according to the experts, decreased labor productivity and the country's economy. They used strategic language – "a significant loss" in labor force, "masses suffering from obesity," the "uncovering of the enemy" – in order to create a sense of acute danger and panic among health officials. They also underscored individual culpability, accusing fat people of "not…making appropriate lifestyle decisions and thereby abandoning their responsibilities (and therefore their rights) as citizens contributing to the general good." Overweight individuals were allegedly slower and lazier, and their labor morality was problematic. Obesity allegedly lead to "shortened lives and premature disability," which, according to the physician at the First Medical Clinic in Prague, Jiří Šonka, had "far-reaching health as well as economic consequences because complications lead to significant reductions in labor process."[26] The whole labor collective would have to step in and do the work for the (slower or even missing) obese individual. The "obese" individual was moreover blamed for aggravating the already gravely underfunded health care system: most important was "[h]igher spending on drugs, more frequent hospital visits, more work for health care personnel, higher percentage of labor absences, disability pensions, etc. Altogether it represents economic losses for the entire society, i.e. the individual as well."[27] Obesity was simply a "luxury that we cannot afford," experts argued.[28]

Now, the Czechoslovak population did grow. The country's anthropometric studies conducted every five years at the occasion of the mass exercises *Spartakiads* demonstrated that the population continued to grow throughout the postwar period: between 1955 and 1965, for example, men's bodies grew by one centimeter and two kilograms (averaging 173cm and 75kg in 1965), women's bodies grew by 2cm and only 1kg (averaging 163cm and 63.5kg); by the time

[26] Šonka, *Boj proti otylosti*, 246.
[27] Doleček, *Nebezpečný svět*, 11–12.
[28] *Ibid*.

of the last *Spartakiad* in 1985, the average man that participated was 5cm taller than his 1955 counterpart, the average women was 4cm taller.[29]

More significant, of course, was the rise of body weight which allegedly led to decreasing fitness of the population. A national poll conducted in 1969 – the only national research of body weight/obesity – gave experts the necessary data to support claims of the prevalence of obesity: they reported that 44.4% of men and 59.3% of women were obese.[30] Two years later, more than half of all male citizens of Prague were found to be overweight, 4% of them were extremely obese; while the category of normal weight women was larger (52%), women also comprised a larger group of those extremely obese 18%.[31] A study of draftees found that between 1963 and 1974, up to 30 % of draftees had become overweight and their overall physical fitness had gone down.[32] By the 1980s, in Slovakia, more than a million people allegedly "suffer from fatness, which means that…it has become one of the main degenerative illnesses among our population."[33] Moreover, experts claimed that since they were using Broca's formula[34] of determining the norm of individual weight, their measurements were more benevolent than the BMI model used in the West, and that, consequently, the actual prevalence of obesity among the Czechoslovaks was much higher than their numbers showed. Experts discussed obesity in terms of national epidemic that required comprehensive solutions.

On the one hand, these numbers can tell us something about the changing lifestyles of the Czechoslovaks. That the Czechoslovaks were becoming bigger was certainly a result of better

[29] Miroslav Kopecký, Kateřina Kikalová, and Jiří Charamza, "Sekulární trend v tělesné výšce a hmotnosti dospělé populace v České republice," *Časopis lékařů českých* 155, no. 7 (2016): 357-364.
[30] Čeněk Adamec et al., *Veřejné mínění a otylost* (Prague: Ústav zdravotní výchovy, 1969), 4.
[31] Kateřina Ošancová, "Obezita ve městě a na venkově," *Výživa lidu* 27, no. 4 (1972).
[32] The proportion of obesity among the conscripts ranged between 9 and 30 %, depending on the height group of the soldiers. L. Hrbáč, L. Novotný, and R. Tupý, "Zdravotní stav branců: Odvodní řízení a léčebně preventivní péče o brance," *Prakticky lékař* 56, no. 19 (1976): 697-700. The slippage between health and obesity – the conveniently overlooked fact that overweight bodies can be healthy – lies at the core of anti-obesity campaigns.
[33] A. Holecová, M. Hyžová. *Redukčné diéty pre deti a mládež v pionierskych táboroch ČsČK a na liečbu tučnoty v rodine* (Martin: Osveta, 1985).
[34] This formula calculates optimal weight as: height in cm – 100 = optimal weight in kg.

health care and nutrition. Too, over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, free time increased (work Saturdays were abandoned in the early 1980s), and, as TV and car ownership grew, the Czechoslovaks were spending an increasing amount of time in front of TV. But whether that says anything about decreasing fitness of the population is, if course, questionable. Further, by the 1980s, obesity rated among men and women in cities and the countryside reversed: while men in cities were becoming heavier, in the countryside it was women. With the beauty standard becoming ever slender and women having better access to gyms in the cities than in the countryside, urban women perhaps invested more resources into maintaining their figures.

On the other hand, the measurements of obesity were questionable at best and certainly inconsistent from one study to another. The People's Diet Research Institute defined four categories of individuals based on their weight: normal (104% of ideal weight), overweight (105-114%), obese (115-124%) and extremely obese (above 125%).[35] Rajko Doleček himself created four "degrees of obesity" – a construction repeatedly used in popular magazines – effectively defining *any* amount of weight above "normal" as obesity.[36] More significantly, Doleček's bestseller *The Dangerous World of Calories*, for example, repeatedly used data collected by the US Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. in 1959 to back his argument that higher bodily weight directly correlated with higher mortality rate – even though a decade later this very data was reviewed in the US, revealing, in fact, a decrease in the link between the two (Figure 3).[37] He also used the same company's table of "ideal bodily weight" to contrast it with the "average weight" of the Czechoslovak population (unsurprisingly, the Czechoslovaks did not fare well in this comparison).[38] Another expert, Ratmír Rath, demonstrated his argument about the existence

[35] Ošancová, "Obezita ve městě."
[36] The first degree 11-24% of excessive weight, the second degree 25-49%, third degree 50-99% and the last one over 100%. Doleček, *Nebezpečný svět*, 9.
[37] He used *Build and Blood Pressure Study* from 1959. In the 1979 rerun of the study, all linkages between excessive bodily weight, blood pressure and mortality significantly decreased.
[38] Doleček *Nebezpečný svět*, 8-9.

of a link between higher bodily weight and complications in pregnancy by simply adopting measurements and findings from the West.[39] The prevalence of Western data being used as an authoritative voice in a Cold War socialist context is significant enough. What I want to stress here as well is the traveling of medical data and its use for making scientifically dubious conclusions, a process that further illuminates the construction of obesity as a moral panic.

The fight against bodily fat was largely a matter of public health officials, who strove to not only manage popular practices but also convince their colleagues of the negative impact of obesity. Functionaries within the Party apparatus, both on the central as well as local level, considered a well-rounded body as a symbol of good socialist welfare. During a session of the Parliament in 1976 discussing the state of the state-sponsored rational diet campaign, Minister of Health Care Jaroslav Prokopec urged his colleagues to finally accept that overeating was "a backward habit, running counter to current scientific knowledge,"[40] only to be countered by his colleague for whom "high standard of living, full existential securities, and a constitutionally guaranteed right to work is an achievement of socialism [contrasted] sharply with unemployment, *malnutrition and hunger* of whole social groups in capitalist societies."[41]

In her examination of East German anti-obesity discourses, Alice Weinrib argues that because it constructed weight as a matter of overeating, anti-obesity rhetoric was a tool to manage (costly) increasing consumption. While encouraging citizens to make appropriate consumer choices, paradoxically, Weinrib argues, the fight against fat led to the introduction of further consumer products onto the market, such as a variety of low-fat milk products.[42] That is true of Czechoslovakia as well. According to Josef Mašek, obesity was a consequence of such

[39] Ratmír Rath, "Obezita ženy a těhotenství," *Výživa lidu* 31, no. 1 (1976).
[40] *Ibid*.
[41] Stenoprotokol jednání České národní rady ze dne 23. března 1976, http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1971cnr/stenprot/020schuz/s020001.htm, accessed August 3, 2015. My emphasis.
[42] Alice Weinrib, *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 235.

"frivolities" as a desire for fat and various delicacies, what he called "superficial and bourgeois gourmet-ship," compromised health and stood in sharp contrast to purposeful moderation and cultured manners. Physician Vladimír Kudlička advised readers of the irregular anti-obesity rubric in *Mladý svět*, SNOB or Spolek nepřátel obesity (The Association of the Enemies of Fat), "to abandon the idea of food as indulgence," calling for moderation in food consumption.[43]

The advice to consume in moderation, however, "clashed with the economic interests of the food industry."[44] The government subsidized foods such as pork, butter and bread throughout the entire Czechoslovak normalization period to demonstrate its commitment to both working classes and national cuisine. The body, thus, stood at the center of competing ideas of proper socialist governance, clashing policies introduced by different parts of the government, and the competition between the East and the West.

Bad Mothers

Experts were quick to blame obesity on Czechoslovak women overfeeding their children. "Mothers are pleased if their children have a good appetite," one expert claimed.[45] A child resembling a "baroque angel" might make mothers and grandmothers happy and "proud," others warned, but it was highly probable that the child would carry its obesity into adult age.[46] Mother blaming, neither specifically socialist nor novel argument, emerged over the course of the 1970s, constructing mothers as irrational human beings acting against the best interests of their child.

But while experts were concerned about the rising rates of child obesity – in 1969, they calculated it at 10-20% of all children[47] – most pressing problem was with infants (since

[43] *Mladý svět*, June 15, 1982.
[44] Weinrib, *Modern Hungers*, 235.
[45] B. Nosková, "Dieta při dětské otylosti," *Výživa lidu* 25, no. 3 (1970).
[46] *Květy,* "Je barokní andělíček zdravý?" March 15, 1981.
[47] Adamec et al., *Veřejné mínění a otylost*, 4.

canteens and sports clubs took over care for schoolchildren). In the first two postwar decades, citing the lack of basic nutritional elements in their milk due to wartime malnutrition, experts recommended that mothers feed their babies infant formula. Their recommendation had the pragmatic effect of allowing women to return to work soon after childbirth, supporting the ideological goal of women's emancipation (throughout the 1950s, maternity leave was 18 weeks long). Over the course of the 1970s, however, as the benefits of maternal milk were discovered and the WHO called on state leaders to support breastfeeding, Czechoslovak pediatricians began criticizing the use of formula and implored women to breastfeed for at least six months after childbirth.

In addition to arguing that breastfeeding helped create a strong bond between the infant and the mother, thus providing the basis for a harmonious development of a child, experts used anti-obesity rhetoric to advocate for breastfeeding. Infant formulas were too calorie-heavy and "easily lead to overfeeding," pediatricians argued, saying that the "best prevention" against obesity was maternal milk.[48] According to the pediatrician-in-chief, Josef Švejcar, originally a proponent of formulas, by then a fierce advocate of breastfeeding, no science could develop a better formula to provide children with all the nutritional value and protective immunity they needed for their healthy development. By then, Czechoslovak women's maternity leave, at three years for every child, was already among the longest in the world. Since social and hygienic norms of the time dictated that women do not breastfeed in public, anti-obesity and breastfeeding became mutually supporting arguments that effectively kept women tied to homes.

While medical experts blamed mothers for overfeeding and excessive care, Roma women were excluded from this group and blamed for the exact opposite: underfeeding and neglect.[49]

---

[48] Šonka, *Boj proti otylosti*, 27.

[49] The distinction between "white" and "Roma" women was never made. Instead, experts as well as Party/state administrators talked about women and "Roma women," effectively excluding the Roma as the "other."

Roma women allegedly fled hospitals shortly after giving birth, before hospital nurses could have shown them how to properly take care of newborn babies.[50] They were also said not to have proper hygienic conditions to prepare the formula, to neglect their children and even let them die of hunger.[51] These arguments were consistent with what Věra Sokolová calls the social pathologization of the "Roma family" and the construction of "Roma deviance." This "deviance" was supposedly caused by "inherent predisposition to asocial behavior and their 'naturally' insufficient parenting skills and social responsibility."[52] According to the logic of this argument, while majority Czechoslovak women were irrational, the pathological behavior of Roma women was rooted in their natural, biologically based characteristics.

The weight of infants thus became a battlefield between the medical community and "lazy" or "overbearing" mothers.[53] Experts certainly complained that women switched to formulas too soon. Overall only about 5% of women breastfed up to five months in the late 1970s,[54] 90% of children in Bratislava were off infant formula in their fifth month; in Bohemia more than half of infants were fed formula in the third month.[55] Most women had to return to work or started losing their milk (but one in ten women claimed they did not breastfeed for aesthetic reasons).[56] As breastfeeding became widely promoted at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the numbers of women breastfeeding up to 6 months would increase, but not dramatically.[57]

---

[50] ŠAK, KNV odbor Zdravotníctva, fond 527/3, šk. 63.
[51] *Ibid*. This claim also appeared in expert literature.
[52] Sokolová, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity*, 187.
[53] However, Vamberová (1963) argues that Hilde Bruch's conclusions are wrong. Mother's employment should not be an obstacle to the obesity treatment, as long as she divides childcare with the father well.
[54] J. Hrubý, and F. Maňas, "Výživové doporučené dávky pro průměrného obyvatele," *Výživa lidu* 32, no. 3 (1977).
[55] J. Prokopec and others, *Zdravotní výchova a socialistický způsob života: sborník materiálů přednesených na celostátní konferenci pořádané 24.–26. 11. 1982 v Praze pod záštitou ministra zdravotnictví ČSR prof. MUDr. J. Prokopce, CSc., k 30 letům socialistické zdravotní výchovy v ČSSR* (Praha: Ústav zdravotní výchovy, 1983).
[56] Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine and the Socialist State*, 186.
[57] Advocates of breastfeeding also blamed their colleagues in birth clinics for giving women formula prescriptions as soon as mothers were leaving these clinics after childbirth. See Dagmar Šráčková, "Historie kojení 2," *Praktická gynekologie* no. 4 (2004): 26-28.

My interviews with mothers revealed that their concern was not so much infants' excessive weight as their hunger. The standard advice at the beginning of the 1980s was that mothers should breastfeed every three and a half hours so as not to overfeed their babies and give them fennel tea in between breastfeeding if children started crying. Beata recalled that as a first-time mother she at first "slavishly" followed advice literature. Her daughter would start crying out of hunger after an hour, and so Beata, at the time living in a house without electricity or gas, would have to light a fire, heat up water, make the tea twice or three times a night. "After a while I gave up and breastfed [my daughter] every two hours but with this feeling that what I was doing was wrong. That I failed to make the break between the feedings last longer." Physicians did make her feel like she was a bad mother but not because she would want to overfeed her child. Other parents I interviewed were similarly worried that their baby children were constantly hungry and soon decided to ignore physicians' advice. The only parents concerned about their baby's weight was Iva and her husband, who corresponded about their baby daughter's chubbiness, at times jokingly, at other times seriously worried that she was being overfed and would grow up fat. "Just don't dip her pacifier in sugar because sugar makes one grow fat. Let's not make her… you know what," Karel wrote in one of his letters.[58] Iva replied that she knew what she was doing and would never overfeed their child; Karel never brought the issue up again.

The blaming of mothers and grandmothers for overfeeding their children is not an argument unique to socialism. In the first half of the 20th century, German psychiatrist Hilde Bruch – one of the most well-known advocates of the idea that obesity is caused by overeating – argued that mothers overfeed their children or shower them with toys and clothing as compensation for their neuroses.[59] But as sociologist Natalie Boero argues, it is only in the last

[58] KH, letter n. 35.
[59] Gard and Wright, *The Obesity Epidemic*, 74.

three decades, in conjunction with the "obesity epidemic," that the weight of children became a "litmus test of good mothering."[60] Not coincidentally, it is also a period of women's highest employment. Mother-blaming arguments, Boero argues, have always sprung up at times of an "uncertainty of women's role in a given society."[61]

At first glance, socialist Czechoslovakia may not fit this narrative, priding itself as it did on the high rate of women's employment. Anxieties about women's employment, which animated public debates about the reconfiguration of the post-Stalinist socialist order, were (seemingly) resolved by introducing protective labor legislation, greater gender segregation of the labor market, and extension of maternity leave – measures that virtually all socialist countries introduced, if based on arguments specific to each context. But the enmeshing of anti-obesity and breastfeeding discourses at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s suggests that the question of young Czechoslovak mothers' roles as workers was far from settled.

Fat Youth

As the Party turned its attention from quantity to the "quality" of the population at the turn of the 1960s and 70s,[62] Bryan Turner's observation that "unrestrained body is a language or statement about unrestrained morality" was gaining ground.[63] In Party ideology, "quality" signified health, political loyalty, and cultured manners. Placing its hopes for the regeneration of socialism in the new generation in the wake of the normalization regime, the Party turned to

[60] N. Boero, "Fat Kids, Working Moms, and the 'Epidemic of Obesity': Race, Class and Mother Blame," *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. E. Rothblum and S. Solovay (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 113–119. 2009: 114.
[61] *Ibid*.
[62] Sokolová, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity*; Dudová, *Zápas o zenská tela*.
[63] Quoted in Sarah Grant, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 85. For the connection between body appearance and morality in the context of late socialism see also K. Kolářová, "The AIDSed *perestroika*: discourses of gender in negotiations of ideological consensus on late socialist Czechoslovakia," Oates-Indruchová and Havelková, *The Politics of Gender Culture*, 234-256.

youth. Fitness, health, purposeful use of free time, quality of family background, and material and psychological support for the young generation came to the forefront of expert, political, and media discussions as well as social policies.[64] Obesity discourse, however, linked body fat with inappropriate gendering of young bodies as well as their inadequate intellectual development.

Obese children tend to be "less independent and assertive, more dependent on their families, are emotionally immature and have a weak will to keep dieting regimes," one of the prominent obesity experts Jiří Šonka wrote. [65] According to another, overweight children "suffer from inferiority complex, which they develop not just because they are less mobile and physically adept [obratný] than other children but also because they are frequently the targets of jokes of their classmates, who tease them for their appearance." The construction of a special category of children: "obese" and all the rest in the quote is noteworthy, Luhanová adds that "some research shows…lower intelligence level" of obese children.[66] Thus, what the founder of obesity studies of Czechoslovak children, Marta Vamberová, considered a consequence of being overweight, normalization discourse flips around to see as the cause of obesity. While the construction and representation of obesity as a physical and social disability was ubiquitous, Luhanová goes a step further, suggesting its connection to intellectual disability. This could have had serious consequences for the child, as mental disability would not only put the child in "special" schools but was also a serious stigma.

It is telling that instead of a campaign to de-stigmatize obesity, the burden was placed on those deemed overweight to fight their "disability." At stake was not only the intellectual quality of the Czechoslovak population, but also the inculcation of appropriate feminine and masculine demeanor. Overweight children were ascribed "abnormal" bodily traits that disrupted gendered

[64] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, 124-128.
[65] Šonka, *Boj proti otylosti,* 41-2.
[66] Zdeňka Luhanová, "Důsledky obezity v dětském věku," *Výživa a zdraví* 26, 12 (1971).

notions of boy and girl bodies. Their physical maturity was delayed, experts wrote, "typically, fat boys grow facial hair later, accumulate fat on chest, sides and thighs, develop high pitched voice, etc. Instead of masculinization, their appearance becomes girly. What we encounter in fat girls is a later onset and irregular course of their period. These girls are most concerned that a few years later they would be unable to find a partner."[67] In these accounts, both girls and boys were described as not acquiring appropriately masculine and feminine bodies. A threat to the appropriate gendering of young Czechoslovaks, obesity had to be fought from early age.

Obese children were recommended to participate at special camps focused on weight loss and learning healthy habits (there were also special camps for underweight children, neither of which were particularly popular.)[68] Significantly, these programs "were set up at the request of clinical institutions," not the Communist Party – which points to the ways in which the medical community had a relatively large autonomy and power over shaping Czechoslovak bodies.[69] One of the women I interviewed, Iva, participated in one of the slimming camps. In her assessment, her body was always symmetrical, but she had "fat thighs," and so was sent to one of the camps. "I loved it! I was in the company of kids with the same problems… It was also the first time that boys found me attractive. It was really nice, I got my first kiss, and it encouraged my self-confidence, you know, that someone would want me."[70] While the camp did not do much in terms of making her slimmer – the real purpose of the camp – she would struggle with her weight all her life. But the experience in the camp, she claims, taught her that her weight and her social acceptance did not depend on each other.

---

[67] Šonka, *Boj proti otylosti,* 10 (emph. mine).
[68] Anecdotal evidence from my interviews.
[69] Spa treatment of obese children were said to had "confirmed positive results." http://zdravi.e15.cz/clanek/postgradualni-medicina/lazenska-lecba-obezity-historie-soucasnost-a-perspektivy-145826, accessed April 6, 2015.
[70] Interview with Iva H., Hradec Králové, July 24, 2018.

Expert discourse, however, clashed with the ideological rejection of and support for the acceptance of all body shapes and sizes. The novella *Metráček aneb nemožně tlustá holka* (Hundredweight, Or the Impossibly Fat Girl), an immensely popular narrative among teenage girls throughout the socialist period and beyond, captured some of the contradictions inherent in the youth body politics. The book has had nine editions, including five in the post-1989 period, and was filmed in 1971; the story is one of the individualizing narratives in which the main character heroically overcomes her stigma through willpower, endurance, and exercise.[71] *Hundredweight* is a story about a teenage girl named Jitka, an ambitious and "nerdy" student, who is bullied by her classmates for being overweight. She is afraid of ridicule at PE classes because her weight prevents her from being good at gymnastics.[72] Mustering her willpower, however, she starts to secretly train volleyball and becomes so good at it as to win a spot in the school team (her effort to lose weight through steady effort is important: her first previous effort to lose weight quickly through starvation made her fall ill and she had to be hospitalized; Jitka decided to follow advice of her physician: eat less and regularly, and exercise).

At a volleyball tournament her team participates in, a boy in the audience, Honza, shouts out at her "Metráček," a nickname that will stick with her for the rest of the book. The whole team, however, stand behind her: "Don't mind anything, Jitka. Really. Play as best as you can. *You have to show them that you're the best*." The team wins the tournament thanks to Jitka's "bombs." Uplifted by the success, Jitka accepts an invitation to join an athletic team. She chooses the shot-putting team, and gradually develops into an athlete, winning the recognition she deserved. Working on her physique also boosts her self-confidence; so much so that Jitka stops worrying about her figure until towards the very end of the novel. She also, significantly, finds her first boyfriend.

[71] This makes the novel one of the two typical disability narratives: heroism or medicalization of disability.
[72] Contemporary research among schoolgirls revealed that many tried to avoid PE classes for this reason.

Metráček is, above all, a moral story conveying that while obesity may be a stigma, body fat can be redeemed. What matters most is not as much what Jitka really looks like as that she is not lazy and that she actively exercises. Bodily ability, then, was constructed as a prerequisite for the recognition of an individual and was thus "mandatory." In his text *Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence*, Robert McRuer examines how heterosexuality and ability are mutually constitutive categories. According to him, not only do both heterosexuality and able-bodiedness depend on the "other" for the definition of normality but also one category is contingent on the other; both operate as "mandatory" categories of modern subjects. As McRuer argues, "The most successful heterosexual subject is the one whose sexuality is not compromised by disability (metaphorized as queerness); the most successful able-bodied subject is the one whose ability is not compromised by queerness (metaphorized as disability)."[73] While McRuer discusses the heterosexual able-bodiedness as the basic mechanism of *capitalist* rationality, I believe that his analysis can be useful for the study of socialist regimes as well. After all, the concept of the good quality population, espoused by the Czechoslovak regime in the 1970s and 1980s, aspired to guarantee the (eugenic) reproduction of physically and morally fit population.

As a teenage novel, *Metráček*'s plot is predictable and predictably heteronormative, linking exercise to (heterosexual) love. Jitka starts training volleyball in response to her teacher's suggestion that she would presumably "want to be liked" by boys in a school dance course.[74] Jitka, indeed, desires to look good. She insists that her aunt sew her a dress instead of a "stuffy" suit, in which she "would look like a wardrobe." Meanwhile, she is spending more and more time with the guy who nicknamed her Metráček, Honza, as both are budding stars of their

[73] R. McRuer, "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence" In Lennard J. Davis (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 304.
[74] These dance courses, teaching ballroom and Latin dances, were short of mandatory for secondary school youth.

athletic club. The ensuing plot is predictable: feelings start to emerge between the two of them, until Honza sees Jitka holding hands with another boy, whom he falsely takes for her boyfriend. A rift occurs between them and both completely blow their athletic competitions. Jitka wants to leave the club because, blaming herself for being "impossible, clumsy." She also worries that she "cannot fight, [does] not have a collective spirit and [is] not an athletic type." It turns out she does; she gathers her strength and rejoins both trainings and competitions. On the bus ride to the next competition, Honza and Jitka are seen sitting next to each other, the novel ending with Jitka's conviction "I will win tomorrow's competition. Certainly." The readers do not find out whether Jitka lost any weight at all but that does not seem important. Her bodily "otherness" disappears at the moment as she overcomes her self-defeating thoughts, rejoins her sports team, and makes an open gesture in the new, fragile heterosexual relationship. This relationship, in turn, is possible only because she joined the athletic club.

The novella also incorporated the discourse of the "bad mother" and alleged generational differences in attitudes towards body fat. Jitka's mother does not see anything wrong with her daughter: "why, you are not fat. I don't understand, sweetie, what you've got in your head. Other girls would be happy to have your figure…" Thus, Jitka has to fight not only her mother's ignorance of her stigma but also her mother's lack of enthusiasm for Jitka's sport career: "Running around the stadium, exhausting yourself, you've got to see yourself that this is not exactly a proper pastime for you!" Since, according to medical experts, older generations allegedly considered a well-rounded body as a sign of a good life (women in particular allegedly did not exercise), the novel represents the hope the regime placed in the young generation to overcome older generation's outmoded attitudes and embody proper socialist subjectivity.

Muscular Men and Attractive Women

Between 1965 and 1989, whereas average male bodies got both taller and heavier, Czechoslovak women's average weight decreased while their height went up.[75] It is, of course, impossible to attribute the change in women's bodies to any single factor, but over the next few pages, I would like to suggest that the changes in beauty culture I explored in the previous chapter and anti-obesity discourses were contributing factors. The vast majority of the women and men I interviewed claimed that they did not do anything to maintain their figures. They were young and slim and did not need to watch their bodies. They recognized the name of Rajko Doleček, obesitologist who became the face of the Czechoslovak anti-obesity campaign, but they did not recall adjusting their diet in any way or exercising to maintain a slender figure. And yet, women and men were concerned about becoming fat and watched their figures. They were also encouraged to do so, even though women more than men.

That the Czechoslovaks watched their bodies – and watched them in gendered ways – was revealed in a 1967 national research project on obesity. The research was conducted in the midst of the Prague Spring beauty pageants and miniskirt craze, which might account for *some* of the gendered difference in the responses, but *before* the anti-obesity discourse would be popularized on national TV and through magazines. It thus suggests, first, that practices related to weight-watching were not new to late socialism, and, second, that the late socialist anti-obesity discourse would only deepen the gendered differences observed in the poll. The researchers found that a higher percentage of women than men were unhappy with their weight. Next to 10 percent of men with "normal weight" who wanted to lose weight, there were 30 percent of "normal" women; and fifty-six percent of "slightly overweight" women wanted to lose weight, in contrast to just 34% of such men. It is not clear, however, how many women and men considered – or were willing to admit to pollsters in the late 1960s – that they were unhappy

[75] Kopecký, Kikalová, and Charamza, "Sekulární trend v tělesné výšce a hmotnosti."

with their figures for aesthetic reasons: ten percent of all respondents did, while three quarters claimed decreased bodily ability. Nonetheless, researchers found, women were much less willing to discuss their weight than men and had a tendency to control their figures by regulating food intake, whereas men by exercise.

The project illuminated other interesting tendencies. Forty percent of respondents, for example, claimed that they did not know how to determine whether they were overweight or not; and 13% of the population did not weight themselves, and further 28% only weighed themselves once in the year before the research (there were no significant differences between men and women. The finding – considering that weight was self-reported, challenges some of report's claims about the high prevalence of obesity among the population. The data also showed that while the majority of respondents were– or said they were – informed about the deleterious health effects of obesity, one fifth of Czechoslovaks associated overweight bodies with strength or cheerfulness. The Czechs were more informed about unhealthy effects of excessive weight than the Slovaks (by 6% points), which could be probably explained by the longer tradition of health and anti-obesity public health rhetoric and spa treatment in the Czech part of the country. Finally, the researchers were "surprised to find" that the higher the income of a respondent, the more concerned about and active approach to individual weight the respondent had, suggesting that the body was, even in a supposedly egalitarian society, a matter of what one might call class difference. By the early 1980s, higher-income urban families would call for a better supply of food items promoted as part of the rational, healthy diet.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-obesity campaign both capitalized on and deepened gendered differences. Promoting women's slimness and men's muscularity and strength, obesity experts reasserted heteronormative constructions of masculinity and femininity. Appealing mainly to women, they used the notion of feminine attractiveness as a tool to cultivate familial

and social harmony. If within the ideological framework of the post-1968 regime, the heterosexual family constituted the basis of the regime's stability – a basis that was seen as endangered by growing divorce rates and declining birthrates – the mobilization of heteronormative constructions of masculinity and femininity were supposed to stabilize it.

Women's and lifestyle magazines, mostly those printed in the Czech part of the country, fully embraced the anti-obesity fight. "Fewer Calories In the Summer!," *Vlasta* appealed, publishing articles titled "Closely Watched Kilograms," "Losing Weight with Music: So You Could Wear Miniskirts," or "Five Minutes for Beauty." *Květy, Mladý svět, Výživa lidu* and other magazines ran articles including dieting and exercise tips to keep women's figures slender, and quizzes or recipes, often adding cosmetic and fashion advice. *Výživa lidu* published cheese advertisements highlighting women's thin waistlines, recipe pages that contained advice for how to count calories of any given meal, and encouraged cooks to switch cream for low calorie quark (Figure 4). Much of the advice literature encouraged women to learn how to discipline their bodies and cultivate a strong will. While pills suppressing hunger were available, they were not widely advertised (and while aesthetic surgeries were available, liposuction as a technique did not become available until the late 1980s). One of the pills available to the Czechoslovaks, Fenmetrazin, had stimulating effects and because students allegedly abused it during exam periods, it was not advertised, and was only discussed behind closed doors.[76]

Women sought out and exchanged diets. Various slimming books promoted different diets, offering recipes for weekly meal plans. There was the "whipped-cream diet," as it was dubbed in popular discourse, developed by the Czechoslovak nutritionist and obesitologist Přemysl Doberský, which consisted of alternating days of fat, fruit, vegetable, dairy, and mixed meals. Drastically reducing the number of calorie intake per day, it led to quick results but

[76] Martin Franc. "Tlouštík a socialismus. Obezita jako vědecký a společenský problém v Československu 1948–68," *Kuděj. Časopis pro kulturní dějiny* 11, n. 1 (2009): 28–42.

reportedly had a high risk of relapse. Wildly popular in the 1970s was an "egg diet," a version of the American Mayo Clinic diet, reportedly most popular among secretaries who copied instructions and recipes on office typewriters.[77] In addition, there was also a "citrus diet," that proved very difficult to follow in a country with severe shortages of citrus fruits. Among the wilder diets circulating in the country was "wine diet," a holdover from the 19th century spa treatments that combined dehydration and dancing (or exercise), and a "sausage diet," nicknamed as such due to the prevalence of meat in the diet and the exclusion of bread, potatoes, and rice.

Physicians organized one- or two-week anti-obesity camps and started the first commercial programs of weight loss. As early as the mid-1960s, the *Institute of Cosmetics* offered a three-month weight loss program, which "in addition to treating internal [perhaps psychological] problems, will include gymnastics, full-body massages, and procedures with special weight loss machines."[78] It was very expensive at the time, costing 480Kc, in the following years the Institute thus encouraged trade unions to pay for the course as a gift to its women's employees. At the occasion of the International Women's Year in 1975, for example, it offered a special "School of Slim Figure," a weight-loss program under the guidance of a dietician and physical therapist.[79]

While until the mid-1970s, the main emphasis of advice literature was on moderate food intake and regimented daily routine, the mid-to-late 1970s saw a growing emphasis on exercise. Jazzercise made a huge splash in the country at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, as elsewhere in the world, exponentially increasing the number of women in gyms sporting colorful, Jane Fonda-

[77] Leoš Středa, *Univerzita hubnutí* (Praha: www.euroinstitut.cz, 2009): 143.
[78] Institute of Cosmetics, personal archive of MUDr. Novakove. The 480Czk was a substantial amount of money in a period in which monthly salary ranged between 400 and 800 crowns for families with children. See Jakub Rákosník, *Sovětizace sociálního státu. Lidově demokratický režim a sociální práva občanů v Československu 1945-1960* (Praha: Filosofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2010), 132.
[79] *Vlasta,* "Chcete držet štíhlou linii?," June 10, 1975.

type outfits. Women literally flocked to gyms, many had to be turned away at the doors. Riding on the wave of aerobics popularity, the Czechoslovak TV created the program *Cvičme v rytme*, encouraging Czechoslovaks to get in shape before starting dinner preparations; magazines depicted women exercising in city and village gyms, ostensibly to maintain their figures.

Iva, whom I have mentioned above, was the only woman who admitted to watching her body and discuss her "lifelong struggle with fatness" with me. Since joining a handball club at age of 12 or 13, she would exercise several times a week, and yet would still be unsatisfied with her figure. "I would go running, even when we didn't have any trainings, because I thought I was fat… I was so stupid, didn't know any better then, I always drank a liter of milk afterwards. So of course, I couldn't lose any weight [laughter]." Her weight come up when years later, happily married, she corresponded with her husband who was serving his mandatory two-year service. Coming back from a handball training one day in early January, she wrote to Karel: "[The coach] should make me run most of all of us. I am so horribly fat. […] One of my New Year's resolutions was that I won't eat after 5pm and will train more." She discussed her weight with her mother and sister over New Years, laughing "my sis will never have fat issues. She was born under a lucky star (you as well)!"[77]

Advice literature encouraged women to pay particular attention to their bodies during "problem periods." "A woman always has to strive to look pretty. For that she cannot have excessive weight, which does not suit her, and is moreover detrimental to her health," physician Hana Platilová wrote in the women's magazine *Vlasta*.[80] According to her, the riskiest periods, during which women were "prone to fatness," were puberty, pregnancy and lactation, and menopause. It was particularly important for women to eat healthy, get enough exercise, and regularly visit a physician. The most critical period was the menopause, when a woman "begins

[80] *Vlasta,* "Hrozba otylosti," August 19, 1973.

to age and often stops caring about herself," allegedly becoming fatter.[81] The contradictory definition of these "critical periods" as pathological and natural to women's life cycles, when women should be particularly vigilant yet enjoy themselves, is of course not uniquely socialist.[82] While decrying pregnancy as a problem period, they found that a year after childbirth almost two thirds of women had "the same weight as before pregnancy, or even lower. It seems, therefore, that pregnancy does not have to be a feared time of life, when slim girls turn to 'matrons'."[83] Experts, again, created a sense of panic where there was none. That is not to say that individual women did not gain weight during pregnancies – in fact, quite a few of the requests for the "whipped cream" diet women sent to the Czechoslovak TV gave pregnancy as a reason – or that gaining weight did not bring about health complications for some women. But the finding underscores the pathologizing of women's bodies.

Slenderness was not just healthy but also attractive, defined as a tool to attract and *keep* a partner. Rajko Doleček repeatedly wrote (and said on TV) that "many marriages broke up" because women had put on weight and were no longer attractive to their husbands.[84] TV shows created comic sketches based on the notion that fatness was not sexually attractive. During one of the New Year's Eve show, two male celebrities – actor and (in)famous womanizer Miloslav Kopecký and sexologist Miroslav Plzák – staged a scene of marital counseling, taking staged questions from the audience. The questions were revolving around themes of sex and male (in)fidelity when actress Stela Zázvorková suddenly exclaimed in an angry, excited voice: "Doctor, what's all the rage with the slimness and dieting suddenly? Look, history shows us something quite different. Art history is a history of plump women, mind you! Rubens would show you! As the poet says: 'Slow down, oval is the shape of women's beauty, only the vase

[81] *Ibid*.
[82] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 203. See also Martin, *Woman in the Body*.
[83] K. Ošancová, S. Hejda, "Výživa v těhotenství," *Výživa lidu* 31, no. 9 (1976).
[84] Doleček, *Nebezpečný svět*.

should be slender."[85] Both men look at Zázvorková in a disbelief, saying to each other: "She mistakes erotics for ceramics." As the audience laughs, both men answer by suggesting that since they are becoming older and their sexual potency decreases, they have to learn to put up with a fat, unattractive wife.[86]

This scene, which was broadcasted during one of the most widely watched programs on the Czechoslovak TV, demonstrated that women's fat bodies, particularly bodies of women above 40 (which was the allegedly most overweight age group), were constructed and portrayed as sexually unattractive to men. The casting of Helena Růžičková, an extremely popular "fat" actress of the normalization era, further supports the message that fat women were sexually unappealing, but it also drew on some of popular associations of fatness with cheerfulness, suggesting contradictory messages about obesity. Růžičková's roles repeatedly included caring, warm-hearted and family-oriented village women, who are smart and fun. Yet, at the same time, they were characters who constantly argued with their husbands, had outbursts of rage or even violence, and their attempts at dressing smart and pretty failed. While there was not much sex in socialist cinema, Růžičková's characters had none. The actress is said to have asked a film director to add a bed scene in one of the movies to show that there was love and even sexual attractiveness between the spouses. However, the bed scene ended up being portrayed as yet another place of the spouses' arguments about everyday matters. In addition to these village characters, the actress also played roles of patients in psychiatric institutions. In short, her characters were unappealing and asexual figures, stereotypically portraying the fat body as outside of the norm of desirability or able-bodied femininity.

[85] *Silvestr 1979*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3TI04MGy6U (accessed January 4, 2016).
[86] Kopecký uses the Czech word *síla*, which can be translated as both virility and vitality. I chose to translate it within the implied sexual meaning.

Were men part of the anti-obesity discourse? Were they concerned about obesity? While women's fatness was said to lower their sexual appeal, men's fatness, experts thought, lowered their sexual potency. Obese men allegedly did not perform well and had lower sexual desire. But magazine and TV representations of this alleged impotence were too few and far between, overcome by the more prevalent and stereotypical discourses of male sexual aggressiveness and assertiveness. In the late 1980s, however, calls for manly masculinity increased – and representations of excess body fat with them. Satirical magazine *Dikobraz* was at the forefront of ridiculing male fatness, depicting men as unintelligent, childish, lazy "couch potatoes," and dependent on their wives (Figure 5).

Susan Gal and Gail Kligman write that the image of the socialist man as a "big child" was a discursive construction to its opposite – the female "brave victim," who expressed the contradiction between the superwoman depicted in women's magazines and women's everyday lives, between supposed excessive power and real-life inadequacy.[87] Stakhanovite work heroes were no longer a dominant mode of masculinity, and because of the link between promotion and membership in the Communist Party, middle-class masculinity was "void."[88] Corporeality, or more precisely the control over the body by the male subject, some scholars argue, was thus constructed as the last available site of male agency. In her analysis of representations of masculinity in the popular novel *Memento* (1986) Libora Oates-Indruchová examines this discourse. The book's generational conflict between a father and his (drug abusing) son portrayed this frustrated middle-class masculinity: the father was depicted as a "couch potato" with a "pot belly and slacking shoulder," who lived from one day to another without any prospects of economic or political power. His sun thus rejected his lifestyle as unacceptable, but

[87] Gal and Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*, 52.
[88] Libora Oates-Indruchová, "The beauty and the loser: cultural representations of gender in late state socialism," *Politics of Gender Culture*, 188-210.

was unable to find any alternative, failing to control his own body and succumbing to drug abuse.[89] Kateřina Kolářová's analysis of the late socialist *A Tainted Horseplay*, too, argues that while male body excess had the potential to subvert social unity "the notion of hegemonic unity performed as homogenous collective subjectivity," her protagonists fail to do so, or do so only as an ironic, self-parodying statement.[90] In other words, the protagonists in both works do not find the space to articulate a confirming position for the male subject, their bodily excess only leads to self-destruction or ridicule.[91]

* * *

At the end of the socialist regime, medical experts contended that the population was aware of its health problems – since the beginnings of the campaign for healthy diet, the population had gained a "better knowledge" of the various components of diet and come to recognize that obesity was unhealthy. At the same time, these experts complained that the impact of the annual *Diet and Health* event was insignificant. The population, according to them, did not exercise enough and did not follow the principles of healthy dieting in everyday practice: "For the majority of the population a good meal is one that is tasty and filling, not prepared according to the principles of rational diet… the preparation of food by requirements of the rational diet was followed only by 8,6% of Slovak population (only about 15% of among young families)."[92] Ultimately, while the public campaign against obesity cultivated weight-watching habits in some Czechoslovaks, the weight of the population as a whole continued to grow.

---

[89] *Ibid*.
[90] Kolářová, "The AIDSed Perestroika," 249.
[91] *Ibid*.
[92] Unfortunately, I do not have comparable statistics for the Czech part of the country. *Mladá rodina v socialistickej spoločnosti: Zborník referátov z vedeckej konferencie 15. dní zdravotnej výchovy* (Bratislava: Ústav zdravotnej výchovy, 1989).

In the last decade of the socialist era, medical attention gradually turned another issue – that of bulimia and anorexia. By the late 1970s, just as beauty experts became concerned about what they viewed as unleashed beautification practices among Czechoslovak women, some commentators became concerned that girls and young women dieted too much. The anti-obesity SNOB rubric in *Mladý svět* increasingly urged young female readers not to diet because, based on their letters, they weighed to little. A teacher at a school in the south Bohemian town of Klatovy complained that every girl in his school wanted to have the "modern look." While boys often competed in who would eat more dumplings, he wrote further, girls, on the other hand, often did not eat at all. "A number of young girls and women have come to think that the right figure and health can only be achieved by being in a perpetual state of dieting," he wrote, echoing opinions of experts across the country, claiming that both girls and boys were learning unhealthy habits.[93]

The concern over young women's slimming practices may have been a new moral panic similar to obesity. However, at the turn of 1970s and 1980s, expert literature started discussing the prevalence anorexia and bulimia among Czechoslovak women and the General University Hospital in Prague opened the first clinic for their treatment in 1982, accepting about 10 patients the first year alone. The concern demonstrates that the body continued to be the at the center of expert intervention as well as debates about socialist subjectivity.

Conclusion

Within the context of what was literally a flood of slimming tools and new advertising strategies in the post-socialist period, long-term anti-obesity campaigners and organizers of weight-loss summer programs Iva Málková and František Krch publish their book *SOS obesity.*

[93] Šlégl, "K výživě dospívající mládeže," 23.

A Guide Through the Troubled Waters of Dieting And Lifestyle (SOS nadváha. Průvodce úskalím diet a životního stylu). The authors claim that their rationale for writing the book was a contemporary "obsession with slimness," which is, according to them, a part of the post revolutionary "search for new models, which naturally focus on outside symbols and values of the 'Western' world."[94] The book criticizes the ubiquitous obesity panic, where even "normal" people consider themselves obese. The authors claim that their patients often "irrationally claim that obesity is not healthy, great looks are a necessary prerequisite for self-confidence and self-fulfillment, or that high-calorie meals are unhealthy."[95] The new cult of the slim body is, according to Málkova and Krch, detrimental especially to women, who are subjected to new requirements of combining self-control and success. These requirements demand that women "are able to combine self-control and sexual liberation with traditional values, such as attractiveness and elegance [...] In the chaos of the surrounding world, they can at least control their bodies."[96] My analysis of the late socialist anti-obesity discourse shows, however, that slenderness became a norm much earlier, even though it radically intensified in the post-1989 period.

The Czechoslovak case demonstrates that medicalization and stigmatization of fat bodies can develop even in the absence of market mechanisms and (a robust) advertising industry. Since the East European regimes always considered the body as a tool of revolutionary progress, labor and of the military defense of socialism, it was subjected to biopolitical aspirations to manage its full capacity. Fat bodies were not only constructed as "different," they were also, simultaneously, stigmatized, pathologized, and associated with both physical and mental disability.

[94] F. Krch, and I. Málková. *SOS nadváha. Průvodce úskalím diet a životního stylu* (Praha: Granit, 1993), 29.
[95] *Ibid.*: 14 (emph. orig.).
[96] *Ibid*.: 32.

Obesity continues to be stigmatized. It no longer means overeating, laziness and the lack of self-control but also "complexes, depression, lack of success, illness or psychical abnormality."[97] In other words, a fat body continues to be associated with mental and social disability. This argument has been repeatedly used in the past ten years, as the media reported that the Czechs are the most overweight nation in Europe, with alarming rates of child obesity. "If this trend continues, who will be doing productive labor in these countries? When these children reach the productive age, it will be a catastrophe," Czech obesitologist Martin Fried commented on the newest WHO measurements, which placed the Czech Republic on the top of the most obese countries in Europe.[98] The moral panic, which began fifty years ago, rages on.

[97] Málková and Krch, *SOS obezity*, 15.
[98] "Pokud ten trend bude pokračovat, kdo bude za deset let v zemích s obezitou na vzestupu pracovat? Až [obézní děti] dosáhnou produktivního věku, bude to katastrofa," http://ona.idnes.cz/cesi-jsou-druzi-nejtlustsi-v-eu-dnk-/dieta.aspx?c=A070423_090016 (accessed August 4, 2015).

The Conscripted Body: Army Service and Military Embodiment

When I was drafted as a soldier
They shaved my head clean
I looked so stupid
Like the fellas all around 'round 'round 'round
Like the fellas all around.
When I Was Drafted as a Soldier, Jaromír Nohavica[1]

Introduction

By 1970s, virtually all Western armies were experiencing a crisis of sorts as men were increasingly reluctant to undergo mandatory service. Even if, as public opinion polls revealed, societies generally acknowledged the need for an effective defense infrastructure, two decades of peace on the European continent, the period of détente and massive antiwar protests of the 1960s, and the rapid growth of professional careers for men prompted populations, men in particular, to question the value of their active participation in the army. In response, governments and army leaderships shortened the length of service, expanded the possibilities of deferrals, or made it easier for men not to enlist altogether. Eventually, most of them transitioned to professional forces.[2]

East European armies found themselves in a similar crisis. East German men preferred civil employment to army service,[3] and Polish conscripts were allegedly "demoralized" by the

[1] For the full text of the song, see the singer's website, http://www.nohavica.cz/_en/tvorba/texty_en/t_en_kostovski.htm (accessed July 29, 2019).
[2] Great Britain transitioned to a professional army way ahead of the crisis, in 1960. The US created an all-volunteer force in 1973. France had been adding allowances for deferred service, alternative paths, and exceptions so much so that by 1970 more than half of the country's draftees never entered the barracks; in addition to a growing number of conscientious objectors, for both religious and political reasons. West Germany's "Zivis" formed a rapidly expanding contingent of conscripts, doing their military service in civilian professions. France did not create a professional army until the 1990s. Gwyn Harries-Jenkins (ed.), *Armed Forces and the Welfare Societies: Challenges in the 1980s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983); Martin, Michel L. "Conscription and the Decline of the Mass Army in France, 1960-1975." *Armed Forces & Society* 3, no. 3 (April 1977): 355–406.
[3] Unlike Czechoslovak men, however, East Germans had the opportunity to claim conscientious objection (even if this option was not widely advertised) and do a "Waffenlose" service.

participation of the army in the 1968 suppression of the Prague Spring and civic protests in Poland in 1970 (and later again in 1976 and 1981).[4] Since the post-Stalinist countries were already anxious about the loss of traditionally working-class notions of manhood, lukewarm attitudes towards the military contributed to a sense of a crisis of masculinity. Commentators from the USSR to Hungary to East Germany decried the loss of courage, initiative, and independence in men,[5] and, in contrast to their Western counterparts who downscaled army service, offered mandatory military service as a way to make man "manly" again.

The Czechoslovak army was in a particularly complicated situation. First of all, Czechoslovakia never had a strong military tradition. The iconic literary hero, soldier Švejk – especially the novel's famous 1956 film adaptation where he was depicted as aging, balding, and plump, a depiction later reproduced in numerous cartoons – was generally considered either very smart or subversively cunning in defying his commanders, and the country's film industry never produced what film scholar Ewa Mazierska called "forthright soldier heroes."[6] Second, the lack of enthusiasm for serving in the army grew especially after the invasion of the country in 1968, which left about 75.000 Soviet soldiers (a number equal to 37.5 % of the Czechoslovak army) with 1200 tanks and 76 aircrafts stationed in the country until 1989.[7] And finally, the depletion of the officer ranks left the military with gravely undereducated officers, a situation that plagued the Czechoslovak army throughout the socialist period.[8] Tales of unintelligent officers,

[4] Richard A. Gabriel, *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: A Combat Assessment* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983).
[5] Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*.
[6] Ewa Mazierska, *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble* (New York: Berghan Books, 2008), p. 38.
[7] Pplk. Pavel Minařík, "Bratrská vojska za hranicemi Sovětského svazu. Střední skupina sovětských vojsk v Československu," *Československá armada*, http://armada.vojenstvi.cz/povalecna/sovet.vojska/3.htm, accessed January 22, 2018. The last Soviet soldiers left on June 22, 1991.
[8] Even before the Prague Spring purges, resignations, and emigration that decimated the officer corps, the army lacked hundreds of officers. Out of those it had, only 69.6 % had what the army considered sufficient education for their jobs, and mere one in five had a university degree. The officer corps was also seven years older than it would ideally have been on all, except the highest, levels of command, and a generally declining health. The Party was aware of the problem but in spite of massive efforts to recruit educated officers, the army never recovered. For the statistics see "Text připravený náčelníkem gen. štábu Rusovem pro projev M. Dzúra v branném a bezpečnostním

nonsensical commands, bullying, and violence circulated among the population and preceded men's entry into the army, exacerbating their perception that their service was an unwelcome civic duty.

Historians have argued that the shaping of male bodies was not the primary function of socialist militaries. According to Maya Eichler, the most important function of the Soviet army was not muscular strength but rather political indoctrination and the formation of national belonging.[9] Historian Andrew Bickford has argued that physical strength was not necessarily the most important means to (re)value military masculinity in East Germany, instead, more important was the "ability to perform complicated tasks, operate certain types of weapons, and in the case of artillerymen, kill at a distance."[10] This task reached a higher level across the socialist bloc from about mid-1980s onwards when the introduction of the newest military technologies shifted demands on soldiers, requiring technical knowledge and skills rather than crude strength. That said, muscular bodies still were at the center of military masculinity. Exercises of soldiers usually represented the highlight of the Czechoslovak mass exercises (*Spartakiads*).[11] These exercises showed bodies unified in comradely, muscular masculinity, displaying dynamism, precision, rationality, and bravery in formations and feats that left the audiences in awe.[12] *Spartakiads* did not simply display muscular bodies, they eroticized them. Military masculinity was to be desired and sought after as an ideal model of masculinity.

Drawing on accessible archival material, expert literature, interviews, and personal letters, this chapter explores the experiences of the mandatory military service in the early 1980s.

---

výboru NS" In *Vojenské otázky Československé reformy 1967-1970*, (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR; Brno: Doplněk, 1996-1999).

[9] Maya Eichler, *Militarizing Men: Gender, Conscription, and War in Post-Soviet Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.

[10] Andrew Bickford, "The Militarization of Masculinity in the Former German Democratic Republic," In *Military Masculinities: Identity and State* (Praeger Publishers, 2003), 162.

[11] Roubal, *Spartakiády*.

[12] *Ibid*., 208-217.

The choice of this time period is partly accidental but is nonetheless significant: in the early 1980s, amidst renewed international tensions and after years of reports from medical experts about a decreasing rate of fitness among conscripts, the Czechoslovak Communist Party became profoundly anxious about the country's defensive capabilities. At the 16th Party Congress in April 1981, it announced to provide a significant amount of resources to increasing the military preparedness of the country, in particular a massive financial injection into sports and fitness of the citizens. However, as numerous accounts of military service suggest, including the letters I analyze below, this commitment did not materialize. Whether in terms of the construction of national belonging, military skills, or shaping muscular bodies, the Czechoslovak army failed. Instead of the army functioning as the school for masculinity or as a nation builder, uniting men in a brotherhood of soldiers, the Czechoslovak mandatory service not only alienated men from the army but, more importantly, exacerbated existing tensions in society. The Czechoslovak army, in short, did not create soldiers. At the same time, however, the analysis shows that the men used their bodies to avoid duties and find comfort, thereby trying to assert their individual agency and power within the army's hierarchy, or, alternatively, build up fitness for individual, rather than military, purposes. They also experienced their bodies in new ways.

The militarization of society?

For men, mandatory military service was not their first encounter with the army. Schoolchildren learned how to wear gas masks and throw (fake) grenades, and went on trips to World War II memorials, some participated in discussions with war veterans. The Pioneers and the Czechoslovak Youth Organization organized the Sokolov and Dukla Runs of Defense Competence (Dukelský a Sokolovský závod branné zdatnosti), attracting thousands of participants. Svazarm, the Union for the Cooperation with the Army, coordinated rifle-shooting

and radio operator club. Before 1971, communist authorities promulgated the pre-war law of mandatory defense training for the entire population, but the law was partially abandoned in 1951, leaving defense training to the initiative of school teachers and voluntary organizations.[13]

It was in 1971 that the Communist Party leadership adopted the Unified System of Military Education of the Population (Jednotný system branné výchovy obyvatelstva, JSBVO).[14] It had been in preparation since the mid-1960s but due to the Prague Spring upheaval, its adoption was postponed. JSBVO mandated schools on all levels of education to include military training in the curriculum, and obligated state and city administrators, employers, trade unions, and various mass organizations to include training in their programming. They were to organize competitions and games, encourage citizens to fulfill the conditions for the Fitness Badge, and prepare citizens for the eventual impact of weapons of mass destruction. JSBVO mandated that the education be differentiated by age and gender. Coed on the elementary school level, on the secondary school level for boys it was supposed to function as a preparation for a career in the military, its goal for girls was that of the "preparation for the role of a woman in defense [system], particularly in the health and life-saving areas."[15] Indeed, women's role in the defense infrastructure was defined exclusively as that of nurses and first aid personnel, saving lives rather than risking them, their bodies considered too weak to participate in the physically strenuous, mentally demanding, and life-threatening job of soldiers on the frontline.

[13] Zákon 184/1937 Sb. o branné výchově. The socialist system of military education directly followed the pre-socialist efforts, legally as well as institutionally. In the interwar period military training of the general population was largely abandoned due to pacifist tendencies of the population but the German militarization, and later mobilization, convinced schools to integrate training into the instruction (particularly PE classes) and the parliament to adopt a military education law. More on the defense training in schools, see the edition of *Retro*, "Branné cvičení," http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10176269182-retro/209411000360019/titulky#t=15m29s (accessed May 14, 2019).
[14] East Germany did not adopt a similar law until 1982.
[15] NA, fond KSC UV 02/1, sv. 39 c.j. 40/9, Návrh zásad zákona o branné výchově, 36. Schůze PUV KSC ze dne 5.5.1972.,"

The system of improving the population's preparedness was adopted in part as a response to international impulses, such as the Cuban crisis and the Vietnam War, which reminded the Party representatives to look into the defense preparation of the population. Designed during the years of liberalization in the 1960s and launched in the wake of the normalization period, the system also had an important domestic function as a disciplinary mechanism. The Communist Party representatives emphasized the importance of military preparedness of the population, striving for the "formation of the sense of pride of our citizens in the membership in the socialist community."[16] Patriotic and loyal socialist citizens were to be formed, in part, through the body.

One of the reasons the Party and state officials turned towards the cultivation of an appropriately fit body was that they had been getting reports that the population was getting less and less fit. In addition to the rise in obesity and cardiovascular diseases described in previous chapters, medical experts had been informing the Party of the decrease in overall physical performance of its citizens, conscripts in particular. In 1967, for example, 40 % of conscripts did not fulfill the basic limit for a 100m run and the same percentage could not swim.[17] Or, an expert study found that between 1963 and 1974 conscripts' bodies grew: they were taller, their chests larger, and bodies heavier. The experts considered it a result of improved nutrition and health care but at the same time – while they noted the overall "better health" of conscripts – they warned that up to 30 % of draftees had become overweight in that same time period, and their overall physical fitness had gone down.[18] Whether it was the government's push for better physical preparation of young men or young men's own initiative to do sports, the numbers somewhat improved over the course of the 1970s. In the early 1980s about 20 % of conscripts

[16] ŠAB, Ka 169, i.č. 343, Plénum a rada Zs KNV, 23. Schôdza rady Zs KNV ze dne 6.12. 1977, bod 7 branná výchova.
[17] AMO, 11-8, karton 74, Model organizace a řízení tělesné výchovy a sportu v Čsl. lidové armádě. Twenty percent could not do 1000m under 4 minutes and "only about" 25% were active sports people in civilian life. The document also said that the conscripts had a generally negative attitude towards physical training.
[18] Hrbáč, Novotný, and Tupý, "Zdravotní stav branců."

did not fulfill the army entry tests (which consisted of timed 100m and 1000m runs, rope climb, the throw of the grenade, and overall medical examination of the body stripped to boxer shorts).[19] But the improvement was not big enough to stop experts from warning against the decreasing fitness of conscripts and alerting the Party about a compromised defense preparedness of the country's population. Still only about 50 % of conscripts were declared to be "fully prepared" to fulfil their military service, although what exactly "fully prepared" meant is unclear.[20]

Of particular danger to the defensive capacity of the country, something that "could not be overlooked" by both medical experts and Party representatives, was the portion of the population that could not swim, especially conscripts.[21] In the mid-1970s there were allegedly about eight million bad swimmers and non-swimmers in the country, more than a half the Czechoslovak population. Warning against the threat of death by drowning, a newsletter of the Czechoslovak Sports Organization (ČSTV) in 1976 encouraged the population to learn to swim by reminding its readers of the 800,000 Soviet soldiers who drowned during various WWII operations.[22] The Party had launched a program supporting swimming classes for schoolchildren in 1972, and adopted a law obligating schools to teach swimming to schoolchildren in 1980, but since the program ran into the problem of a lack of swimming pools, the overall number of non-

[19] *Ibid.*; see also MZA, fond JmKNV, Plnění úkolů branné výchovy v Jihomoravském kraji v letech 1980-1981 z hlediska závěrů stranických a státních orgánů – za její další rozvoj v linii krajské stranické konference a XVI. sjezdu Komunistické strany Československa. The only available photographs of a draft are by a photographer Jozef Sedlak, who received a unique permission to photograph it in 1980: http://www.sedlakjozef.com/conscription-1980-1981_838_2.html (accessed June 15, 2015).
[20] MZA, fond JmKNV, Branná výchova, Plnění úkolů branné výchovy v Jihomoravském kraji v letech 1980-1981 z hlediska závěrů stranických a státních orgánů – za její další rozvoj v linii krajské stranické konference a XVI sjezdu Komunistické strany Československa.
[21] Proceedings of a meeting of the Parliament, June 24, 1984. "Zpráva vlády České socialistické republiky o dosažené úrovni a perspektivách zdravotnictví v krajích a okresech České socialistické republiky z hlediska rozpracování závěrů XVI. sjezdu KSČ."
[22] MZA, G 588, ka 7, inv.c. 81: Zpravodaj KV CSTV c. 20, ze dne 25. 10. 1976.

swimmers in the country did not improve much.[23] In 1982, 20 % of conscripts were non-swimmers.[24]

Due to its pervasive military discourse and massive infrastructure, Michael Mann labeled late socialism as "military socialism"[25] – a label that is now being used by scholars of East European civilian defense training and the army.[26] Mann distinguished it from "spectator-sport militarism" of the West, where, he claimed, the army was marginalized and the population participated in it only indirectly. He considered the military institutionalized in everyday lives of the population in the Soviet bloc, and linked Soviet/socialist citizenship with military discipline. Mann was aware that what he was describing was a "strategy of social control" rather than the lived reality of the population, but his label needs reassessment. Moreover, comparative analyses would be useful. Not only there seem to be differences between the various socialist countries but also socialist societies were not particularly more militarized in comparison with the West. According to Cynthia Enloe, to give an example, the US has a particularly strong relationship between the military and citizenship, what she calls a "militarized concept of national loyalty and identity."[27]

In its assessment of the implementation of JSBVO three years after its adoption, the Czechoslovak Party's leadership was notified that there was a significant increase in the number

[23] After the political support for and financial injection into the development of sports facilities after the XVI. Party Congress in 1981, sports infrastructure started being developed particularly in smaller cities and in Slovakia. But due to shortages of construction material, repeated extensions of deadlines, and poor coordination, sports facilities were not being developed to the degree party plans promised, and needed to. In 1984, according to the parliamentary reports, the sports infrastructure in the cities allegedly reached only 63% of urbanistic norms (see note 40). Many of the swimming pools, city and school sports grounds and gyms were not finished until after 1989.
[24] Štátny archív Bratislava, KNV západoslovenského kraje, ka 6: Kontrolná správa o realizácii Hlavných smerov rozvoja pohybovej výchovy SZM Západoslovenskej krajskej organizácie SZM, materiál na P KV SZM 23.7.1982. About 65 % of the population of the Western Slovak region still could not swim in 1982, including 20 % of conscripts.
[25] Michael Mann, "The Roots and Contradictions of Modern Militarism," *The New Left Review*, I/162, 1987.
[26] Matthias Rogg *Armee des Volkes? Militär und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Berlin: Links Verlag, 2008); Heiner Brockermann, *Landewsverteidigung und Militarisierung: Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik der DDR in der Ära Honecker 1971-1989* (Berlin: Links Verlag, 2011); Maya Eichler, *Militarizing Men*.
[27] As quoted in Melissa T. Brown, *Enlisting Masculinity: The Construction of Gender in US Military Recruiting Advertising during the All-Volunteer Force* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

of the "clubs of young army friends," from 43 in 1971 to 243 in 1973. Underneath this impressive number was a much more sobering reality, however. The document complained that the vast majority of the new clubs were those of car and motorbike enthusiasts, the more militarized shooting and radio operating clubs were in need of a larger membership according to its authors. Defense training was often limited to demonstrations of evacuation plans; and whereas secondary schools taught defense as (only) part of PE classes, universities did not offer anything at all because they lacked trained teachers. Material aids were sorely missing at all levels (the insufficient supply of gas masks, or their wrong size, was notorious).[28] This situation does not seem to have changed much by the early 1980s. Official documents from the south Moravian region, for example, claim a "relatively good" preparedness of secondary school boys but a lot of deficiencies in the system, including the lack of defense training at elementary schools and a very "formal character" of patronage relationships between the army and schools.[29]

Moreover, popular attitudes towards the military infrastructure were lukewarm throughout society.[30] Public opinion polls revealed that by the mid-1980s, more than half of the respondents harbored what researchers labeled as "more or less strong pacifist tendencies," 5 % were identified as complete pacifists, who considered the Czechoslovak participation in any war morally wrong.[31] Almost a half of the respondents thought the army's role in the peacetime was in assisting in the aftermath of natural disasters and in the economy (49 %), one in ten

[28] NA, fond UV KSC 02/1, sv. 139, a.j. 141/3, Zpráva o plnění opatření uložených usnesením P UV KSC z 19.3.1971 o jednotném systému branné výchovy obyvatelstva ČSSR, 136. schůze PÚV KSČ ze dne 6.12.1974

[29] MZA, fond Jm KNV, Plnění úkolů branné výchovy v Jihomoravském kraji v letech 1980-1981 z hlediska závěrů stranických a státních orgánů – za její další rozvoj v linii krajské stranické konference a XVI sjezdu Komunistické strany Československa.

[30] Two public opinion polls were conducted on the attitudes towards the army and defense system, and notions of peace, one in 1980 and another in 1985. The timing of the polls reflected the growing concerns of the Party and Ministry of Defence about the lack of interest in the military. See The Czech Social Science Data Archive, http://archiv.soc.cas.cz/pristup-k-datum.

[31] Štátný archív Bratislava, fond KNV Západoslov.kraj, P KV SSZ c. 19, Kontrolná sprava o realizácii opatrení P SV SZM z roku 1983 k zvyšovaniu úrovne brannej propagandy a účinnej popularizácie ČSLA v spoločnosti v podmienkach činnosti orgánov a organizácii SZM vo Východoslovenskom kraji.

respondents considered the army redundant in time of peace. Among the soldiers themselves, only one fifth was proud of their service, more than one fifth considered it a complete waste of time. In sum, what these results seem to suggest is that as a general principle, citizens considered military infrastructure and preparedness important, but they would want it to exist without their active participation in it.

The decreasing popularity of the army exacerbated already existing anxiousness about the loss of traditional working-class masculinity due to the transition to light industries. In response, in the wake of the normalization period, media ramped up images of jobs for "true men," such as firemen, mountain rescue service, truck drivers, construction workers, and soldiers, partly to demonstrate that it was in a homosocial environment, one that required strength, resolve, and bravery, that men could become manly. In the mid-1970s, the Ministry of Defence decided to move the ceremony of the solemn oath by new soldiers to the public space. The display of soldiers on town squares, watched by families, friends, and townspeople were supposed to both demonstrate the strength of military and create emotional attachment to the men in uniforms. In addition, in order to increase the representativeness of the army in the public, the Ministry issued a new dress code for career soldiers and conscripts in 1980.[32] The last change in soldiers' uniforms took place in 1964 but it failed to address soldiers' complaints about their old-fashioned look. The new, slick uniforms had the shape of a suit, discarded a belt over the jacket, and added a long tie to the shirt, making soldiers look both more civilian and professional. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that this change did not make men prouder to wear their uniforms in public and display that they belonged to the army.

Differences in army service

[32] Všeob-P-47. Stejnokrojový předpis ČSLA.

Military service was different based on the branch of the army the men were stationed with, their level of education, their employment, and, to a large degree, the personality of their commanders. Excluded from military service altogether were disabled men, incurably sick, imprisoned, and those pronounced legally incompetent. Men who had not finished elementary school (9 grades) were often classified as "mentally deficient" and exempted from military service.[33] Many in the category of mental deficiency would have been of Roma origin, furthering racialized associations of the Roma and constructing their unmanly status.[34] With the decreasing popularity of the army, getting the "blue book," a complete medical exemption from the army, was increasingly popular, though how widespread the phenomenon was awaits further research. None of my interviewees had the exemption, one of them described himself as a pacifist but did not try to get the "blue book." "I thought it would be embarrassing if I, not so much a professional as active, good sportsman, pretended to be a sluggard [lempl]; it was beneath my dignity."[35]

Paratroopers and border patrol were considered by soldiers the elite of the army due to the strenuous training as well as "real soldiering" that these units did in contrast to the "playing to be soldiers" many conscripts saw themselves doing.[36] "We were kind of braggarts [machýrkové]," a former border patrol member told me, "we thought that the armymen [armaďáci] had a drag of a service. We were constantly in a state of war, constantly with live ammo, constantly on duty, facing the pressure of action…whereas those armymen were lolling

[33] Although this practice was changed in the 1970s, and even men without full elementary education underwent service. Oldřich Zámečník, "Inteligence branců s nedokončeným základním vzděláním (předběžně sdělení výzkumu)," *Vojenské zdravotnické listy* (43), 6/1974.
[34] Anecdotal knowledge is that Roma conscripts were sent to serve as tank crews. For an analysis of racial othering of the Roma in socialist Czechoslovakia, see Sokolova, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity*. Our knowledge of homosexual men's service is virtually nonexistent. Some of my interlocutors claimed that the army would not draft homosexual men in order not to have gays "disrupt" the community of army units. This may or may not be pure rumor, however.
[35] Interview with Vladislav Z., Bělečko, Sept 1, 2016.
[36] The border patrol was institutionally attached to the Ministry of Interior, similarly to police, rather than the Ministry of Defense as the rest of the armed forces.

about in the hinterland."[37] In addition to the sense that they were in "action," paratroopers and border patrol were also commended with high technical skills and intelligence, though many of my interviewees also shuddered at the thought of being prepared to kill a person at the border.

The vast majority of men went through a two-year service, but not all. Professional sportsmen and soldiers who joined the army theater, poetry or music clubs did not have much of a military service. Sportsmen were sometimes placed in army training centers – which were top sports facilities in the country – spending some of their days by training and weekend by competing; those who joined cultural clubs had their service split in between military drill and practice. These soldiers were often called off their duties, exempted from cleaning shifts, guard duties and, even, military practice in order to prepare for internal army competitions as well as public appearances. They were supposed to counter the popular image of a soldier as an empty, "green brain," and promote the notion of a soldier as an all-rounded, cultured human being.

A university educated graduate, *absík,* had his service divided into two parts. He first had to complete a two-year course organized by the "army academy" at his school. The course was held once a week during the school year, reportedly specialized according to the type of university; so, for example, lawyers and actors were trained to be medical personnel, technical university graduates were trained to be in the communication corps, etc. At the end of this two-year course, an *absík* had to undergo a month-long military exercise course, living in the barracks, to pass military exams. If he passed, he would begin his active service lasting a year. If he failed, he would have to do the standard two-year route. *Absík* was an ambiguous status, both envied and despised by the "regular" soldiers (and bullied or left alone accordingly). Many university graduates were placed in an NCO crash course to become commanders of their units.

[37] Interview with Jiří M., Lhotka, January 31, 2015.

Both envied and despised for a short service and NCO position, these men were alternatively treated well and badly by senior conscripts.

Some workers, particularly in agriculture, mining, and some industries would serve only five months, acquiring the somewhat derogatory but enviable label of "fivemeter" or *pětimetr*. Fathers of two or more children who were primary breadwinners could claim this exemption as well. "They hated us," Pavel H. told me about the attitude of "regular" soldiers to "fivemeters," explaining that everyone wanted to have as short a service as possible. Trained as a technician, had been working in a Prague tram company, when his boss told him he would "reclaim" him from the military along with the rest of his classmates. For the next 19 months, he would have to work in whatever position the company needed him, doing "work that was poorly paid and that no one wanted to do."[38] He did a four-week basic military training in the barracks afterwards,[39] but for the remaining months of service was sent to work on a construction of an anti-aircraft bunker just outside of Prague. Allowed to go home once a week, Pavel said it felt as if he "were at a Pioneer [summer] camp." He preferred this type of service to the standard military one, which would have been "wasted time, having to clown around there for two years… running around like a loony [*cvok*]."[40]

While the railway army was specifically created to service the railway network in the country, with soldiers constructing or maintaining the railway and its stations for months at a time, any soldier could spend weeks and even months working at a construction site or in agriculture. According to the material of the Ministry of Defence from the late 1960s, daily about 2,000 soldiers were sent out of the barracks for the needs of the national economy, about 8,500

[38] Interview with Pavel H., Prague, December 11, 2015.
[39] As an active sportsman (Pavel H. did karate), he liked the morning exercises. As such, he was popular among those soldiers who did not like them, being able to exchange a cleaning shift for showing up at the morning exercises for them. "I didn't do any cleaning the entire month," he recollected.
[40] Interview with Pavel H., Prague, December 11, 2015.

soldiers were released early due to the needs of the national economy; and 11,000 soldiers daily were transferred to do maintenance work on and around the barracks "due to the insufficient numbers of civilian personnel in these services."[41] The acute need for maintenance work within and around the barracks was exacerbated by the lack of investment in reconstruction; according to the Ministry, about 20 % of army buildings had been built before 1900 and had not been reconstructed since.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the work around the barracks or at a construction site was perceived by many of those I interviewed with mixed feelings. On the one hand, many welcomed the respite from military drill, and those working in agriculture or in construction considered their work more meaningful and fun than "clowning around" with a gun. On the other hand, such work rendered their time in the military completely useless, adding another layer to the already unpopular perception of the Czechoslovak army.

Stories about the military service

There is a relative uniformity in which men tell their stories of army service, whether one reads memoirs and letters or conducts interviews. The army service, in these accounts, was largely a waste of time, men were forced to "clown around" [šaškovat], were bothered and bossed around [buzerovat], and their commanders were generally either stupid or alcoholics, or both. If "'military culture' is largely a *military habitus* a system of transposable and durable dispositions that generate *body techniques,*"[42] the way in which men present themselves in these narratives is the opposite to any performance of a "military habitus." These men do not strive for or find pride in military embodiment – standing upright, chin up, a gun on their chest, marching

[41] "Text připravený náčelníkem gen. štábu Rusovem pro projev M. Dzúra v branném a bezpečnostním výboru NS," *Vojenské otázky Československé reformy 1967-1970*, květen 1968. (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR; Brno: Doplněk, 1999): 133.
[42] qt. in Brian Lande, "Breathing like a soldier: culture incarnate," *The Sociological Review*, 55 (2007): 97.

in perfect unison, enduring physical hardships and training their bodies to fight. They fight against it, portraying themselves as mostly frustrated and often proud skivers, resisting the military drill, shirking duties, and trying to gain as much comfort as they can. Endurance of the military service itself is a feat. It is not that they avoid physical exertion. In fact, many of them go running, weight-lifting, and otherwise strengthening their bodies through physical activity in their free time; they also sneak out of the barracks to fetch alcohol rain or shine. The avoidance of specifically military discipline is their way of asserting their power over commanders and fighting against and coping with a system they find meaningless.

The following pages analyze letters of three soldiers that they wrote to their wives and a girlfriend respectively. Two of the three sets of letters, by Karel and Richard, my father, are originals, including letters by both the men and their wives (although in this text I largely neglect the women's letters). The third set of letters, Václav Vokálek's, was published as a book exactly thirty years after the man's service, and include only the soldier's letters in his first year of service. They have been edited, stripped of the opening hellos and closing goodbyes, and, unlike the other two sets of letters, they do not include any references to family anniversaries, mutual friends of the author and his girlfriend, or even intimacy and sexuality. They seem to be authentic, but I have not been able to verify that.

Karel began his two-year military service on July 1, 1982, a mere couple of days after his wife gave birth to their first child. She was 18, he was a year older. A cook by training, Karel had been playing volleyball for his hometown's club and was hoping to continue to do so in the army as a professional athlete.[43] Throughout his service, he alternated between being a volleyball player, regular soldier, and cook and while traveling around the country, spent most of the military time in Spišská Nová Ves, seven hours away by train from his family. He seems to have

[43] Sportsmen were situated in the army sports club *Dukla* training facilities. They had to master basic military skills but were otherwise rigorously trained and continued doing their sports.

been among the 44 % of young men who perceived military service as an obligation of citizenship, approaching his service pragmatically as something that he had to go through and endure, even though his service was not uncomplicated.

Richard began his service in April 1982, he was 24, had been married for almost two years, and had a 15-month old daughter. As a university educated young man, he only had to spend a year in the barracks. He was first stationed in the Slovak city of Topolčany, and after five months was transferred as a signaler to the 3rd anti-aircraft regiment in Nitra, Slovakia, 190 miles away from his family. When we talked about his service, he would often tell me that his service was relaxed; the signalers were, in his words, "aristocracy." What he meant was the high level of comfort and protection from the military drill; after laying the cables and establishing communication, he could sit in the warmth of a car. Nonetheless, desperately missing his family, he could not bring himself to get comfortable in his military shoes.

Václav Vokálek, the author of the printed letters, describes himself as a person with a "doubtful loyalty to the socialist state."[44] He had a degree from a technical university in Prague but because he shirked the army academy, he was kicked out and had to serve two full years. He was stationed with a unit of the railway army in Valašské Meziříčí, which, as he was pleased to find out, was only 190 miles from home. Throughout the first year of his service, he was hopeful that his girlfriend's acquaintances would help him get out of the barracks to become an employee in a computer center in Prague. Putting on a "foggy frame of mind, which dulls and doesn't hurt as much," he considered his army service as a frustrating intermezzo between school and real employment.[45] Unfortunately for him, the job did not work out and he got stuck in the army for full two years (and his letters end at the beginning of his second year, when he began a new phase as an NCO, so we don't know anything about this period).

[44] Václav Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek* (Praha: Věra Nosková, 2011), 2.
[45] *Ibid.*, 43.

Stationing soldiers far away from their hometowns was a deliberate strategy of the army. In part to facilitate good relations between the two parts of the country and sentiments of national belonging, in part to prevent men from escaping the barracks without a permit, the army developed the practice of sending Czechs to Slovakia and vice versa for their service. While some of my interviewees made lifelong friends with their counterparts, letters and memoirs reveal that many soldiers did not like the practice. Karel, for example, was not at all pleased to be sent to Trenčín, a small city in western Slovakia, hours away from home by train. "I felt like crying when they told me, but I couldn't because the boys would laugh at me… I'll do everything so as not to stay there long, so they would kick me out," he wrote in one letter.[46] In another, he wrote in big capitalized letters, "WE HAVE TO ENDURE THIS, and show them that we are stronger."[47] Like Karel's, many of these accounts shore up traditionally masculine values of endurance, strength, control, and emotional detachment to cope with the separation.

The practice of sending conscripts across the country profoundly backfired when it comes to Czech perceptions of east Slovak men, *východňári*. Perhaps because of their proximity to large communities of Roma population, Czech conscripts considered them uneducated, unintelligent, brutally violent, loud, clannish, and difficult to understand (the languages spoken in East Slovakia are a combination of Polish, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Slovak and Hungarian). The theme is most prominent in Vokálek's letters, though it permeates all of them. According to Vokálek, East Slovaks were all of the above; and more. Some of his commanders were *východňári*. He complained that they can "only shout and curse," eating their food with a spoon, instead of the fork and knife, while scolding conscripts for doing the same. Vokálek was offended most by the fact that they were less educated than him, calling them the "biggest morons." He often found something derogatory to comment on their bodies, as if the way their bodies looked reflected

[46] KH, letter n. 1.
[47] KH, letter n. 6.

their level of intelligence: "a giant figure, the look of a local fool Vincek…this man, who looks like a cattle herder" (*pohůnek od krav*).[48] Rather than uniting men under a common umbrella of military masculinity, the service, at least in some cases, created divisions among men along the lines of ethnicity, exacerbating tensions between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

Fit and unfit bodies

The first phase of the military training, when it is most strenuous, made soldiers aware of their bodies and their limits. The goal of the phase of the drill is to completely crush the conscripts and gradually build them up again as strong, proud soldiers. That goal, however, did not quite materialize. The morning warmup exercises were intense and made many, even seasoned sportsmen like Karel, "want to vomit," and left them with an aching body – even though unlike other soldiers, Karel was ushered into a sauna and a massage therapist immediately after the physical training, luxury other serviceman never even heard of. After a session in a weight-lifting gym, which was the first one he had ever been to, Karel was "quite surprised how strong I am," he wrote to his wife, proud of himself. He also lifted 60kg worth of weights, something he never thought he would be able to do. "I did it! But don't think it was easy for me. 60 was ok, I hardly did 65, and didn't lift 70."[49] He enjoyed the physical strain; playing soccer with his fellow soldiers on off days, he was happy about "the stream of sweat" on his body.

Bodily discomfort was supposed to part of the training, but it is clear that for Vokálek it did not evoke any sense of satisfaction. He grudgingly submitted to the physical training at first. The drill was demanding and exhausting, not least because the surroundings of Valašské Meziříčí is hilly and most of the drill happened in late autumn and early winter when the weather

[48] Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek*, 10.
[49] KH, letter n. 6.

was unpleasant. Running around the hills in full gear, he remembered backpacking with his girlfriend in a similar landscape but, as he wrote, "this was no tramping. You could only stop on command, sweating like a pig, buckled up by all sorts of straps, and scolded all the time. Then back [to the barracks], get it all off and eat lunch. It's weird but I'm not even hungry, maybe because I'm so pissed."[50] If he was ironic and angry about some experiences, he realized the limits of his body through others. On a particularly cold and rainy day in November, the unit spent six hours outside, running, crawling, and carrying the wounded. Everyone got soaked and tired quickly. He wrote, "when I got exhausted [*byl jsem turch*], and there was still no end in sight, I just gave up, lying in the wet snow and totally didn't care."[51] He did at one point admit to being glad that he was getting in a better shape but that was the first and last time he would mention anything related to fitness. Unlike Karel's above, Vokálek's notion of masculinity does not seem to have been located along the lines of the fit/unfit body at all.

Bodily discomfort did not lie only in the physical strain of the military drill, but also in adjusting to the life in the in the barracks. Richard's letters reveal that the food was not bad – a little too spicy for his taste – but there was too little of it; they only received a couple of pieces of rolls for breakfast and ate lunch seven hours later, so he was very hungry all the time. He did not like that he had to spend all day wearing boots that "one can't even unfasten. It feels great, especially at the end of the day you feel as if you were standing in a pile of shit." But by far the "worst thing is that we can't really wash ourselves. I haven't bathed once, I just wash myself up in cold water in the bathroom."[52] The Ministry of Defence was aware that material conditions in the barracks ran contrary to the desired standards of hygiene (and alleged civilizing mission of

[50] Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek*, p. 13.
[51] *Ibid., p.* 22.
[52] RA, April 7, 1982.

the military mechanism).[53] In the sweltering heat of the summer, feeling dirty, sweaty, and hungry, he often dreamt about escaping the barracks: "It's so depressing. How great it would be to get out only in shorts and a shirt, go to the pool, play volleyball, sunbathe."[54]

While in the first few weeks, both Karel and Richard were adjusting to the physical demands of their life in the army, after a few months both became concerned about getting fat. "I have, gradually but surely, begun to gain weight," Karel wrote to wife a few months into the service, warning her that their weight measurements would be exactly opposite by the time he would get released from the army.[55] While it was more likely muscle build-up at this point, he still seems to have thought it was fat, which he understood as problematic. His weight resurfaced later again and again a few months before his release. The volleyball trainings had been suspended because there were not enough soldiers to cover guard and other duties around the barracks, and working as a cook, Karel had gained 5 pounds. "When I look at myself, I am becoming an old fat dad [*fotrovatím*]. Not that I am getting a pot belly, God not, that looks good, but my hair is thinning…[but] I will try to make myself sexually attractive when I get home. We'll be on a weight loss program together…".[56] The word *fotrovatět* suggested a growing belly due to decreased physical activity and increased level of bodily comfort, but it also implied a loss of initiative, determination, and moral strength in men. So, while Karel talked about his body, he also addressed a bag of meanings associated with masculinity, suggesting that he needed to ramp them up after the service. Interestingly, was not worried that his growing body was making him less of a soldier; by referencing his sexual attractiveness, Karel bypassed the military discourse of fit bodies as a basis of the country's military defensiveness drew, instead, on the official anti-

[53] Taking a shower once a week seems to have been the case in most barracks; most men I talked to would have a story about a fellow soldier who would not to bathe at all – to the dismay of the rest of the men living in the room – prompting the men to devise various tricks to get the given man to the shower.
[54] RA, May 25, 1982.
[55] KH, letters n. 13 and 28.
[56] KH, letter n. 79.

obesity discourse. If Karel's formative years were spent during the boom of the anti-obesity campaign, the message seems to have been well received.

Karel was not the only one worried about his decreasing fitness. After he became a platoon commander – against all regulations; as a category D soldier, he was not allowed to command – Richard's life got busier and more sedentary. His responsibility was to create daily program for the soldiers – schedule their morning exercises, military trainings of all sorts, guard duties, giving out both short- and long-term permissions to leave the barracks – check on his platoon that they do all the work they were assigned, and deal with all the paperwork. He did gain weight and "became quite lazy", he wrote in a letter shortly before the end of the service, worrying, just like Karel above, that he was turning into the "fat daddy" *fotrovatím*. So he used his privileges as a commander and scheduled a run for his soldiers: "Whenever we wanted to run away from the barracks, I would schedule a run up [the nearby hill] in full gear," .[57] What is interesting about both Karel and Richard is that their sense of self had almost nothing to do with their soldierly body. Similarly to Karel, Richard's worry was not that he was becoming less of soldier; instead, both men viewed their bodies through the prism of their civilian selves.

Mandatory military service did not get soldiers in a better shape. Measuring paratroopers and tank crews in various stages of their service through a series of step tests revealed an overall stagnation, even decrease.[58] While the step test results significantly improved by the end of the third month in service for both groups, they radically dropped in the months afterwards, deeper for the tank crews: paratroopers left the army with the same index as they came in with, tank crews left with a worse one.[59] If the 1970 inspections of military drill in randomly selected units across the country can indicate anything about the physical training of troops in the

[57] Interview with Richard A., Ostrava, August 5, 2016.
[58] Step test is a cardiovascular endurance test developed at Harvard.
[59] Jan Skalický, "Změny indexu step-testu u vojáků v základní službě v průběhu dvouletého výcviku," In *Vojenské zdravotnické listy* 37, no. 1 (1968): 3-9.

normalization period, they only suggest what the inspectors called "insufficient attention" to the physical fitness of soldiers.[60] Testimonies from those who served as NCOs in the early 1980s – a period in which the Party radically stepped up its fitness campaign – suggest that there were hardly any models of physical fitness training for NCOs to follow to create appropriate physical training lessons for the troops. The army itself explained decreasing fitness of conscripts and soldiers by a variety of arguments, including labeling conscripts "mommy boys," and declaring that as a result of the introduction of new military technology, which was "changing the role of commanders, who focus on soldiers' technical skills," the amount of physical training of soldiers was "significantly reduced."[61]

The body as a tool of agency

The complicated relationship of conscripts to the army is partly explained by what scholars have noted as the contradiction between conscripts' image of military life, one of action-packed soldiering, and reality, in which there is boredom and a lot of "activities of domestic nature."[62] In addition to cleaning boots, tidying up beds, arranging clothes neatly in soldier's lockers (and being chastised for not doing so), and cleaning the barracks, many Czechoslovak men remember having to get up at 4 am to peel potatoes before their daily program began.[63] As John Hockey writes, many of these activities are disciplinary mechanisms of no combat value, serving only to instill a sense of discipline. Hockey and other scholars

[60] In fact, it seems that the political training took up more space in the soldiers' program than physical training. MNO, MNO 1970, kr. 117, cj. 27/1. Rozbor výsledků komplexní prověrky výchovy a výcviku u 3. Motostřelecké divize Antonína Zápotockého ve dnech 19.-25. října 1970, Zápis o výsledcích komplexní prověrky stavu výcviku a výchovy 1td provedené komisí ministerstva národní obrany 5.-11. října 1970.
[61] MNO, 11-8, karton 74, Model organizace a řízení tělesné výchovy a sportu v Čsl. lidové armádě.
[62] John Hockey, *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1986), 51.
[63] They also remembered painting the grass of the training ground (*buzerplac*) green, repainting the inside walls the barracks so they would look clean, and putting up notice boards with political pamphlets before an official visit of a major or a general. This only exacerbated the already negative view of their commanders. "It was all total madness," my father would say.

conceptualize this as feminization of junior soldiers for their later re-masculinization; according to Aaron Belkin, activities such as bed-making are an example of the inherent contradictions in military masculinity, which encapsulates both feminine and masculine traits, submission and power.

Conscripts often respond by asserting their autonomy and power through their bodies. In fact, as Joanna Bourke claims, conscripts and soldiers are left only with their bodies to use as a tool of agency.[64] When Karel was told he would be stationed in Spišská Nová Ves (Spiš), about 15 hours away by train from his family, he "decided to strike" in order to protest the transfer. He had injured his finger playing volleyball, so he used that as an excuse not to work, and just watched TV and slept.[65] Shoring up the value of endurance in hardship, something that also implied bodily composure, rational detachment and emotional restraint, he drew on the masculine repertoire to assert their agency in the face of both the news of being stationed hours away, and the service more generally.

Vokálek was the strongest in condemning the military service and most vocal in his opposition to it. He wrote of the "weekly treadmill of stupidity",[66] "clowning around with weapons,"[67] and often of the "meaninglessness" or "hopelessness" of the days. He was repulsed by the obligation to move around the barracks "in a formation."[68] Having to deal with disorganized command, orders he considered nonsensical, and the stereotype of the drill, particularly the endless practice of marching and timed changing of clothes, he wrote that "[i]t feels like a combination of a prison and a madhouse here, sometimes I feel like I've become a

[64] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[65] KH, letter n. 6.
[66] Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek*, 9.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

character in one of Kafka's novels."[69] This vivid imagery of a closed space, in which a mass of men are forced to coexist, suggests his refusal to be reduced to a mere body.[70]

Vokálek seems to have resisted the drill whenever he could. As time progressed, instead of working through the mandatory morning exercises his unit simply ran or walked across the *buzerplac* (literally "botherplace," the training grounds) and hid behind a building or inside a garage, passing time before breakfast by smoking and talking; Vokálek himself increasingly did not participate in the mandatory morning exercises at all and just slept through it. He slacked during marching practice, did not wear his gas mask during the chemical attack training so he could breath, sunbathed instead of working around the barracks, and learned to avoid being seen when it was his time to do duties of any sort, most often by hiding in the attic of the building where some of the soldiers' lockers were located. Sometimes he would get yelled at (*pojeb*) for slacking but he did not care. He wrote: "A determined and experienced skiver [*salámista*] will be neither disturbed nor discouraged from his way of life, nor will his philosophy be shaken."[71] He did not have anything to lose, as he wrote, apart from being denied the permission to leave the barracks, which he did not get due to his superior's antipathy towards him anyway. While this discourse of pride in avoiding drill is to a certain extent performative – after all, the men had to learn the gestures and bodily postures to not only pass regular control exams but also to be able to become nonchalant in their daily performance of them – the consistency of slacking does, in part, explain the decreasing levels of fitness among conscripts and is quite striking. It shows that slacking and skiving were generated by the system and tolerated by commanders, who sometimes even joined in.

---

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[70] "The measure of the quality of a human being here is how well you march, whether you know regulations by heart, how well you say hello, do your bed, and stack your clothes, etc.," he wrote in one of the first letters, all bodily, mechanic activities. Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek*, 4.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

There were, of course, other ways Vokálek used his body to assert agency against his superiors, all of which are widespread across armies.[72] Feigning illness was one of them. When he eventually got sick, he willingly extended his days in bed: "[I]n civilian life I would of course not even bother" but here "he was as happy as a child" to be sick.[73] Finding a way to run out of the barracks through the "hole in the fence" (*every* barrack had one of those) to both get out and fetch alcohol was perhaps the most common way to defy orders. Strictly prohibited within the walls of the barracks, it happened almost every night nonetheless, making some of the days of physical training particularly difficult. Curiously, allegedly the most popular drink among soldiers was something that would be considered a drink for women: a sweet, fruit wine called "čučo." The scale of drinking is impossible to discern but the Party/state considered it such a widespread problem that it established anti-alcohol advising clubs within the army. A comparison of 134 Russian emigre soldiers in 1984 and surveys done in the US military revealed, however, that Soviet soldiers did not drink much more than US soldiers. What was different was that while both "appear to drink heavily, far fewer of the Soviet soldiers admitted to being drunk on duty than did American soldiers."[74]

Vokálek's own notion of masculinity was not embedded in his body, but in middle-class values. A part of it had to do with a notion of meaningful employment. "When we, engineers, clean the corridors, we have a lot, a lot of ideas; how many innovative things we'll give to this country; what the future of the land will be; Forward still, socialism…," he wrote in one of the

[72] Anders Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917-39* (Routlege, 2014); J. Hockey, *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1986); T. Shibutani, *The Derelicts of Company K* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978).
[73] Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek*, 34. The letters also mention injury as well as self-injury of soldiers on numerous occasions, from attempted suicides and hazing within the barracks and fights in pubs and serious injuries during the railway construction. In 1967, for example, the army reported 278 deaths and 397 serious injuries, and there were 18 suicides among new soldiers.
[74] Timothy Colton and Thane Gustafson (eds.), *Soldiers and the Soviet state: Civil-Military Relations from Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 42.

letters a few months into the service.[75] This could be read as a commentary on his frustrations with the popular perceptions of the socialist authorities suppressing creativity and education, which would in some way confirm Oates-Indruchova's notion of a "void" of middle class masculinity. But it could also suggest that employment, getting things accomplished and getting paid for it, still constituted a meaningful endeavor for him. When the entire company was sent to work on a reconstruction of a railway for a few months, Vokalek's references to the nonsensicality of the training disappeared.[76] He was content to be doing meaningful work, outside of the barracks, almost proud of the hard work he and his fellow soldiers put in.

Intimacy

One of the most interesting aspects of the letters was their themes of intimacy and embodied emotionality. It is often assumed that donning of the uniform serves the purpose of making both soldiers and civilians believe that it erases all forms of previous masculinities, leaving only space for the transformation of men into killing tools.[77] Soldiers' letters show, however, how their civilian lives and concerns – being fathers, husbands, workers – influenced their life in the military. Working on letters sent by soldiers in WWI, Michael Roper urges historians to engage emotional aspects of masculinity as aspects of their personalities, resulting

[75] Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek*, 76.
[76] The railway army was used almost exclusively for the construction and maintenance of the railway network in the country but any soldier could spend weeks and even months working at a construction site or in agriculture. According to the material of the Ministry of Defense from the late 1960s, daily about 2,000 soldiers were sent out of the barracks for the needs of the national economy, about 8,500 soldiers were released early due to the needs of the national economy; and 11,000 soldiers daily were transferred to do maintenance work on and around the barracks "due to the insufficient numbers of civilian personnel in these services." The acute need for maintenance work within and around the barracks was exacerbated by the lack of investment in reconstruction; according to the Ministry, about 20 % of the army buildings were built before 1900 and had not been reconstructed since. "Text připravený náčelníkem gen. štábu Rusovem pro projev M. Dzúra v branném a bezpečnostním výboru NS" In *Vojenské otázky Československé reformy 1967-1970* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR; Brno: Doplněk, 1996-1999).
[77] Tom Smith, "Narrative and the Body in Uniform: East German Military Masculinities in Claus Dobberke's Ein Katzensprung and Jurgen Fuchs's Fassonschnitt." *The Modern Language Review* 110, no. 1 (2015): 204-221.

from and sustaining both their interpersonal and familial relationships and their own sense of sanity on the front.[78]

Karel and Iva's exchanges about their intimate life were sometimes flirtatious, often complicated, and occasionally anxiety-driven. Karel thought about sex and marital fidelity a lot in the first few weeks. He reassured his wife that he would not cheat on her, claiming that he did not want to "have anything to do with Slovak women. […] You do not have to worry," he repeated twice.[79] His statements betray contemporary notions of men's sexuality: instinctual and impossible to restrain even if under the imperative of marital fidelity.[80] A few weeks later he wrote, however: "You may get angry or be sad about it, but I do not miss it yet. I don't know why it is so, whether I got unused [to sex before the birth of their daughter] when I was home the last 2-3 months or whether it's happened here; but I do not miss it yet."[81] He was more worried about his second year of service when, he seemed to assume, both him and his wife would have their desires increased.

While the first few months were those of tolerated absence, later months of the service were spent by intricate calculations of his wife's period. Following the advice of medical experts to avoid sexual intercourse during the days of women's periods, the couple sent messages back and forth about when she would "have it." Getting out of the barracks for a weekend was a frustrating project even without having to calculate women's periods because superiors granted permissions based on what soldiers perceived as unclear and unfair rules, clustered under "good soldiering." But even when a conscript obtained a permission to leave the barracks for the

[78] Michael Roper, "Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History," *History Workshop Journal* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 57–72; Michael Roper, "Maternal Relations: moral manliness and emotional survival in letters home during the First World War," In *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).
[79] KH, letter n. 1, emphasis orig. Trenčín, where he was first stationed, had a big textile industry (it was dubbed The City of Fashion) and a woman to man ratio of 3:1.
[80] Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*.
[81] KH, letter n. 6, emph. original.

weekend, trips home were tricky and sometimes meaningless because of the vast distance between the barracks and home. This couple still considered it worthwhile to add another complication to the planning.

A year and a half into his service, Karel dissuaded his wife from visiting him, which she wanted to do because "she couldn't do without 'it'" any more by calculating when the next opportunity for them to see each other would be. A few of months later, the couple was calculating again. Karel's mother offers him a *chata* for a week during his March vacation. He immediately consults the calendar only to find out that "it" falls on the same dates as his vacation, thus he contemplates canceling the vacation: "After all, I wouldn't want to come home in vain." He was excited about the prospect of spending a few days with his wife and daughter, of course, "but the most important thing is when you get it (if you get it). It is foremost, we have to make the plans based on that. Well, we don't have to, but we should."[82] These calculations provide a fascinating view into a married couple's negotiations about sex and reveal the openness with which desires were communicated among the spouses. They demonstrate that the late 20th century openness about sexuality – and late socialist public debates about normative sex – made their impact on the population.

Richard's letters are progressively filled with passages describing embodied emotionality. He missed his wife and daughter, and desperately wished he could go back to live a regular family life. "It is such a long misery for me here. […] And it's all for nothing. I'm standing here like a dick and what do I get from it? Nothing," expressing his frustration at the meaninglessness of guard duty.[83] In the middle of a letter a couple of months into the service he wrote, "I MISS you both!...I can't even see anything [that I'm writing]. Is it even possible that such a man (at least a man this old) could cry so much?" Echoing other men's perception of a complete loss of

[82] KH, letter n. 66.
[83] RA, August 23, 1982.

freedom, the transition to military life was difficult for him. He wrote that he was "constantly in a state of inner tension"[84] and he "doesn't feel himself," his anxiousness causing a lasting stomach ache.[85] Both him and his wife attributed the stomach ache to his stress of being separated from the family.

In her book on male bodies, Susan Bordo writes that "Men are not supposed to be guided by the rhythms of bodily cycles, susceptible to hormonal tides. They are not supposed to be slaves to sexual moods and needs, to sexual and emotional dependency."[86] Army officers and some politicians considered the emotionality of conscripts a result of the men's feminized upbringing. A member of the defense and security committee of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly claimed that "commanders attribute this situation to the family and school. They say that contemporary family and school pampers children too much, giving them everything they want, and the school has not yet found an efficient form of education towards independence and the ability to face difficulties."[87] The proper school to transform "mommy boys" into composed men, magazines advocated, was the army. The emotional charge of the letters is remarkable, in my view, in that it shows the ways Richard negotiates the tension between prescriptive notions of masculinity as rational and detached and embodied experience.

The negotiation of reticence and emotional expression is most revealing in his passages declaring love for his wife. While he did it in every letter, he nevertheless claimed that he would not be able to say anything in person because he would be embarrassed. "You know, I think it's silly to tell you daily how much I like you… It would be humiliating. I've always thought that it's enough to show one's feelings through actions, so a woman would see if a man liked her or

---

[84] RA, May 25, 1982.
[85] RA, June 19, 1982.
[86] Susan Bordo, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1999), 19.
[87] Session of the Federal Assembly on March 22, 1981, http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1981fs/slsn/stenprot/012schuz/s012020.htm

not."[88] He thought his inability to express his emotions was a result of his personality and his upbringing, not linking it to social(ist) constructions of masculinity as rational, detached, and controlled. Wondering why it was that he could write about his feelings but not talk about them, he did not resolve the issue, only called himself "stupid" and hoped that "the service will, indeed, make a man out of me," in that it would help him learn how to express his feelings.[89]

Unlike Karel's letters above, Richard's are much more explicit about his sexual desires and show how he negotiated between his embodied experiences and ideals of masculinity. Seeing *Coming Home*, the 1978 Hollywood movie about a disabled Vietnam War veteran, his wife made her "realize how much I desire you." She wrote that she wanted to be caressed and kissed by him and snuggled up close to him. The letter set the tone for the rest of the correspondence, exchanging passages of longing and sensual fantasies. Looking at his wife's picture he had on the desk in his officer, he wrote in one letter, "[I] feel excited all over my body. And particularly in certain parts…," further describing his erotic memories and fantasies. He did not feel exactly comfortable writing those lines however, he was "embarrassed" about them. "I think I should restrain myself a little, but I can't. I have to write what are, I hope for both of us, beautiful things. They are things that are just ours, after all."[90] He later questions whether his desires are healthy: "As for sex, I think about it the minute I sit down to write you a letter… Sometimes I think its's not normal."[91] The moral taboos around sex as a pleasurable, sensual activity, taboos that had only shortly before begun to be discussed publicly, were channeled in this passage, and his negotiations of the ethics of sexual desire. Similarly to the negotiations of his love declarations, he did not resolve the issue. As the time passed, he wrote in one of the later letters, he got used to the abstinence, nothing much would made him excited anymore.

[88] RA, May 31, 1982.
[89] RA, June 22, 1982.
[90] RA, May 15, 1982.
[91] RA, June 5, 1982.

The moments of intimacy and open discussions of sexuality in the letters seem to be new. This openness about marital sex is striking and perhaps new. While scholars have shown that in soldiers' testimonies sex is everywhere, but it is mostly prostitution or casual sex. Rather discreetly discussed in earlier decades, it became graphically detailed in the era of the Vietnam War.[92] These letters, however, are rather unique in that they reveal spouses' discussions of when to have sex, how to plan it, and what their desires are. Coming after the wave of the 1960s sexual revolution, and the loosening of the public discourse about sex in its aftermath, these letters open a new vista into masculinity and sexuality. The back and forth in these letters reflects the changes brought about by the sexual revolution in the East, and it also shows how soldiers' embodied selves were linked to their civilian identities as husbands and lovers.

Conclusion

This chapter showed the failure of the Czechoslovak military to construct male soldierly bodies and prepare them for fight. While the Czechoslovak military was never at the top of social prestige, the normalization-era pacifism and peace as well as occupation of the country caused its legitimacy to plummet. Military drill, intense in the weeks of basic training, relaxed afterwards, and male bodies grew less fit over the course of the mandatory military service. Moreover, while the army, a "school of the nation," is supposed to create a patriotic sense of unified masculinity transcending class and racial hierarchies, the Czechoslovak military seems to have exacerbated divisions along lines of nationality and class, rendering East Slovaks marginalized, and educated, middle-class conscripts frustrated at the disrupted hierarchy of class privilege.

However, army service encouraged men to use their bodies as a site of agency, made men aware of their bodily limits, and sometimes generated new, unexpected experiences of their

[92] Samuel Hynes, *A Soldier's Tale: Bearing the Witness to the Modern War* (Penguin: 1997).

bodies. Men were concerned about growing body fat and decreasing fitness not as soldiers, but as husbands and sportsmen. They viewed and experienced their bodies through civilian discourse of physical attractiveness or sport performance. Many explicitly rejected the military drill, avoiding or shirking military training and other obligations, contributing to the decreasing rates of physical fitness.

Relatedly, staying in contact with their families, men did not discard their civilian selves, on the contrary, their civilian selves seem to have prevailed over the military. One of the surprising themes of the letters analyzed in this chapter is their emotionality. While men, soldiers in particular, are supposed to be guarded against emotional outbursts, men often expressed their frustrations, anger, sadness, depression, or love and longing in their letters, in one case physically manifesting these emotions in the body. As well, the passages expressing intimacy and sexuality show that men negotiated their emotional selves and normative prescriptions of masculinity.

Between Shame and Pride: Experiences of Pregnancy and Childbirth

Where the early socialist regimes saw in women mainly workers, the late socialist regimes saw primarily mothers. Czechoslovak authorities defined reproduction as the highest form of self-realization, appealed to women's "natural" desires to have children, and mobilized their reproductive roles in order to reverse falling birth rates. Reproduction would create new labor force and reinvigorate aging population and provide evidence of the superiority of the late socialist good life.

Public discourse focused on women's maternal roles as a vehicle for the creation of a new generation.[1] Czechoslovak authorities defined medical care for women as the care for the healthy development of the population and proudly displayed low infant mortality as a symbol of excellent care provided to women. At the beginning of the 1970s, they renamed the unit of the care for the mother and the child within the Ministry of Health Care for a unit for the care of the new generation.[2] Media representations advice literature was saturated with images of mothers with children and childcare facilities. But where was the pregnant woman herself? How did women experience their pregnancies? What conditions did the Czechoslovak state create for childbirth?

Much scholarly work has focused on the reappraisal of women's roles as mothers and the promotion of pronatalist policies in the post-Stalinist period. Scholars have observed that in many countries citizens were able to 'take the carrot but largely evade the stick' of reproductive policies, evading the call of pronatalism and changing demographic trends and sexual behaviors

[1] Alena Heitlinger, *Reproduction;* Barbara Havelková, "The three stages of gender"; Sharon Wolchik (ed.), *Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985).
[2] M. Břešťák, "Zkvalitníme péči o ženu," *Československá gynekologie* 50, no. 3 (1985): 161-163. Břešťák was the head obstetrician and gynecologist at the Ministry of Health Care.

from below.[3] The restrictions on abortion was a particularly complicated issue, however. Nowhere was the surveillance of women's bodies as far-reaching as in Ceausescu's Romania. Gail Kligman's study of what she called the duplicitous politics of reproduction revealed a complex mechanism of propaganda, monitoring, statistics, and surveillance deployed to control the population, with doctors serving as mediators between state policies and women's lives. While many women were able to end pregnancies, the policies had disastrous results, increased women's mortality, and strengthened as well as disrupted families, friendship and social networks as women.[4]

The system of maternal care itself has received almost no attention. Donna Harsch's study of postwar East Germany showed that issues of reproduction were important to the state already in the 1950s. The East German state created welfare benefits, campaigned against domestic births and midwifery, and discouraged the use of contraception, intervening in the sphere of reproduction just as much as its late socialist counterpart.[5] Annette Timm observed a shift from an emphasis on sexual duty to the promotion of reproductive happiness and healthy lifestyles, arguing that East German authorities saw in high birth rates not just a matter of replenishing the population but also a symbol of socialist good life. But Alena Heitlinger's 1987 study of Czechoslovak maternal health care system remains the only complex work on reproduction, pregnancy and childbirth in a socialist country.

While the Czechoslovak health care system generally and obstetrics/gynecology more specifically were underfunded throughout the socialist period, Czechoslovak ob/gyn underwent a profound development in the course of the last two decades of socialism. In addition to

---

[3] Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*; Dan Healy "The Sexual Revolution"; Jakub Rákosník and Radka Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu: Populační růst a instituce manželství v českých zemích 1918-1989 (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2016).*

[4] Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[5] Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 133.

developments in medical technology, these changes included the formation of girl gynecology as a new discipline, the beginnings of IVF and surrogate motherhood as new methods of treating sterility, and the introduction of new methods of childbirth. Throughout, doctors enjoyed an unchallenged authority and all changes to the obstetric practice came largely from them.

Drawing on an analysis of expert discourse and interviews with four women about their experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, this chapter shows that despite the emancipatory and mother-centered rhetoric of the regime, Czechoslovak women's experiences were of secondary concern to physicians.[6] While some women welcomed a lack of oversight during pregnancy, medicalized and technocratic approach to childbirth left women with unpleasant, if not rather traumatic, memories. The chapter further shows that women had ambivalent experiences of pregnancy, all experiencing their pregnancies in different ways.

Reproduction and the Czechoslovak state

In response to the "catastrophic population trends," the Czechoslovak government launched a complex system of measures to promote higher birth rates over the course of he 1960s and early the 1970s.[7] In 1967, similarly to countries elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, Czechoslovakia implemented protective labor legislation, banning women from a number of jobs deemed unsuitable to women's bodies. When first implemented the law was met with a mixed reaction from women. On the one hand, representatives of women's organizations as well as many women praised it as an expression of the socialist care of women's bodies. On the other hand, many women protested being transferred to allegedly safer but less paid jobs, and denied night shifts, losing extra money for working at night.[8] Employers often did not abide by the law,

[6] Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 218.
[7] qt. from the 1968 "Program společenské pomoci rodinám s dětmi," in Rákosník a Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu,* 60.
[8] Hilda Scott, *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences From Eastern Europe* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974).

however, and many women continued working in unsafe conditions or doing hard manual labor anyway. In the mid-1970s, ten percent of pregnant workers worked in forbidden jobs and nine percent of employers allegedly claimed that women themselves requested to do the work. At the shoe factory Svit Gottwaldov, for example, out of nearly 13.000 women employees over a thousand of them were pregnant at any given time, but only 332 transferred to a job deemed safe for pregnant women.[9] Moreover, pregnant women were not considered "good" workers, disrupting work ethic, increasing company expenses and lowering their profits.

In 1972, the state introduced a set of welfare benefits to improve the conditions of young families: a 2000 Czk benefit for every live birth (*porodné*), another benefit for families with children, and extended the paid maternity leave from one to three years, even though this was conditioned, similarly to what Lynn Haney found in Hungary, by the demonstration of "appropriate care."[10] (It was only in 1984 that fathers were eligible to apply for the benefits.) Social workers checked whether women fulfilled hygienic standards of care, vaccinated their children, and created harmonious household conditions. The state also strove to improve conditions for young families, introducing loans to newlywed couples and constructing housing units. The measures increased benefit expenditures; by the end of the 1970s, the Czechoslovak state spent about 4% of its budget on various family benefits and 7% on services directly related to families with children.[11] These pronatalist measures, as Annette Timm wrote, were not simply measures to create the new labor force; high birth rates were also a symbol of state legitimacy and the competition with the West.[12]

Among the consequences of the law were a deepening gender segregation of the labor market and shifting attitudes towards pregnant employees.

[9] Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 60. Trade union material often mentions that employers often chose to pay extra for "difficult work conditions" instead of making workplace conditions safer.

[10] Lynn Haney, *Inventing the Needy*.

[11] For more on the normalization-era pro-family policies see Rákosník and Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu,* 59-74.

[12] Annette Timm, *The Politics of Fertility*, 257-291.

Marriage counselling centers were being set up across the country, providing psychotherapy and legal advice for couples as well as educating young Czechoslovaks on issues of "responsible parenthood." (Though sessions educating Czechoslovaks on parenthood were not very popular; an experiment mandating engaged couples to attend sessions of the counselling center failed due to what city officials saw as "disregard for being advised."[13]) Czechoslovak sexologists advocated reproduction as a tool to eliminate the "mounting coupled boredom" that allegedly stood behind the sharply rising divorce rates.[14] But over the course of the 1970s, demographers found, the Czechoslovaks began actively planning their family life and many did not want large families. By the 1980s, many found maternity benefits, at four times lower than the average wage, too inadequate, housing construction was too slow, more than half of young families lived in multigenerational households, and material conditions of households stagnated. Single mothers, whose numbers were on the rise, were particularly hard hit by the pro-family policies as well as continued cultural stigmatization of singledom.[15] Czechoslovak birth rates were falling again. That the state did not launch another pronatalist campaign was a result of increasing economic difficulties as well as, perhaps, doubts about the legitimacy of the normalization regime.

The 1970s pronatalist policies may have signified a shift from the previous years of socialism but they illuminate that a large degree of continuity in the Czechoslovak discourse on reproduction throughout the 20th century. In the early 20th century, Melissa Feinberg writes, based on her analysis of abortion debates "tropes of family, duty and responsibility were [deeply] embedded in Czech political culture."[16] At the end of the socialist period, the nuclear family had

[13] qt. in Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 212.
[14] Plzák qt in Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 188.
[15] Šárka Rámišová, "Podporované, či opovrhované?: Životní úroveň svobodných matek v období normalizace," *Paměť a dějiny*, n. 4 (2013): 40-47.
[16] Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 157.

not only been defined as the primary unit of the Czechoslovak socialist society but was also high on the list of values of individual Czechoslovaks. By the end of the 1980s, divorce rates soared but almost half of all women and 65% of men remarried, and only 6-7% of children were born out of wedlock, in a rather sharp contrast with similarly secularized East Germany, where a full third of children were born out of wedlock.[17] Given the widespread practice among Czechoslovak couples to get married as soon as they got pregnant, sociologists speculated that even some of those births were "motivated by the desire for marriage."[18]

Among the pronatalist measures introduced over the course of the 1960s and 1970s was the strengthening of access to abortion. Abortion was legalized in 1957, largely as a matter of public health and labor policies. Women, however, had to petition for abortion and defend their request in front of a committee consisting of a doctor and representatives from the public (usually a member of the regional administration or town hall and a local woman's organization representative). These abortion committees are often portrayed as a socialist measure to control women's bodies but were first proposed during the debates in the interwar period.[19] In fact, the Czechoslovak socialist discourse never presented abortion as a matter of women's individual choice.[20]

The first limit on abortion came a few years after its legalization, in 1962. It introduced a not insignificant fee for an abortion, the possibility that the father participates in the hearing, and limited a woman's application to her birthplace, which prevented women from petitioning in succession in multiple places – the changes were significant enough that abortion petitions

[17] Rákosník a Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu*, 167. For the statistics on East German birthrates, see McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*, 56.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] In the interwar period, Melissa Feinberg found, abortion was discussed in terms of social justice, and social and familial duty. Where opponents viewed abortion as a rejection of familial duty or religious codes, its social democratic as well as feminist proponents argued that the ban on abortion oppressed working classes. Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 138.

dropped by 21%, while miscarriages rose by 12.6%, some as self-induced abortions.[21] A more important change came in 1973. The circular of the Ministry of Health Care redefined abortion from the protection of women's health, the original reason that abortion was legalized, to a procedure that harmed women's health and threatened the development of the population.[22] That abortions were considered harmful to women's bodies was in part a result of Czechoslovakia's old technology and procedures, but it was also an ideological move to deter women from petitioning. The Ministry further increased the fee and encouraged committees to both make "more responsible" decisions about individual petitions and advise women on possibilities of adoption. Dudová argues that while abortion was considered a population policy measure – at least until the mid 1980s, when abortion was redefined as a women's rights issue and abortion committees were abolished – individual women's complaints about abortion committees, increasingly vocal throughout the 1970s and 1980s, reveal a growing understanding among women of abortion, and reproductive choices, in terms of their own bodies and lives.

None of the waves of abortion restrictions were complemented with expanded options of contraception, which effectively instituted abortion as a form of contraception for Czechoslovak women. The contraceptive pill was introduced in the country in 1967 but was both limited to married women who had already had two children and was available in a limited supply. Mostly because of its complicated availability, however, only 5 % of Czech women and 2% of Slovak women used the pill in 1977. Most women depended on an IUD called DANA, but DANA was unreliable, leading to a number of unplanned pregnancies (a woman who got pregnant on a DANA was granted an abortion automatically and did not have to go through the abortion committee). In any case, in 1979 contraception was used by 20% of women between 15 and 44

[21] Kateřina Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 118.
[22] Radka Dudová, *Interrupce v České republice: zápas o ženská těla* (Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2012), 67.

years of age,[23] by the late 1980s, about half of women surveyed by sexologists had used either the pill or DANA, the rest relied on condoms or their partners.[24]

The politics of sterilization, as one of the possible methods of contraception, reveals another continuity of the Czechoslovak reproduction policies throughout the 20th century – that of the eugenic discourse of quality population. The concept of "quality population" reemerged in the Czechoslovak demographic discourse at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. In order to "prevent a regression in social, economic, and cultural progress of the society," advocates originally proposed to include a range of groups in the project of eugenic control.[25] "Oligophrenics, asocials, alcoholics, psychopaths, and others" were all included in the initial discussions on sterilizations among population experts. According to the proposals, sterilizations would not be applied in full, but each case would be individually evaluated by a committee of sexology, genetics, psychiatry, and psychology experts.[26] It is not without importance that these debates took place at the peak of the Prague Spring, when not just the population but also experts felt free to openly discuss their concerns. While historians usually discuss Prague Spring in terms of liberalization, the population experts seized the opportunity of a freer atmosphere to call for the adoption of eugenic measures.

The "quality population" discourse had especially harmful repercussions for Roma women and individuals with disabilities.[27] Roma women were subjected to lectures aimed at limiting their birth rate, were offered monetary compensations for their sterilization, and undergo to involuntary sterilizations that were performed right after their childbirth (the sterilizations continued long into the post-communist period and are currently at the center of debates about

[23] Dudová, *Interrupce,* 68.
[24] Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 124.
[25] E. Dlhoš, "Závery z konferencie venovanej problematike sterilizácie žien a mužov," *Československá gynekologie* 33, no. 4 (1968): 302.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] Havelková, *The Politics of Gender Culture*; Dudová, *Interrupce*; Sokolová, *Cultural Politics*.

compensation).[28] Experts calculated that the amount the state paid as a sterilization incentive was less than the "cost" of "genetically damaged" children.[29] A study in 1975 reported that the population "explosion" of the Roma resulted in the "decreasing quality of the Gypsy population itself."[30]

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, further, the Ministry of Health Care established genetic advisory centers in all major cities across the country in order to closely monitor pregnancies that threatened to produce a child with a disability, and created a national genetic register that collected information on all persons with disabilities. Experts advised young couples to find out about each other's family genetic history before committing to getting married and avoid partners with hereditary baggage. But both the national registry and genetic counseling were unused. Reporting of congenital disabilities was not legally binding and doctors simply did not report all cases, and genetic counselling was unused. While there is no official data about the sterilization or involuntary contraception given to (institutionalized) people with disabilities, the practice existed.[31]

The racialized aspect of reproductive measures found its further reflection in the ban on any relationships between Czechoslovaks and Vietnamese migrant laborers who came to the country in throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Analyzing approaches of the Czechoslovak government to the pregnancies of Vietnamese women, sociologist Alena Alamgir that pregnancies were a point of contention and negotiation between the Czechoslovak and Vietnamese governments. Some Vietnamese women came to the country pregnant despite

[28] While Western countries too sterilized "undesirable" populations, they phased out this practice by mid 1970s. In contrast, Czechoslovak doctors began to do so in the mid-1970s.
[29] Sokolová, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity,* 231.
[30] *Ibid*.: 220.
[31] "Nedobrovolnou sterilizací si kromě Romek nejspíš prošly i postižené ženy," https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/cesti-lekari-pry-sterilizovali-i-postizene-zeny-nedobrovolne.A131022_154854_domaci_hv (accessed March 26, 2019).

mandatory pre-departure medical examinations, and many more became pregnant while in Czechoslovakia. Alamgir does not provide any statistics on how many of these pregnancies resulted from Vietnamese/Czech relationships but claims that they developed despite the ban. Originally lenient, with the rapid increase in the number of Vietnamese workers in the country in the early 1980s Czechoslovak officials insisted that all pregnant women be sent back to Vietnam. Under the pressure of the Vietnamese embassy, Czechoslovak officials loosened their originally strict approach, agreeing to let pregnant Vietnamese workers stay in the country and receive health care until the end of their work contract.[32]

Just as the state strove to limit the Roma birth rates and reproduction of the disabled, and prohibited sex with the Vietnamese labor migrants, it created conditions for the treatment of sterility of Czechoslovaks. Allegedly about 15,000 couples sought expert help annually, around 10-15% of all couples. Czechoslovak experts researched causes and treatments of sterility throughout the socialist period, both male and female. As Kateřina Lišková uncovered, in the early socialist period sexology experts were convinced that female orgasm and conception were directly linked. Studying the mechanism of female orgasm and its links to marital satisfaction, they also claimed that women were only able to climax in an egalitarian relationship and advocated that couples adjust gender hierarchies within the family. Over the course of the 1960s, sexologists dropped the association of fertility to female orgasm and began exploring a variety of psychological, biological, social and anatomical explanations for infertility. Throughout the late

[32] Alena Alamgir, "Recalcitrant Women: Internationalism and the Redefinition of Welfare Limits in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Labor Exchange Program," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 73, n. 1 (2014): 133-155. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s there were mere hundreds of Vietnamese women works, the numbers rose significantly in the course of the 1980s. In 1982 there were 4000, by 1989 there were close to 9000 Vietnamese women workers in Czechoslovakia. With growing numbers of women, the Czechoslovak state shifted its policy of allocating benefits in case of pregnancy. a shift in amounts and ways of allocating benefits between: in 1970s presumably Vietnamese workers were allocated the same amounts as Czechoslovak women, in 1980s, Vietnamese women received not only significantly smaller amount per worker (rather than per child) but these were also sent to the Vietnamese government, and thus it is unclear if the workers themselves received the benefits. Eventually, ridding itself of all responsibility for the Vietnamese women workers, the government left all provisions for the care on enterprises that employed the respective workers (despite being the sponsor of the program).

socialism, Czechoslovak sexologists would prescribe relationships with hierarchical gender divisions as one of the solutions to healthy reproduction.[33]

When in vitro fertilization became available, Czechoslovak experts enthusiastically embraced it despite the fact that they lacked the technology to treat all who sought their help. In 1984, six years after the first "test tube" child, Louise Brown, was born, gynecologists from Brno proudly announced the birth of the first child conceived outside the woman's body in Eastern Europe. They also created plans for sperm banks to be set up in three or four major cities across the country. In conjunction with legal experts, they began discussing legal ramifications of IVF as well as of surrogate motherhood (though this option did not become available until after 1989). Donors to the sperm banks were supposed to be healthy, intelligent, and overall appropriate – the selection criteria focused especially on the level of education of candidates rather than their political loyalty; experts reportedly accepted only university educated donors. The reason was not be compromise the "genetic pool" of the country but, on the contrary, rejuvenate it.

The late socialist policies and expert intervention into the reproduction of the Czechoslovaks demonstrate an approach of both incentives and restrictions, care and control. They were underpinned by the ideology of a heteronormative family and advanced a racialized .

Maternity health care

We do not know almost anything about the ways in which women in any East European socialist country navigated the ob/gyn apparatus beyond matters of abortion, and how they experienced pregnancy and childbirth. The late socialist discourse was conspicuously silent on these matters, too. Despite motherhood being lauded as the noblest woman's function, pregnancy

[33] Lišková, *Sexual revolution, socialist style*, 122-157.

and childbirth were glossed over. Film representations often jumped from a love scene to an image of a mother pushing a stroller, and advice literature was limited to teaching women to get enough sleep, nutrition, and exercise. Women could learn about what changes to their bodies to expect from two books that were available in Czechoslovakia at the time, Stanislav Trča's *Čekáme děťátko* (We Are Expecting a Baby), and Josef Švejcar's *Péče o Dítě* (Childcare), but both books followed the standardized format of pregnancy literature and focused on biological and health aspects of reproduction.[34]

A health care law adopted in 1951, On the Unified Therapeutic and Preventative Care (103/1952 Sb.) unified a previously decentralized system of regional and city health establishments. Throughout the 1950s, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Health Care expanded its institutional infrastructure for the care of the pregnant woman and mother, establishing a specialized Ministry unit on the Care for the Mother and Child, which was tasked with preparing policy proposals, collecting statistics, improving the organization of work between research institutes and clinical units, and preside over education of physicians. The Ministry banned midwives in 1952, creating the profession of a "woman's nurse" instead, and mandated that all childbirths took place in a hospital so as to decrease maternal and infant mortality. While in 1955, hospital births amounted to 79.4%, by 1975 the number of children born in hospitals was 99.6%.[35] The state also expanded educational opportunities for doctors and nurses, increasing women's share among gynecologists/obstetricians from 21% in 1960, to 30% in 1980.[36]

Gynecology and obstetrics were plagued with a lack of resources, personnel and technology. As their agenda grew, particularly with the rising number of the births and new procedures and guidelines for the safeguarding of quality population over the course of the late

[34] Cynthia Paces, "Czech Motherhood and Fin-de-Siècle Visual Culture," *Gender in 20th Century Eastern Europe and the USSR* edited by Catherine Baker (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
[35] Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 199.
[36] *Ibid*. 80.

1970s and 1980s, doctors and nurses were extremely strained. The primary focus of the maternity care was on lowering infant mortality, which further compromised the goal of caring for women. As Heitlinger writes, "both supporters and critics of medical intervention have been for the most part interested in practices seen as harmful to the physical and mental health of babies; mothers' own feelings and satisfaction have been of no particular concern…"[37] At the same time, Heitlinger's study showed a relatively high degree of professional debate about and internal critique of the standards, level and approaches in maternal care.

Pregnancy

According to feminist scholars, pregnant women experience their selves as "refracted" or "split." Pregnant bodies disrupt notions of a rational public order, as they break boundaries between self and other, subject and object, mother and the child. Pregnant bodies become "public property," with strangers commenting on and touching women's bodies. They are objects of fascination, yet pregnancy is strictly separated from sexuality.[38] In her study of the ways in which London middle class women negotiated their changing bodies and selves during pregnancy, Luce Baily showed that many experienced pregnancy as a period where they were temporarily "excused" from previous narratives of self. Fulfilling their maternal roles, they felt more relaxed about the changing shape of their bodies, but they also worried about being reduced to the "body." While Baily found that women were allowed to take more space in public, Robyn Longhurst's study of New Zealand pregnant women revealed the opposite. Feeling ashamed that

[37] *Ibid*., 218.
[38] Iris Young, "Pregnant Embodiment: Subjectivity and Alienation," *Female Body Experience: 'Throwing Like a Girl' and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 46-62.

their "leaky bodies" breached social norms through sickness, frequent urinating or emotionality, women withdrew from the public space.[39]

Elena Neiterman, conceptualizing pregnancy as performance, examined what are the practices women engage in when they "do" pregnancy.[40] She argued that women "learn to perceive their bodies as pregnant" by changing their bodily routines and adopting new ways of eating, moving, or showering. These practices are not simply private, but scrutinized by the public – experts, coworkers, family members – as well as performed for them. This is particularly useful for women marginalized groups, whose "good" performance of appropriate habits can often elevate them on the social ladder.

Reconstructing experiences of Czechoslovak women more than 30 years later poses challenges. As Zdena, one of the women I interviewed, jokingly noted when we met: "your email scared me a bit to be honest."[41] I had written to her that I wanted to discuss how she experienced the changes to the body, whether she adjusted her lifestyle in any way, what she thought of the 1980s pregnancy dresses, what her experience with ob/gyn doctors and nurses were. She thought it was too long ago and she was worried she would not remember much. All four women I interviewed – Zdena, Iva, Beata and Eva – had children in the 1980s, Beata also in the 1990s. All four remembered pregnancies differently, ranging from enjoyable, to discomforting, to complicated, and often expressed ambivalence about it. Importantly, their stories cannot be understood as experiences per se but as narratives that have been refracted and shaped both by memory and by the ways in which they understand their lives today.

---

[39] Robyn Longhurst, "Breaking corporeal boundaries: Pregnant bodies in public places," in *Contested bodies*, ed. John Hassard and Ruth Holliday (New York: Routledge, 2003): 91-104.
[40] Elena Neiterman, "Doing pregnancy: pregnant embodiment as performance," *Women's Studies International* Forum, Vol. 35, issue 5 (Sept–Oct 2012): 372-383.
[41] Interview with Zdena C., Prague, July 24, 2018.

All women had one thing in common, however: while they compared their own pregnancies to those of their daughters or nieces today, claiming that women today have more joy in being pregnant, proudly carrying their bodies in public, none of them knew how their mothers experienced pregnancy or in what ways their own experiences differed from those of their mothers. Neither of the women discussed their pregnancies or childbirth with their mothers, nor did their mothers give them advice or tell them what to expect (once the baby came home from the hospital, on the other hand, grandmothers reportedly had lots of advice to give). Such silence underscores the "abjectness" of women's pregnant and childbearing bodies, and shows how much the possibility of speaking intimate matters of women's bodies have changed over the past few decades.

Iva does not like to remember and discuss her pregnancies. She got first pregnant when she was a senior in her vocational school. "I am so ashamed," she said repeatedly during our interview, "I knew it was not normal. Children should be planned, I knew that. It's such a failure. If you're in school, you should be in school, and not get pregnant." Being pregnant at the age of 18 was not exceptional, even though it was criticized by experts who claimed that young couples were not only unprepared to raise a child but also immature for married life, and would soon divorce. Iva decided to get an abortion, but soon got pregnant again, and another abortion was out of the question. "There was no pill available. I am a responsible person, I would go get them if the pill was there. We did use condoms. But I don't know how [I became pregnant]," she claimed, echoing complaints by many Czechoslovak women about the unavailability, or unreliability, of contraception. With nowhere to live and the prospect of being labeled an unmarried mother, she said the first few months of her pregnancy were "the worst period of my life. I never cried more." Her difficulty of accepting her pregnancy stemmed in large part from

complicated material conditions, the couple having nowhere to live and no money to start a family.

While Iva got more excited about expecting a baby when she got married and found a place to live with her husband's family, she was ambivalent about her body throughout both of her pregnancies. "I looked awful, I was so fat. And no-one would even tell me that I looked nice," she explained, suggesting that she wanted a confirmation that she was not only a mother but also a woman. Since she had been fighting her weight for years, being pregnant got enmeshed with being fat. At the same time, she thought that she looked nice in the pregnancy dresses since the style fit her body type. It was in moments when she was called, interpellated, on the street for looking big in the dress that she felt "ashamed of herself."[42]

Fashion came up also in my interview with Beata. With the first two pregnancies Beata said she "just need[ed] to endure" them. Not only was she sick long into her first two pregnancies, cultural norms also did not allow her to go to an open swimming pool and she complained that pregnancy dresses were the only available fashion choice. According to her, it was "impossible to be both pregnant and look good." Our interview revolved around fashion, sewing and adorning and issues of fashionable dress seemed important to her. Beata noted that clothing of pregnant women was supposed to be elegant yet inconspicuous but suggested that this dilemma was a false construction that she never faced. Similarly to the other women, she only had two items of pregnancy clothing in her wardrobe, so what to wear was never a question. "You just got sick of it all," she said of having to wear the same thing every day, adding that whatever fashion trends looked similar to pregnancy clothing afterwards, she refused to get them.

[42] Interview with Iva H., Hradec Králové, July 24, 2018.

Only Zdena said that she enjoyed her pregnancies, so much that once she gave birth to her first daughter, she realized that she "missed the belly" so much that she got immediately pregnant again. She and her partner had already decided that they wanted three children so there was no reason to wait. Unlike other women, Zdena did not marry her partner until their older daughters were both in kindergarten. She "felt an aversion to marriage." She did not consider herself a rebel against social norms, both her and her partner simply did not feel they needed "the paper." Until, that is, as a single mother she was visited by a social worker, who came to check in on her living conditions. The social worker was confused by the orderliness of her place, had "perhaps expected something…a squat of sorts," Zdena laughed. Around that time, her partner also found out that he was paying a lot of money in the "bachelor's tax," and the couple decided it was time to get married. Zdena was also the only one among the women who said she stroked her belly regularly, talked to her unborn babies, and gave them all working names. "I was a proud mother," she said with confidence and pride even thirty years later.[43]

Pregnant women were advised to pursue healthy lifestyles. Medical experts urged women to stop smoking and drinking alcohol during pregnancy, limit their coffee intake to one cup a day, eat a heathy diet, and exercise. Cautioning that pregnancy could lead to calcium deficiency, which affected both bones and teeth, they advised women to eat plenty of milk products. They told women to avoid fatty meals and recommended eating diet meats such chicken as well as lots of vegetables and fruits, and had magazines publish weeks' worth of recipes for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Women were supposed to wear loose clothing, good shoes, and low or no heels. Advising women to get plenty of exercise, experts recommended walking and swimming, cautioned against competitive or fast-paced sports such as biking or downhill skiing, and designed a series of exercises specifically for pregnant women.[44]

[43] Interview with Zdena C., Prague, July 24, 2018.
[44] Pavel Dráč et al., *Příprava ženy na mateřství* (Praha: MZdr, ÚZV, 1981).

But as Heitlinger notes, many women either could not follow or ignored much of the expert advice that was directed at them. They continued smoking and drinking coffee throughout their pregnancies, did not change their diets, and stopped breastfeeding much sooner than experts would have wanted them to.[45] Rational management of one's body sometimes proved impossible. During her second pregnancy, Beata was craving sweets so much she gained a lot of weight. She felt she was losing control over her body but "couldn't help it." When chastised by her gynecologist and shouted at by nurses, she started cheating during weight examinations.

Other women disrupted expectations in other ways. Zdena defied both expert advice and social norms when she went swimming: "I just went in, dressed in bikinis, at the end of my seventh month. [People] did give me weird looks." As an aerobics instructor, Eva exercised much more intensely than experts would advise. In the gym until the last month of her pregnancy, she said she never discussed it with her gynecologist. "I felt good, there was no need to discuss anything with anyone. I only stopped because the women in the gym didn't [like to see her exercise]," she laughed.

My interview with Eva, indeed, was permeated with her active life. She had a small belly and so she could continue with her life as before. Apart from instructing aerobics, she also had a regular job that often took her out of town, she and her husband were building a house and went on a two-week hiking vacation late in her pregnancy. "Did I *enjoy* that I was pregnant? No. [I] did not really care about it all that much," she added. Motherhood, she claimed, was not as venerated then as it is today (sic!), and while she was excited to be expecting a child, pregnancy did not occupy any special place in her life.

Czechoslovak health authorities both promoted that women have frequent examinations by gynecologists and highlighted the high frequency of visits as a sign of the superiority of

[45] Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 186, 237.

socialist maternity care over capitalism. Mothers who refused medical care or who failed to show up at an appointment were considered "potential risk" or even deviant.[46] But, as Zdena and Eva told me, the reality was more complicated. Since their pregnancies were without any complications, both got examined by their gynecologist only twice or three times throughout their pregnancies. Both women contended that there was no need to visit more often and were in fact glad for the lack of attention from doctors.

Beata, on the other hand, had to see her doctor regularly. She had to change jobs while pregnant because she and her husband moved cities when she was four months pregnant. Since, as she claims, it was known that she was expecting a child, she did not even try to get a job with the National Library of Slovakia where she wanted to work, she knew she would not be accepted there. She found a stint at a local factory, which she hated: "it was a horrible job… As I was pregnant, I could smell everything. There were thousands of odors there." She was also mandated to go to the factory gynecologist for all her examinations:

> because there were so many women, in the factory, [there were] many pregnant women, so I was sitting in a row. And I was like, new, new in [the city], new in the apartment, new at the factory, and because I wasn't very social, I didn't ask those strange women. It was a horror, an unfathomable one, and the doctor, I won't forget him ever, he was repulsive. And the nurse […] they looked at me as if I was an object. An enormously unpleasant feeling.[47]

That Beata went to a gynecologist for the first time when pregnant was more common in Slovakia and rural areas than in urban centers and the Czech part of the country. Feeling like a "thing" in a gynecologist office was probably not unusual, however. In the late 1970s, at the peak of the normalization baby boom, it was not uncommon for doctors to examine 12 women per hour, which did not allow for much personalized approach and women criticized it a decade

[46] *Ibid*., 178.
[47] Interview with Beata S., Velký Šariš, July 12, 2015.

later when Czechoslovak media began a public discussion about gynecology and obstetrics practice.[48]

Many pregnant women were reportedly not examined by doctors but by nurses and even medical students.[49] Experts criticized the practice, the exact opposite of the programmatic documents of the Czechoslovak ob/gyn, not least because they considered it one of the reasons for why risk pregnancies were not diagnosed early enough, followed through, and prevented. Which, in turn, they considered a reason for a high number of premature births, one of the reasons for why infant mortality stagnated in in the 1970s and the 1980s. Ultrasounds, as technology that needed to be imported from the West and therefore largely unavailable, were few and scarce; larger regional hospitals had one or two ultrasounds for the entire hospital, resulting in long waiting lists, smaller hospitals did not have them at all. As a consequence, the shift towards fetal imaging – the "fetal imperative," as Meredith Michaels and Lynn Morgan called it – that has had such a profound effect on the ways in which women understand and experience pregnancy as they are able to see and imagine the baby inside their bodies based on the ultrasound picture, did not get to Czechoslovakia until the 1990s.[50]

The finding that some women may have had rather infrequent visits to gynecologists as well as did not follow expert advice, whether they could not or did not want to, challenges the notion of medicalized pregnancy and medical control over women's bodies advanced in expert discourse. It also shows that women developed knowledge about their own pregnant bodies and acted on it. The narratives of pregnancy women gave me are certainly refracted through memory, but interestingly all four women remembered having different experiences: For Iva and Beata,

[48] Dušan Brucháč, "Lekárske vedenie pôrodu," *Československá gynekologie* 43, no. 2 (1978): 140-142.
[49] J. Sochor, "Koncepcia starostlivosti o tehotne ženy ohrozene predčasným pôrodom a jej realizácie," *Československá gynekologie* 39, no. 5 (1974): 349-351.
[50] Meredith W. Michaels and Lynn M. Morgan, et al. *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

pregnancy highlighted their bodies, frustrating their desired embodiment of conspicuous femininity. For Zdena, on the other hand, pregnancy allowed her to see her body through notions of motherhood. Finally, Eva saw her pregnancy through the prism of an active (sports)woman.

Childbirth[51]

When in February 1988 *Mladý svět* published a reportage from a Belgian hospital, which allowed fathers to be present during childbirth, women from all over the country flooded the magazine with inquiries and comments.[52] Many commented on whether they would be in favor of having their husband with them or not, some wondered why this practice had not been already implemented all over the country. In the process, many revealed their experiences of childbirth. A few of these stories recalled the "kindness" of doctors, of a nurse who "wiped off my forehead" or a cleaning lady "who offered and held a cup of tea." Others wrote of being ignored or treated badly: "I felt like last year's trash. When my contractions got strong, the nurse shouted at me 'breathe!' and kept reading," wrote one woman. Another complained that her labor was "accompanied by an undisguised and complete disinterest. I had to beg for the smallest help, all medical procedures were not only incredibly painful, but I was also ridiculed." Still another wrote that at the start of her labor she was told her child would be stillborn and when asking for help during contractions a doctor shouted her down "not to make a circus" (the child was born alive and healthy).[53] The original article, published as a series of statements from both experts and ordinary citizens, was extraordinary. It marked the first time a magazine published stories of

[51] Czech language has only one word for childbirth, *porod*, and does not distinguish between delivery and labor.
[52] This was not the first mention of the fathers at birth. In 1981 the Czechoslovak TV broadcasted a short story as part of the popular *Bakaláři* series that depicted the topic. It was a discussion between two women in labor in a hospital discussing their wishes for and advantages of having their husbands at birth. All the stories within the series were created based on suggestions by the population. *Bakaláři*, "Ta rozkošná mateřská dovolená," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4-qiZKBlvs, (accessed May 27, 2018), the relevant part starts at 16:55 min.
[53] *Mladý svět*, "Tatínkové v porodnicích," June 6, 1988.

childbirth that did not praise the accomplishments of Czechoslovak obstetrics or revolve around the child and the happiness of motherhood. For the first time, the focus was on the hospital room, childbirth, and, to some extent, women themselves.

Obstetrics and gynecology experts did not let the article pass without comment, demonstrating strong feelings (and words) on all sides of the debate. Since a few hospitals had introduced the practice of allowing fathers into delivery rooms over the previous years, the issues had already been on the radar, but until *Mladý svět* came out with its article, debate in expert journals was rather tame.[54] The vast majority of experts agreed that there was no evidence that a father's presence at birth would be harmful, or particularly beneficial, some considered it the latest "Western fashion" motivated by a consumerist demand for profit.[55] Others argued that where hospitals had the resources to allow fathers into the delivery room, they should not be prohibited. Invariably, experts considered any *public* debate about the topic "misleading," unnecessarily raising public expectations and feeding parents with "false statements" about the benefits of the practice, and claimed the need to discuss the issue internally. As they criticized *Mladý svět* for "doing damage to obstetrics, which [the doctors] have been unable to prevent," the chief country obstetrician reportedly "intervened among the editorial staff" of the magazine and stopped further public discussion.[56]

---

[54] The discussion started with a report from the one of the hospitals, published in L. Slezák, M. Stimpl, "Nejde o experiment," *Československá gynekologie* 51, no. 7 (1986): 565-567. The first father in a delivery room seems to have been in the Znojmo hospital on 29 March 1984. Between 1984 and 1988, 250 couples giving birth in this hospital chose to be at birth together. Other hospitals included Ohří nad Orlicí and Havířov soon followed.

[55] In the camp of advocates was also perhaps the most famous Czechoslovak pediatrician, Josef Švejcar, then ninety-year-old. He argued that doctors needed to stop seeing childbirth as a "process of illness," which the doctors "understood as a mechanical act without any emotional component." He urged doctors to familiarize themselves with and use Leboyer's childbirth method with dimmed lights, quiet room, with a loving atmosphere. And he claimed that the presence of fathers as the "co-creators of the new life" was "absolutely necessary." According to him, doctors had the "human and expert responsibility to create conditions" that would allow fathers to be at birth. See *Mladý svět*, "Tatínkové v porodnicích," June 6, 1988.

[56] "Pracovní schůze komise pro psychosomatiku v gynekologii a porodnictví," Praha, 17. června 1988, *Československá gynekologie* 54, no. 2 (1989).

While concerned that fathers would compromise hygienic standards of maternity wards and that they were unprepared for the experience in birthing rooms, the experts left largely unremarked upon women's recollections of their experience with hospital labor. Some suggested that the real issue was not that men (or another relative) should be present at birth but that women were afraid of hospital birth, and viewed women's fear largely as a result of the lack of preparation of expecting mothers for hospital birth.

The stories published on the pages of the magazine were in no way unique. Forty years later, women remember their labor as an unpleasant experience. Beata, who I mentioned above, recalled:

> "Well, in fact, I came as if late so they hadn't done some of the stuff that they need to do before labor…because before the delivery you sit there and they ask you all these endless questions like when you got married, what children you have, what illnesses run in your family, whether your kids are healthy, and all the while being in all the pain I had to tell them my marriage date three times you know, so I couldn't… fortunately this doctor came and told the nurse to stop as I was in labor. So, he rescued me. But since they didn't manage to clean me up before labor, a certain event happened on the table and the doctor, the doctor, he probably didn't like me, you know, I was so big and the labor didn't go, my fluid broke only when I was on the table, and he started screaming at me like what you are doing here, your fluid is green, what, do you want to hurt the baby? I thought, really? What is he telling me, how am I supposed to know that the fluid is green and what am I supposed to do with that? He was probably just nervous, it was exactly the doctor I had had [for examinations during pregnancy] and whom I hated. And when I saw him there, that he was above me… But fortunately, nature did what it should have done and everything happened just fine…"[57]

It is striking that even after so many years Beata was willing to explain away the doctor's mistreatment, perceiving the expert as a human being who had her best interest in mind rather than as a professional who abused his position and mistreated her. In addition, she described her childbirth as a process where she did not have any role, in this description it was "nature" that

[57] Interview with Beata S., Velký Šariš, July 12, 2015.

did the delivery. Beata's first labor happened in a hospital that had a room for the first phase behind a mirror and she could not stand being stared at, so she decided that for here second birth she would stay at home as long as she could.

More commonly, many women remember being left alone for hours on end, sometimes forgotten altogether. Giving birth at night, on days of important hockey or soccer matches, or when the staff celebrated something were invariably bad days to be in labor:

> "I sweated up the stairs to the third floor, pain in the back and having regular contractions. It was mandated to me – allegedly to speed up the labor. It wasn't possible to say no, not even when they were shaving me with a blunt razor. After the enema, they gave me this gown, stiff, it was sticking out too, and I couldn't even button up (my back and butt were exposed), and put me in the moaning room (hekárna) – a tiled room with a dirty toilet. I was completely alone in there. I was absolutely terrified and I remember the nurse relishing in it. I ended up giving birth there because the ward celebrated something and they forgot all about me. I couldn't reach anyone and they didn't manage to transport me to the birthing room. What's should I say, being happy that I had a daughter and looking forward to going home made me forget all of the unpleasant feelings.[58]

Sometimes, the birthing process was not the main point of the story. Both of Eva's childbirths went smoothly, Zdena described herself a "disciplined woman-in-labor" and said her deliveries were "quite alright." It was rather the "things around" that women recalled. The lack of women's pads; being cold or freezing in the rooms; having to sleep in the hall "because the other hospital in the city was being painted and they did not have enough beds for all of us in the

[58] "Dávná historie? Nebo ne? Jak se rodilo před 30 lety," https://www.maminka.cz/clanek/davna-historie-nebo-ne-jak-se-rodilo-pred-30-lety, last accessed May 27, 2018. Funěla jsem tedy s křížovými bolestmi a pravidelnými kontrakcemi do třetího patra. Povinně – prý ať se porod urychlí. Neposlechnout neexistovalo, a to ani během povinného holení tupou žiletkou. Po klystýru jsem obdržela tuhou odstávající plátěnou košili bez možnosti zapnutí (koukala mi záda a zadek) a byla jsem zavřena do tzv. hekárny – vykachlíkované místnosti se špinavým záchodem, kde jsem byla úplně sama. Strašně jsem se bála a pamatuji si, jak si mě sestra vychutnávala. V hekárně jsem nakonec i porodila, na oddělení se totiž cosi slavilo, a tak na mě nějak zapomněli. Nemohla jsem se nikoho dovolat a převoz na sál se nakonec nestihl. Co vám budu povídat, radost z dcerky a vidina návratu domů mi dala zapomenout na nepříjemné pocity.

rooms."[59] Zdena said that the staff at her hospital and the maternity wards was "not particularly caring, even if Motol [a hospital in Prague where she gave birth] was well known to be a good hospital." The staff did not communicate at all ("we were desperate, they didn't tell us anything"), dismissed her own sensations and knowledge about her own body ("you can't be having any contractions, what nonsense are you talking about"), and literally ordered her around ("push here, what are you doing?, not to the stomach!, push up"). The doctors were also insensitive to her needs of bodily intimacy. Zdena remembered that they did not sow the stiches after the childbirth well and had to redo it a couple of days later (she still recalls the pain she was in). As she was healing, still lying in the hospital, a doctor came to check up on her along with a team of ten medical students, and without any warning or asking for permission, simply moved her pad away and showed the wound to the entire team. While showing wounds and discussing them with medical students was, and still is, a common practice in university-related hospitals, Zdena considered this instance particularly insensitive as it concerned her intimate parts.

Perhaps because these women were not medicated and were fully present for their birthing experiences, on the whole they did not describe a sense of alienation (that their experiences would be stolen from them) that we know from Western literature. But being terrified, and often subjected to obstetric violence, the birth was not fully theirs, either [I would like to get more detailed stories of childbirth, however, to understand and unpack]. Crucially, women do not frame their experiences in terms of violations of bodily integrity, saying that the happiness and euphoria after the delivery made them "forget." But they did not forget. Beata will always remember her gynecologist, Zdena was in pain for months afterwards and she could not

[59] Interview with Eva A., Ostrava, August 8, 2018. Women often remembered staying in big rooms of ten or twelve women fondly. They say there was a lot of joking and laughter, women also bonded over the fact that all of them could see their children save for nursing a few times a day.

forget that her friend was left forgotten in the hall and saved from bleeding to death at the last minute.

None of this is new to those familiar with Western critiques of obstetric practice.[60] Since the 1950s, and with renewed vigorousness after 1968, Western women pushed against obstetric power, as well as the violations of bodily integrity and neglect accompanying medicalized hospital births. Wertz and Wertz observed: "Hospital delivery had become for many a time of alienation. The efficiency of medical security had become a kind of industrial production far removed from the comforts of social childbirth. A woman … was isolated during birth. She had to think of herself instrumentally, as a body-machine being manipulated by others for her ultimate welfare. She played a social role of passive dependence and obedience."[61]

Czechoslovak obstetrics approached childbirth in a similarly "technocratic" way. As Emily Martin showed, medical discourse views the body as a machine. During labor, "uterus is a machine being held to certain standards of efficient work," such as working steadily, fulfilling its tasks within an optimal time, under the supervision of experts.[62] Even normal birth is considered "intrinsically traumatic to the baby," Martin's analysis further showed, and so the doctor's role is "to ally with the baby against the potential destruction wreaked on it by the mother's body."[63] The extent to which Czechoslovak experts viewed childbirth as a process to be expertly managed is exemplified by their definition of "natural birth" as one that is "watched" by a doctor and

[60] There is a large body of literature on the topic, including: F.S.W. Brimblecombe, M.P.M. Richards, N.R.C. Roberton (eds), *Separation and Special-care Baby Units* (London, William Heinemann Medical Books, 1978); Margot Edwards, *Reclaiming Birth: History and Heroines in American Childbirth Reform* (Traumansburg: Crossing Press, 1984); Margaret Sandelowski, *Pain, Pleasure and American Childbirth: From the Twilight Sleep to the Read Method, 1914-1960* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984); Nancy Stoller Shaw, *Forced Labor: Maternity Care in the United States* (New York, Pergamon Press, 1974).
[61] Richard W. Wertz, Dorothy C. Wertz, *Lying In: A History of Childbirth in America* (London, Collier Macmillan, 1977): 173.
[62] Martin, *Woman in the Body*, 61.
[63] Martin, *A Woman in the Body*, 64.

"monitored" by technology.[64] The entire childbirth, experts explained, was supposed to happen smoothly and last an "optimal amount of time" so it would not be detrimental to the baby.[65] They routinely performed episiotomy, allegedly to protect the baby from deformations caused by the mother's body, and "mandatorily medicated" the last stage of the delivery with the use of oxytocin, a substance that helps with contractions.[66] If deemed necessary, ie. the labor did not start at the optimal time, doctors conducted amniotomy, and when the laboring woman got tired they often used medications to help with contractions.[67]

The reality was sometimes different from what the expert journals would suggest, as the above-mentioned women's experiences of women laboring without doctors and nurses demonstrate. As well, hospital cultures mattered. If big hospitals lacked space, medical equipment, technology, and often medication to conduct childbirths according to the textbooks, it was true even more so of smaller hospitals, and almost all hospitals in Slovakia outside of Bratislava. In the East Slovak Košice region, for example, seven maternity wards were "absolutely unsuitable" when it came to the norms of managed labor, without the possibility to end delivery with a surgery; the hospitals were also often without nonstop medical service.[68] They lacked gynecological tables, colposcopes, gynecological mirrors, levers, and ultrasound technology.[69] And thus, despite the fact that the medical establishment praised the unification of hospital practices under socialism, it is clear that approaches towards childbirth were wildly inconsistent and varied, depending on hospital technology, opinions of the medical staff, and on

[64] J. Martinčík and M. Uher, "Naše stanovisko k náplni pojmu 'lékařské vedení porodu'," *Československá gynekologie* 43, no. 2 (1978): 142-143.
[65] K. Poradovský, et al., "Lekárske vedenie pôrodov koncom pánvovým," *Československá gynekologie* 43, no. 2 (1978): 160.
[66] E. Zajacová, E. Šomská, and J. Chabada, "Komplikácie pri medikamentóznom vedení III. pôrodnej doby," *Československá gynekologie* 43, no. 2 (1978): 155
[67] Martincik and Uher, "Naše stanovisko."
[68] Importantly, since East Slovakia had the highest natality rate of all regions in the country due to both traditionally bigger families as well as big Roma population, hospitals used all their available beds for birthing women at the expense of women with gynecological complications.
[69] ŠAK, KNV Východoslovenského kraje, Odbor zdravotníctva, i.č. 128, ka 55.

staff availability. These differences notwithstanding, all hospitals managed childbirths and viewed them through medicalized lens; it was not until mid 1980s that new approaches made their way into (a handful) Czechoslovak hospitals.

Doctors did try to ease women's pain in childbirth throughout the socialist period – both in the interest of the birthing mother and in the interest of "discipline" and "quiet" in maternity wards. Magazine articles and experts themselves urged expectant mothers to attend courses guiding them through pregnancy and preparing them for delivery, claiming the courses would give them knowledge of what to expect, and prepare them cope with the pain during labor. But in reality, these courses were rarely held, if at all. Certainly not a single woman I talked to went through one, knew exactly what to expect, let alone how to breathe through her contractions. Psychoprophylaxis, what is now commonly known as the Lamaze method, was enthusiastically accepted in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, not least because it originated in the Soviet Union.[70] But as medical experts got disillusioned with the claims of painless childbirth and encountered both a lack of space and staff to conduct the courses, the method was phased out later in the decade, research on it discontinued in 1960s, and psychoprophylaxis ceased to be used in practice. Some doctors preferred a technocratic approach to delivery all along, considering psychoprophylaxis "against the physiological conception of Czechoslovak obstetrics."[71] And indeed, a report from an international conference on psychosomatics and pain during childbirth held in Rome in 1977 published on the pages of *Czechoslovak gynecology* contained a not very subtle critique that the conference was not of interest to doctors in Czechoslovakia.

Whatever was left of psychoprophylaxis in the late 1960s was reduced to biological accounts of the processes of pregnancy and delivery, advice to follow doctors' instructions

[70] John D. Bell, "Giving Birth to the New Soviet Man: Politics and Obstetrics in the USSR," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 40, no 1 (Spring 1981): 1-16; Paula Michaels, *Childbirth Pain Relief and the Soviet Origins of the Lamaze Method* (Seattle: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2007).
[71] Brucháč and Sochor qt. in Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 84.

during labor, and, most importantly, recommendations to do physical exercises both before the childbirth to help with labor and after the childbirth to help with recovery.[72] Thus, even when a 1977 government report claimed that about 27 % of pregnant women went through preparation courses (which is most likely a gross overstatement) and some women may have had a better idea of what hospital childbirth looked like, their preparedness for the actual labor was most likely insufficient.[73] A survey among maternity wards in Prague in mid-1980s revealed that there was none that would conduct prophylaxis according to the methodological literature. Some hospitals had massive courses with fifty and more participating women at a time, which meant that these courses were limited to lectures, others did not have any lectures at all and offered only physical exercises. All hospitals reduced their courses to 2-4 classes from the recommended six, and women themselves often participated in only one or two classes.[74] Psychoprophylaxis may have undergone something of a renaissance in the late 1980s, as Ema Hrešanová claimed, but if happening at all, the renewed interest was limited to a few hospitals; it was not long after 1989 that pregnancy courses proliferated.

To what extent doctors used analgesics to manage women's pain in childbirth is impossible to say, not least because there is not much published information. In one of the Prague hospitals in the first half of 1961, doctors considered analgesics so "useful" that 82% out of 3000 births were medicated using a neuroplegic-analgesic mix.[75] But more often doctors were wary of using painkillers. The numbing of the pain simultaneously decreased the laboring

[72] Ema Hrešanová, "The Psychoprophylactic Method of Painless Childbirth in Socialist Czechoslovakia: from State Propaganda to Activism of Enthusiasts," *Medical History*, Vol.60, n. 4 (2016): 534–556. Western midwives' associations made a similar observation of psychoprophylaxis being limited to preparing women for hospital birth.
[73] NA, f 419/23, MZd ČSR, Praha-Zasedání kolegia ministra 1969-1989, ka 2, i.c. 4, Návrh harmonogramu zdravotně výchovné přípravy těhotných žen a mladých matek.
[74] A. Mellanová, K. Ludvíková, and P. Čepický, "Současný stav porodnické psychoprofylaxe v Praze. 1. Způsob provádění přípravy," *Československá gynekologie* 49, no. 8. (1984): 568-572.
[75] E. Stiksa, and J. Budínský, "Technika lékařského vedení porodu s použitím neuroplegické analgetické směsi," *Československá gynekologie* 27, no. 5 (1962): 395-6. In 5% cases, doctors used different medication and 13% of births were already under way to the extent that no medication would be useful.

woman's "cooperation" (as doctors often labeled women's role in childbirth) and extended the childbirth process or stalled it altogether. Epidural and local anesthesia was used by individual obstetricians on and off throughout the decades, but it never really caught on for various reasons.[76] A poll among hospitals in the mid-1980s revealed that hospitals' use of analgesics varied between 10 and 90 % "depending on what each hospital considers an analgesic;" epidural was not used in part because of the lack of access to it as but also due to the lack of anesthesiologists, and in part also because the vast majority of hospitals claimed that *they* were "satisfied with the way births were being conducted."[77] Cesarean sections were not very popular among obstetricians either. While they allowed doctors to completely manage childbirth, as a surgical procedure they led to complications and sometimes deaths (more women died due to complications in relation to the surgery – by all accounts many due to the negligence of doctors rather than for physiological reasons – than in physiological delivery).

One of the reasons for the emphasis on the medically managed childbirth was that Czechoslovak obstetrics was obsessed with "favorable perinatal statistics."[78] The term "obsession" is not an overstatement; perinatal statistics was the first item in every government report on the care for the mother and the child throughout the socialist period, was repeatedly praised in popular media as one of the biggest achievements of Czechoslovak obstetrics, and constitutes one of the childbirth-related themes most written about in expert literature. While the numbers of perinatal mortality were relatively low already, they stagnated between early 1960s and mid 1970s; moreover, more than half of all cases of deaths did not result from any

[76] One of the most important reasons was that shortages of staff led to the insufficient monitoring of the laboring woman, which led to fatal complications (as a consequence, if anything, doctors preferred full anesthesia). See E. Sirotný et al., "Súčasný stav anestézy při cisárskom reze," *Československá gynekologie* 35, no. 9 (1970): 557-561. For an overview of the development of anesthesia at birth see "Historický vývoj v České republice," http://www.porodnice.cz/tehotenstvi-a-z/historicky-vyvoj-v-ceske-republice, last accessed May 29, 2018.
[77] Pavel Čepický, K. Ludvíková, and Mellanová, A., "Současný stav porodnické psychoprofylaxe v Praze I. Způsob provádění přípravy," *Československá gynekologie* 49, no. 8 (1984): 568–572.
[78] Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 213.

pathologies but from perfectly healthy pregnancies.[79] At the same time, the number of premature births seemed to have begun rising (and reached higher levels than those in the West).[80] These two issues sent doctors into frenzy over finding solutions.

They increased their oversight over delivery.[81] In 1976, they expanded indications for cesarean sections, although this expansion did not result in radically higher numbers of surgeries. In one hospital, cesareans amounted to 3% of all deliveries,[82] the Institute for the Care of the Mother and the Child in Prague reported that its numbers hovered around 10-12%.[83] Experts also increased the number of risk pregnancies, sending the numbers up to about 30%.[84] Most importantly, at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s some doctors started advocating for and performing what they called "programmed labor." Induced labor allegedly decreased the incidence of "dramatic events" involving childbirth, such as the breaking of the water outside of hospital.[85] I have not been able to determine how many births were induced but it is clear that it became widely used; with some hospitals advocating to move to induced labor as a standard practice (Olomouc), others considering it as secondary to "other methods" of decreasing perinatal mortality (Brno).

Indeed, Czechoslovak obstetricians began to split in their approaches to childbirth in the early 1980s. The majority advocated for more programmed births,[86] but a few, under the

[79] A. Černoch, "Úvodní slovo ke konferenci o perinatální úmrtnosti v chorobnosti," *Československá gynekologie* 47, no. 1 (1982): 13-15.
[80] Czechoslovakia's statistics of 6-6.5% against 4-5 % in other states was not significantly higher but it did concern experts.
[81] There is some indication that they began thinking of social factors as causes of premature births. They named stress and overwork, and unhealthy work conditions. But this was not a mainstream approach and led nowhere. A minority of voices suggested that women's employment would have to be rethought.
[82] Viktor Knobloch, "Bolest za porodu," *Československá gynekologie* 35, no. 4 (1970): 223.
[83] P. Čepický, T. Lomíčková, J. Presl, "Jaký je současný názor na indikace císařského řezu?," *Československá gynekologie* 54, no. 8 (1989): 604-609.
[84] Heitlinger wrote that 30% was still below Western levels. Heitlinger, *Reproduction*, 177.
[85] F. Gazárek, Z. Krikal, and H. Kavalová, "Programovaný porod," *Československá gynekologie* 48, no. 7 (1983): 542-546.
[86] F. Gazárek, et al., "Cesty ke snížení perinatální úmrtnosti v ČSSR pod 10 promile," *Československá gynekologie*, Vol. 47, n. 1 (1982): 24-28.

influence of the critique of obstetric practice in the West, began questioning their technocratic approach to labor (though there was never, and still is not, a question that births needed to happen in hospitals). Obstetric experts in the north Moravian region, for example, discussed options of a more physiological delivery. Other experts reported that episiotomy was not necessarily beneficial to the birth of a healthy child, there was also a handful of voices arguing that doctors should rethink the position of the laboring mother (to vertical rather than horizontal position on the table).[87] In the early 1980s, a couple of hospitals began using the newly developed Leboyer's method of childbirth. As well, motivated by arguments of a bond developing between the mother and a child right after the birth, many hospitals began introducing rooming-in options. But any discussion of births outside of hospitals has been resisted to this day.

Conclusion

That women experienced – and remember to have experienced – their growing bodies in different ways is hardly surprising. While the late socialist elevated women into the role of mothers, mothers did not cease to be women, interpellated by ideas associating femininity with slenderness and beauty as well as work and public roles, leaving it up to women to negotiate these interpellations. The plurality of experiences also demonstrates that while experts viewed pregnant and childbearing bodies through medicalized prism, their control over women's bodies was limited for reasons ranging from lack of time to technological and human resources. Women avoided (some) expert advice and developed their own knowledge about their bodies.

[87] J. Presl, "Vzpřímená poloha ženy za porodu," *Czechoslovak Gynecology*, Vol. 47, n.1 (1982): 10-12.

Czechoslovak obstetrics has not changed much. Research on contemporary women's experiences care underscores the legacies of socialist approaches.[88] Pregnancy and childbirth are framed as "conditions" in need of authoritative medical/technocratic intervention, with the rising age of mothers perhaps more so than ever. Medical authorities vigorously resist challenges from midwives and mothers who prefer natural or even unmedicated approaches to childbirth; midwifes are for the most part allowed to be present at birth and even when they are, they are unable to prevent unwanted procedures. The issue of domestic births is currently not only the most hotly contested issue but also one that is discussed by the Supreme Court. On their part, while many women adhere to medical authority and "strive not to be labeled a hysterical mother," things have gradually begun to change. Women have begun to criticize obstetric practices, challenge medical authority, and demand respect for their bodily integrity as well as their choices in how they want to do childbirth.

[88] Ema Hrešanová, "Porodní péče a zkušenosti českých žen: kvalitativní studie," *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 12, no. 2 (2011): 63-74; Ema Hrešanová, "'Nobody in a maternity hospital talks to you': Socialist Legacies and Consumerism in Czech Women's Childbirth Narratives," *Czech Sociological Review* 50, no. 6 (2014): 961-985; Ema Hrešanová, 'Midwives, women, and the professionalization of midwifery: an ethnographic study of two maternity hospitals in the Czech Republic', *Cognition, Brain, Behavior* 11, no. 2 (June 2007): 371-396.

Transsexuality: The Normalization of Difference in the Era of Normalization

David petitioned for hormonal blockage therapy in 1981.[1] With a female body, he was required to approval for his desired transition to become a man. An expert committee, which met to evaluate his case, rejected the petition. According to the experts, David gave signs of "insufficient social adaptation": he had finished a degree in psychology but was not interested in obtaining a job commensurate to his education, working instead as a cleaner. David had told the committee that he could not imagine being a psychologist in his female body and would only think of finding a job appropriate to his education after a sex change, but his explanation did not convince the panel of experts. The committee, referring to David as female, had also allegedly received "negative reports about her hygiene habits from her address and some inconsistencies in the handling of her financial resources, etc."[2] David was permitted to undergo hormonal therapy only three years later.

After hormonal therapy, which transformed his body, and after changing his name from a recognizably female to a gender-neutral form to prevent misunderstandings in communication with authorities, he moved across the country and started practicing psychology in a marriage counselling center.[3] He lived with a female partner, raising her children, in what he described as a "happy family life." He requested the approval to undergo a sex-reassignment surgery so he could change his name and ID to a typically male form. The "situation," he wrote, was

[1] David is not the person's real name. In order to protect the identities of the transmen who appear in this chapter, I use nicknames throughout the text.
[2] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.c. 203 (nezprac.), committee meeting in early August 1982.
[3] Czechoslovak names are gendered. Transpeople were only allowed to transition gradually, and, accordingly, change their names from recognizably male or female to a gender-neutral form for the period of hormonal transition; they could change their name to a recognizably gendered one again only after sex reassignment surgery. To give an example of a shift in the names: from the identifiably female Monika, Karolína or Jarmila, transsexuals would pick a neutral name Míla, René or Štěpa that could indicate both a female and a male body/gender. They would use this neutral name until they were permitted to change their name to an identifiably male form: Karel, Štěpán or Martin (and vice versa).

> no longer socially bearable… We both were reminded several times that our cohabitation is socially unacceptable; I am being pressured by my supervisors to get married because as a psychologist / one living in a small town at that / I do not provide a sufficiently good example to the public.[4]

David did not "insist on complicated plastic operations"; he simply wanted to complete his transition so he could live "as a normal, decent married man, not as a frivolous person [větroplach]."[5] The irony of a situation in which he, as a transman, would be required to provide an example to his fellow citizens could not have been lost on him.

David's transition was one of the increasing numbers of sex changes that took place in Czechoslovakia, and across the world, at the time. Since 1949, when American sexologist David Cauldwell coined the term transsexual, and the sensational case of Christine Jorgensen, a former GI who became a woman, stunned the world in 1953, an increasing number of individuals sought assistance in their transitions. Socialist countries were no exception to the trend – we know they took place at least in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the USSR – but more research on other socialist countries is necessary to determine how widespread this practice was.[6] According to official statistics, the number of transitions in Czechoslovakia before 1989 amounted to a handful per year, with roughly 250 surgeries in total, even though there is no doubt that many more individuals lived non-normative lives.[7]

---

[4] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.c. 203 (nezprac.), letter from spring 1985.
[5] *Ibid*.
[6] Poland did not establish a sexological institute until 1982 and most of the sex changes it supervised took place in the second half of the 1980s. Yugoslavia's first sex reassignment allegedly happened in 1989, and has since become one of the world centers of sex reassignment surgeries. And while we know that the USSR too did at least some sex reassignment surgeries, whether there was any systematic "treatment" of transsexuality remains to be researched. For Poland see Kazimierz Imieliński, Stanisław Dulko, *Apokalipsa płci* (Szczecin: Glob, 1989); Godlewski, J., "Transsexualism and anatomic sex ratio reversal in Poland," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 17 (1988): 547-8. For East Germany see Cohen-Kettenis, P. T., J. Wålinder. "Sex reassignment surgery in Europe: A survey," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* Vol. 75, no. 2 (1987): 176-182.
[7] According to sexologists Petr Weiss a Hana Fifková, up until 2006 around 761 transsexuals sought consultations, out of which 331 completed the transition to a different sex. Around a third of individuals came to the sexologists before 1989, also a third of surgeries took place before 1989. See "1937: Může být člověku změněno pohlaví?," http://otereze.blog.cz/1402/1937-muze-byt-cloveku-zmeneno-pohlavi, last accessed October 15, 2017.

Existing scholarship on transsexuality has largely focused on Western, liberal societies, particularly the US. The main argument of this scholarship is that transsexuality developed as a decidedly medical category, which associated transsexuality with mental or medical disorders. The category coalesced as an identity in an environment of open public discussions of non-normative lives (both in the form of sensationalizing media news and community-supported narratives) and the existence of gay, lesbian, and trans communities.[8] Where work on transgender issues concerns non-Western societies, it is usually to show that non-normative genders and sexualities have been an integral part of the respective cultures, and to critique Western notions of transgender identities.[9] Scholarship on non-normative identities in Eastern Europe largely focuses on post-communist developments, both demonstrating gradual (if regionally varied) openness towards non-normative sexualities and challenging Western trajectories of gay and lesbian emancipation.[10]

Far from being isolated behind the "pink curtain," East European governments implemented measures to permit and regulate sex transitions long before the collapse of

[8] Holly (now Aaron) Devor, *FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997) Bernice Hausmann, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology and the Idea of Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1955); Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Henry Rubin, *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment Among Transsexual Men* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003). Maxime Foerster's study of transsexuality in France, too, pivots around the existence of transgender cabaret community in Paris, with Coccinele as a national celebrity trans-figure, and public advocacy for gays, lesbians, and transpeople. Maxime Foerster, "On the History of Transsexuals in France," in *Transgender Experience: Place, Ethnicity, and Visibility*, ed. Chantal Zabus and David Coad (New York and London: Routledge, 2014).

[9] For example, the category of "hijras", see Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Two Spirit people in native American traditions, see Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (eds.), *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Additional scholarship has us consider the ways in which transsexuality is permissible in non-liberal contexts. The study of Iranian transsexuality by historian Afsaneh Najmabadi reminds us, for example, that sex reassignment surgeries can take place in a conservative regime, alongside official condemnation of homosexuality, in no small part due to the agency of transsexuals and the framing of sex change as a means of preventing crime. See Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

[10] Robert Kulpa, and Joanna Mizielińska (eds.). *De-Centering Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives* (Burlington, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011). Roman Kuhar, and Judit Takács (eds.). *Beyond the Pink Curtain: Everyday Life of LGBT People in Eastern Europe* (Ljubljana: Mirovni Institut, 2007).

communism.[11] In this chapter, I draw on recent reevaluations of Eastern Europe by scholars of sexuality who have argued that socialist sexology was not simply heteronormative, homophobic, and repressive. It also had an "emancipatory dimension," whereby sexologists actively strove to remove feelings of alienation, exclusion, and inferiority in their patients and wider public.[12] Indeed, analyzing their attitudes towards homosexuality, historian Věra Sokolová playfully (and provocatively) labeled Czechoslovak sexology offices as the "first gay club[s]."[13] Transsexuality, as I will show, belonged to a similar category.

What opened up a space for the acceptance of transsexuality in Eastern Europe, I argue, was not only its medicalization but also other factors—its seeming heteronormativity and the fact that it did not conflict with notions of proper socialist citizenship. After all, as Dan Irving's recent analysis of early medical texts on transsexuality demonstrates, a crucial factor in the acceptance of transsexuality in the West was the fact that transsexuals were economically productive citizens; the "real life test" sexologists imposed was motivated by questions of whether transsexuals would successfully adapt to the labor market.[14] Socialist medical experts were preoccupied with similar questions of productive labor.

In this chapter, I show that political and sexual liberation do not have to go hand in hand.[15] The Czechoslovak 1970s are often described as one of political retrenchment after the suppression of the Prague Spring but this chapter shows that the decade represented a time of profound change for Czechoslovak transsexuals. While the period began with Czechoslovak sexologists largely "lacking experience" with transsexuals and rejecting the possibility of legal

[11] "Beyond the Pink Curtain" is the title of a 2007 volume on LGBTQ issues in Eastern Europe, arguing that while homophobia is rampant, Eastern Europe is not just homophobic and in fact not too "different" from Western Europe. Kuhar and Takács, *Beyond the Pink Curtain*.
[12] Sokolová, Věra. "State Approaches to Homosexuality," 87.
[13] *Ibid*., 85.
[14] Dan Irving, "Normalized Transgressions: Legitimizing the Transsexual Body as Productive," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* edited by Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013): 15-30.
[15] Herzog, Dagmar. "Syncopated Sex: Transforming European Sexual Cultures." *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1287-308.

transition, it ended with the state permitting transsexuals to marry upon transition.[16] As David's story demonstrates, however, the mechanisms implemented throughout the 1970s cannot be understood simply as liberalizing steps. They also constituted disciplinary measures aimed both at regulating what had previously been a matter of individual negotiations and at creating legible bodies firmly situated within the heteronormative system.

Arguably the most striking aspect of East European transsexuality is that, despite the historical construction of transsexuality as a male phenomenon, there were many more FtM than MtF transitions.[17] Official numbers are not the best indicator of the prevalence of transgender identification—indeed, in one region some lesbian women allegedly "chose" to become transsexuals rather than being subjected to homophobia.[18] They are, however, useful in that they reveal a differentiated access to medical services based on culturally specific gender norms. Czechoslovakia was not unique in the higher numbers of FtM transitions; similar percentages were also noted by East German and Polish sexologists. This observation likely constitutes a distinguishing feature of East European transsexuality, and, by implication, of the East European gender order.[19]

This chapter is based on expert articles published in the 1970s and 26 individual case files of sex-reassignment petitions from one region of the country.[20] The majority of the individual files consist of a few pages of institutional correspondence and a brief report, written by medical experts, on whether a given individual was granted the permission to undergo a sex-

[16] J. Medvecký, E. Medvecká, and Š. Sajko, "Prípad transsexualismu," *Československá psychiatrie* 69, n. 4 (1973): 236-239.
[17] The numbers show us that the number of transitions was higher than or equal to FtMs everywhere. Only in Eastern Europe did the transitions through sexological offices include a higher number of FtMs (3:1).
[18] Jan Seidl, *Od Žaláře k oltáři: emancipace homosexuality v Českých zemích od roku 1867 do současnosti* (Brno: Host, 2012), 337.
[19] Anecdotal testimonies from bodybuilders suggest that there was no black market with artificial hormones in Czechoslovakia, but this theme deserves further research.
[20] Personal medical files from the communist era are inaccessible to historians, I came across these files purely accidentally. In other parts of the country, sexological clinics were attached to hospitals and many of the files are still located in hospital archives; and inaccessible without a written consent of the patient.

reassignment surgery or a name change. Despite all the limitations of the source material—the letters largely follow the script of what authorities wanted to hear—these files give us an insight into the process of medical decision-making. Because of the sensitivity of these petitions, I have changed the names of the petitioners and removed any personal data that could lead to their identification.

A note on the case files is necessary: the relatively advanced stage of the petitioners' transitions does not allow us to reconstruct what brought transsexuals to the sexologists,[21] how they experienced the repeated and extensive medical examinations, and the process of hormonal change. As scholarly work on transgender individuals shows us, however, transitioning is not a straightforward process. Not only do individual transmen and transwomen have varied notions of what being a man and woman means to them, becoming a man/woman is also a learning process. It requires adjustment, the incorporation of behaviors, gestures, and expectations of bodily contact, and a proper demeanor in public. As Kristen Schilt shows, transgender men specifically negotiate using men's bathrooms in the early stages of heir transitions, they are vigilant about personal safety, and they have to learn to occupy space as men are supposed to.[22] These individualized processes, including the experiences of surgery and post-surgery life, are unfortunately not part of the material at my disposal.

Sexuality in Central Europe

[21] A significant number of Czechoslovak transsexuals seems to have gotten to sexologists mainly through psychiatrists, where they were being treated for depression and, more often than not, attempted suicides. The situation in Poland seems to have been different: Polish transsexuals whose personal narratives were published in *Apokalipsa płci* had read about transsexuality in magazines. Imieliński, Dulko, *Apokalipsa płci*.
[22] Kristen Schilt, *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). See also Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press); Rubin, *Self-made Men*.

Central Europe had been the "center of the medical and legal study of sexuality" long before the socialist regime.[23] The work of Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, or Magnus Hirschfeld developed in Central Europe, and their books were widely read throughout the region, and beyond. To further the study of sexuality, Czechoslovak experts founded The Sexological Institute in Prague in 1921, and eleven years later, in 1932, hosted a congress of the World League for Sexual Reform.[24] As a consequence, the Czechoslovak interwar discourse on sex and gender was heavily medicalized but also, due to the influence of Magnus Hirschfeld, focused on decriminalizing "deviant" sexualities.[25] The work of sexologists culminated shortly before WWII with the surgical change of the world-renowned Czechoslovak track athlete Zdena Koubková and their equally famous colleague, putter Štefanie Pekarová, into men, which, widely publicized, shocked the Czechoslovak population.[26]

Interwar Czechoslovakia also had a vibrant homosexual community, perhaps best known through the life and work of the non-conforming artist Toyen, who is widely considered the founder of Czechoslovak surrealism.[27] The Nazi occupation decimated the leadership of the gay and lesbian community. Most organizations were never renewed after WWII and the Communist Party takeover in 1948 further squashed any possibility of formal organizing. Much of the emancipatory agenda throughout the forty years of communist rule thus rested with the medical and state apparatuses, and individual agency.

---

[23] Stauter-Halsted, Keely, and Nancy M. Wingfield. "Introduction: The Construction of Sexual Deviance in Late Imperial Eastern Europe." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 2 (2011): 215.
[24] The WLSR advanced marriage reform and equality of women in society, availability of birth control and contraception both as a means of responsible sex and as a eugenic measure, integration of homosexuals, tolerance for and protection of unmarried women and children born out of wedlock, and sexual education. Dose, Ralf. "The World League for Sexual Reform: Some Possible Approaches." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan. 2003): 1-15.
[25] Seidl, *Od žaláře k oltáři*, 79.
[26] Both of the athletes allegedly had intersexual bodies. See Pavel Kovář, *Příběh české rekordwoman: Zákulisí největšího sportovního skandálu první republiky* (Pejdlova Rosička, 2017).
[27] Karla Huebner, "Fire Smoulders in the Veins: Toyen's Queer Desire and Its Roots in Prague Surrealism," *Papers of Surrealism* 8 (Spring 2010): 8.

The Sexological Institute in Prague, while rather small in size, continued its work after WWII. During the Stalinist years in the 1950s, its experts helped establish matters of sexuality as medical issues, in part removing them from the ideological oversight of the Communist Party. They also played an important role in discussions about the decriminalization of (male) homosexuality by arguing that homosexuality was inborn, irreversible, and natural; homosexuality was officially decriminalized in 1961. The work of the Institute became highly influential in the post-1968 period, both because its experts became members of various government committees and due of the emergence of sexuality as a matter of public interest and individual happiness.[28] Throughout, the Institute's sexologists kept themselves well informed about medical developments in the West.

Sexological discourse was only one, though a crucial, part of the background in which sex reassignment surgeries emerged. The changing body culture in the postwar period, as historian Joanne Meyerowitz argues, was similarly important. From sports to fashion, dieting, and cosmetic surgery, individuals were encouraged to construct their bodies in a way that reflected their inner self and to tell a story about themselves, which provided the necessary context for imagining sex transitions.[29] While we do not usually think of socialist Eastern Europe in terms of individualized and commercialized body politics, scholars have recently begun to explore how, particularly in the late socialist period, bodies were sculpted through consumption, anti-obesity campaigns, the promotion of beauty products, and even aesthetic surgeries.[30] This

[28] Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*. Sexology became an official medical discipline in 1970. By 1973, the sexological branch of the Purkyně Medical Society had about 450 members and 50 practicing doctors all around the country. Sexologists were trained in their primary disciplines, most often psychiatry and gynecology, sometimes general medicine, urology or venerology, and received optional training. In 1974, sexology was defined as a medical discipline and what had previously been optional lectures for medical students became a specialization in postgraduate study

[29] Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 130-131.

[30] Weinrib, Alice. *Modern Hungers*; Neula Kerr-Boyle. "The Slim Imperative: Discourses and Cultures of Dieting in the German Democratic Republic, 1949-90," *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities After Hitler*, edited by Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013): 158-179. Kristen

was not just a matter of the socialist disciplinary (bio)politics. As scholars have argued, despite deep ambiguity about consumption due to its potential for "rampant individualism of personal and cultural expression,"[31] the concept of self-realization was an important catchword of late socialist regimes, opening up the space for individualized and intimate projects of self-fulfillment and self-expression.[32]

Transsexuality and Czechoslovak Sexology

The impulse for the Czechoslovak experts to discuss the conditions for, and ramifications of, sex change came in the late 1960s.[33] Transsexuals were reportedly invited to the 1968 international sexological conference in Prague, the first meeting of sexologists from both sides of the Cold War; two particular "cases" compelled the Czechoslovak experts to organize a symposium specifically about transsexuality. In the first case, a married couple had petitioned the regional authority in Olomouc for a surgical sex change of one of the spouses; the other case was a complaint of a foreign citizen about a "sex conversion" surgery the individual underwent in Czechoslovakia. The experts noted the lack of professional experience and state regulations in the area and stated a fear of future lawsuits against hospitals for performing surgeries that caused irreversible changes to the body.[34] It suggested that any sex changes that had taken place were unregulated and a result of personal negotiation.

Ghodsee, "Potions, Lotions and Lipstick: The Gendered Consumption of Cosmetics and Perfumery in Socialist and Postsocialist Urban Bulgaria," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 30, n. 1 (Jan. 2007): 26-39.

[31] Anne E Gorsuch, "The Dance Class or the Working Class: The Soviet Modern Girl," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum and the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 186-187.

[32] Bren, *The Greengroceer and His TV*; Pullmann and Kolář, *Co byla normalizace?*

[33] There exists a 10-minute documentary entitled "Transsexualism and transvestitism", filmed in 1962 by a director who created a number of educational medical films. The film is mute but it is clearly intended for a medical community (doctors and medical students), featuring photos of the individual's anatomy, followed by a couple of sections filmed in the countryside (with a wooden house built in a traditional style in the background, perhaps suggesting the link to biology and medical argument that transsexuals are born transsexual and are not a fashion of urbanites). The sections show the transsexual (MtF) sitting on a bench dressed and gesturing in a very feminine style, surrounded by mostly young men. It is clear that the conversation is about her rather than by her.

[34] *Ibid.* The case of the foreigner (the country of origin was unspecified) getting a sex change surgery in Czechoslovakia is the only such case I came across in the expert literature. It is unclear to me whether there were other cases of foreigners undergoing sex change "treatment" in the country. According to Tereza Spencerová, one of

The transcript of the symposium is the only sustained discussion of transsexuality by Czechoslovak medical experts and thus deserves attention. Attended by psychiatrists, sexologists, surgeons and medical-legal experts, it is a fascinating read. Displaying a combination of medicalization and moralization, therapeutic and repressive approaches, it demonstrates how deeply Czechoslovak experts based their opinions on essentialized notions of gender and naturalized notions of bodies within a strictly binary framework. It also reveals that the experts had a good knowledge of recent Western literature and court decisions related to transsexuality, showing that Czechoslovak sexology was not isolated behind the Iron Curtain.

The psychiatrists in the room dissected transsexual individuality, showcasing the "abnormalities in the personality" of the patients concerned and documenting the allegedly aberrant psychosexual development of transsexuals. Based on the observation of her patients, one expert claimed that what they had in common was "infantile narcissism." Not only were transsexuals interested primarily in themselves (particularly in their looks), their assertion that they were "an error of nature" was, in her opinion, an "infantile stylization of oneself into a position of a martyr." She was "quite surpris[ed]," she said, "how easily even the most renowned experts have fallen for this compelling [sugestivní] presentation."[35] Another psychiatrist described diagnoses of his four patients, claiming that transsexual leanings constituted only one aspect in a whole complex of personal pathologies developed during the teenage years. In his view, the "pathological change" was irreversible whereby surgeries only legitimized the

---

the first publicly self-identified transsexuals, who published her memoir in 2003, the case caused medical experts to be overly careful in determining whether their "patients" are "true transsexuals" warranting a surgical sex change. See Tereza Spencerová, *Jsem tranďák!* (Prague: G plus G, 2003).

[35] All quotes Libuše Widermannová, "Naše zkušenosti s transsexualismem," Contribution at the symposium *O soudně lékařských otázkách transsexualismu* (Olomouc: Katedra soudního lékařství Lékařské fakulty University Palackého a krajské soudně lékařské oddělení FN v Olomouci, 1969), http://www.translide.cz/knihovna (accessed July 29, 2019). Henceforth *Symposium*.

perversion. In other words, for both psychiatrists, transsexuals were psychologically immature and intellectually undeveloped, a result of growing up in what they called dysfunctional families.

For others, morality was more directly prominent. One expert warned that "transsexualism" represented a way for homosexuals to legitimize their "deviant" way of life; another associated it with striptease and red-light districts of Western cities, "[p]eople, who often have nothing to do with decent society."[36] The problem of transsexuality, for this expert, was not only its association with homosexuality, but also Western "decadence." Despite their strong moral condemnation, however, even these experts nevertheless agreed that transsexuals needed professional care. They noted that transsexuals were subjected to derision and bullying, which led to their "feelings of inferiority, bitterness increasing to the point of anxiousness and more or less strong depression."[37] They contended that as "ill" persons transsexuals had a legal right to medical care, which the state was obligated to provide. In making their arguments, the experts invoked notions of transsexuals' "fulfillment in the society."[38]

The discussion focused mostly on sex reassignment surgery (SRS): whether it was a castrating procedure or not, what the implications of the procedures related to sex change were, and whether SRS constituted grounds for changing the legal sex of an individual. With the exception of participating surgeons, for whom SRS was yet another development in surgical techniques, the vast majority of participants were strongly opposed to surgical changes of the body. For them, what was at stake was the authenticity of the body, the correspondence between anatomical sex and gender. One expert claimed that surgery created "pseudomen" and "pseudowomen," who have "little to do with real womanhood and manhood."[39] Another bluntly

[36] Jozef Lukáči's contribution in the general discussion, *Symposium*.
[37] Rozmarič, Adolf. "Transsexualismus s hlediska soudně lékařského," *Symposium.*
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] Widermannová, "Naše zkušenosti s transsexualismem," *Symposium*.

stated that "surgery cannot change what makes man a man and woman a woman."[40] Surgery, still another asserted, was "[against good manners]" because it destroyed a healthy body, producing "artificial male and female pseudohermaphrodites" with "pseudocoital organs," which the expert labeled as "unnatural."[41] These arguments, by no means unique to Czechoslovak experts, revealed that for the Czechoslovak experts the anatomical body was ultimately a moral category.

In attendance was the most prominent Czechoslovak sexologist, Josef Hynie, who headed the Sexological Institute in Prague, across four different regimes, between 1935 and 1974. Having studied with Magnus Hirschfeld in the interwar period, he was a "life-long supporter of medical rather than a criminal approach to sexual deviance."[42] Consistent with the Hirschfeldian training, Hynie preferred the more biologically oriented approach to transsexuality advocated by the Johns Hopkins' sexologist Harry Benjamin. Benjamin, whose book *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966) popularized a medical approach to transsexuality, claimed that "transsexualism" was most likely biologically determined - a prenatal, neuro-endocrine disorder.[43] He understood transsexuality to exist on a spectrum of conditions and behaviors from homosexuality and transvestitism to "true" transsexuality. After extensive diagnosis, observation, and a "real-life" test, he claimed, "true" transsexuals could be firmly diagnosed and recommended for transition.[44]

Adopting this theory, Hynie distinguished between "true transsexualism" and other "psychic balance disorders," where he placed homosexuals, transvestites and hermaphrodites.[45] As the "innermost feeling and conviction of belonging to the opposite sex," "true

[40] Zdeněk Šnupárek's contribution in the general discussion, *Symposium*.
[41] Rozmarič, "Transsexualismus s hlediska soudně lékařského," *Symposium.*
[42] Sokolová, "State approaches to homosexuality," 85.
[43] Harry Benjamin, "Newer Aspects to the Transsexual Phenomenon," *The Journal of Sex Research* 5, n. 2 (May 1969): 135-141.
[44] Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: The Julian Press, 1966).
[45] Josef Hynie, "O soudně lékařských otázkách transsexualismu," *Symposium*.

transsexualism" was, according to him, characterized by the persistence in the desire for sex change and resistance to all other treatments.[46] He cautioned his colleagues to exercise "utmost vigilance" in diagnosing their patients and did not recommend legal change of sex, or marriage, because he was convinced that without properly functioning sex organs (more specifically, the penis), transsexuals could not act as fully functional partners in marriage. Transsexual erotic life was, according to Hynie, ultimately homosexual, which contradicted the Czechoslovak family law and ruled out the possibility of marriage.[47] This view came to shape the final resolution of the Symposium.

The final resolution stated that no surgery could create an individual of a different sex. Since, as the experts had agreed, transsexuals sought recognition of their needs rather than a sexually functioning body, neither surgery nor a change in the civic status were warranted. At the same time, however, the resolution did not explicitly exclude the possibility of a surgical change of sex. It appealed for the creation of expert committees which would consider each case individually--a mechanism most likely modelled after Harry Benjamin's practice at Johns Hopkins. There, too, each petitioner had to be evaluated by a committee of experts. The resolution further recommended that transsexuals be allowed to change their names to a more neutral version to reduce their complications stemming from the discrepancy between their IDs and appearance.

Responding to the appeals of sexologists, the Ministry of Health Care circulated instructions in 1970 that regulated how to proceed when treating persons with "serious sexual dysfunctions" which, being irreversible, had potentially "serious psychological and social impact."[48] The circular did not comment on hormonal treatment or examination procedures and,

[46] Dita Jahodová, "Representations of Transsexuality in the Czech Medical Discourse and Documentary Films After 1989." *Dějiny, teorie, kritika* 8, no. 2 (2011): 289-309.
[47] Hynie, "O soudně lékařských otázkách transsexualismu," *Symposium*.
[48] *Věstník Ministerstva zdravotnictví České socialistické republiky* (1970): Čj. LP/4-270-8.2.1970.

despite expert agreement against surgeries, left any decision-making about surgical procedures to experts. It mandated that regional health care officials compose an expert committee that would deliberate on each individual petition and recommend further steps. The committee was to consist of the doctor who recommended the given procedure, a sexologist, a psychiatrist and an expert who would perform the procedure (gynecologist, urologist or plastic surgeon).[49] The Ministry cautioned that no surgical procedure was to be performed without the written consent of the "ill individual" [sic!].[50]

Stunningly, despite the rather strong expert opinions against legal sex change, by the mid-1970s at least ten transsexuals treated at The Sexological Institute in Prague changed their sex in the birth registries.[51] Whether these were exceptions, "experimental" cases, or the changes happened due to the insistence and persistence of the transsexuals themselves is difficult to tell. It is clear, however, that sexologists did learn a few things about their transsexual patients in the years after the Symposium, which may have contributed to the change in their opinions. Experts at the Sexological Institute, for example, tried LSD therapy on a group of FtM transsexuals only to find that the experiment made "transsexual leanings" in their patients stronger, making them firmly "decide for transsexualism."[52] The only effective therapy, indeed, seems to have been sex change.

---

[49] Anecdotal evidence suggests that authorities had a different approach towards the composition of expert committees as well as of expert approaches towards the transsexual change. Transsexuals remember that the clinic in Brno was headed by Růžena Hajnová, infamous for her dismissive and authoritative approach, insisting that unless transsexuals are flawless in their performance they would never be granted her permission to transition. The Prague committee was feared. Allegedly headed by the family psychologist Jaroslava Pondělíčková, it included, in addition to experts, two city hall officials, who intimidated the petitioners. See Spencerová, *Jsem tranďák!*

[50] *Věstník Ministerstva zdravotnictví České socialistické republiky* (1970), Čj. LP-276-16-16.9.1970. The requirement of a consent of the individual and the committee approval was a legal requirement, instituted in the Health Law, 20/1966 Sb., §27, which required that all procedures affecting the reproductive functions of an individual required them. Therefore, abortions and sterilizations performed on sex offenders required similar consent. However, sterilizations of Roma women were done for the most part involuntarily, unbeknownst to the women, and thus illegally.

[51] Josef Hynie and Iva Šípová, "Transsexuálky," *Československá psychiatrie* 71, no. 1 (1975): 48-52.

[52] Iva Šípová, "Terapie LSD u homosexuálů a transsexuálek," *Časopis lékařů českých* 113, no. 48 (1974): 1491-1493.

In other research projects, sexologists learned that in contrast to a control group of homosexuals, their transsexual patients came from good and well-functioning families, suggesting that their "deviance" was not psychopathological but inborn and irreversible (whether this observation led them to see transsexuality as less "deviant" than homosexuality is impossible to tell). They also found that their patients were highly intelligent but often ended their education after the mandatory nine grades of elementary school and worked mainly in manual, working-class jobs.[53] In other words, transsexuals checked all the boxes of well-performing members of society. That, however, does not mean that expert attitudes towards transsexuals were celebratory or positive. Anecdotal evidence, some of which I present below, suggests that transphobia among experts was more than common.

Employees of the Sexological Institute in Prague also sent requests to regional police departments, specifically the division of ID cards, to change the names (and ID cards) of individuals to a gender neutral version of their names "for reasons of a different/peculiar sexual development [zvláštní sexuální vývoj]."[54] Such requests—how many there were is unknown—demonstrate that the employees of the Institute themselves did not know the correct procedure for changing one's name as the responsible authorities were not the police but rather the regional departments of internal affairs. They were, however, strikingly bold: sexologists acted on behalf of their transsexual patients without any prior consent of the Ministry of Health Care/Communist Party. Considering these requests unlawful, birth registry administrators raised this issue with the Ministry of Health Care. The Ministry answered that a change in the name was allowed if it were not "contrary to the interests of society and if there were no circumstances justifying specific

[53] Among the petitions I have, there was a zoo technician, construction worker, driver of a fork-lift truck, chicken factory worker, office worker in a steelwork company, nurse, and a cleaning lady, at least one of these jobs were chosen for the duration of the transition only.
[54] ZAO, SmKNV, i.č. 154, ka 88, č.j. Zdrav 488/1974-Vaš.

considerations [důvody vhodné zvláštního zřetele]."[55] It concluded, in other words, that such a change was not against the law.

The medical practice of sex change was solidified in the second half of the 1970s. Johan's case file illustrates the change: in 1975, a regional committee called to discuss his case permitted mastectomy and hysterectomy but did not recommend the change of sex in the birth registry, claiming that such a move would have "serious legal implications."[56] In their report on the deliberations the experts further wrote that taking the extra step towards a legal change was unnecessary because Johan would be able to adapt even without it, and anyway he would not be allowed to marry since the marriage would not "fulfill its social function."[57] But when his case was reviewed three years later, no such reservations were made. Ten years after he first stepped into the office of the regional sexologist, Johan could hope both for the possibility of having his sex rewritten in the birth registry and for a marriage to a woman he had been living with. In sum, then, in the short span of a few years, a new range of possibilities opened up to Czechoslovak transsexuals, including the normative way to live in the socialist society: as married individuals.

Agency

The fact that transsexual individuals mounted pressure on experts and civic authorities, insisting that doctors help them, and thus alleviate their suffering, cannot be underestimated in accounting for the shift in expert practices.[58] In fact, several files reveal that the petitioners did not waste any of their time waiting for a decision to be made for them and urged authorities to deal with their cases. The petitioners kept themselves informed about the state of their cases,

[55] *Ibid*. I am indebted to Kubo Mačák for his help with the legal translation.
[56] ZAO, SmKNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), report dated September 15, 1975.
[57] *Ibid*.
[58] Šípová writes that transsexuals "demand" that sexologists treat them. Iva Šípová, "Intelektová úroveň u transsexuálů," *Československá psychiatrie* 71, no. 2-3 (1975): 131-136.

transfers of their documentation from one place to another, and would often give authorities exactly the one month the authorities legally had to respond to a request, after which they would demand answers by writing additional letters. These letters were not only pleas for intervention into an unbearable situation, they were also matter-of-fact requests that the authorities fulfil their duty. Sometimes, the petitioners justified their request by claiming their subject position as citizens of the country and asserting their right to self-realization in Czechoslovak socialist society. Some presented themselves as confident individuals, if individuals in need of intervention by the medical community, demonstrating that they saw themselves as equal, fully participating members of Czechoslovak society.

Tom was one of those who kept contacting the authorities and may have thus contributed to the change of expert and state approaches to transsexuals. Tom first attempted to complete his transition after a mastectomy in 1975, but the request was rejected. Tom tried again a year later, sending a letter asking for a new surgery that would make him "look like a man and have sexual intercourse with women."[59] This request, too, was rejected by the head of the psychiatric clinic in the region on the grounds that "everything the committee could have dealt with, it already did."[60] Since phalloplasty was not offered at the time, there was nothing more to do.[61]

Tom did not accept this answer and, at the recommendation of his sexologist, sent another letter requesting that an expert committee discuss his desire to change his name to a fully male form. At the time (this was still 1976), there were no regulations stipulating what officials should do in such cases, and so Tom's sexologist probably wanted to obtain an official document in case the respective birth registry authority refused Tom's request for a legal sex change. Strikingly, the regional health care official, Lubomír Ficker, sent Tom's request directly to the

[59] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated September 20, 1976.
[60] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated November 8, 1976.
[61] In 1987, phalloplasty was only offered in 3 countries, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. Cohen-Kettenis and Wålinder, "Sex reassignment surgery in Europe."

respective unit in city hall, perhaps strategically using Tom's legal (female) sex/name: "…should [Tom] ask [you] to change her name, we recommend – if it is within the possibilities of the relevant regulations – that her request be accommodated." Ficker explained that the change of name would "further the social adaptation in the direction of a male role."[62] Tom's case did not get resolved until 1979, however. Having discussed Tom's petition, including a letter in which he claimed that he desired to "live fully as a rightful member of our socialist homeland,"[63] an expert committee approved Tom's desire to fully complete the transition.[64]

David, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, too, sought all possible ways to speed up expert decision-making. After years of back and forth between his physician, the expert committee and himself about whether he was a "true transsexual," David decided he had had enough. Pointing out potential social confusion about his identity, he wrote: "This waiting is unbearable; for some I am a him, for others I am a she…I can't do this double face forever."[65] Arguing that he was older than other petitioners (he was 25 at the time) and mature enough to know what he wanted, he insisted that the committee gave him the permission to transition. Demonstrating familiarity with transsexual treatment in the US, David asked why he could not just test-live as a man for a year without having to wait for the decisions. That way "one can at least do something with the problem." To convince the committee that he was a man, he also provided what he thought would work best: he enclosed a letter from his former girlfriend addressed to him, which testified to his sexual attractiveness and manly demeanor. The girlfriend described him as having "completely unwomanly reflective serenity," and wrote further, "your

[62] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated May 4, 1979.
[63] *Ibid*., letter dated May 17, 1979.
[64] *Ibid*., report dated September 22, 1979.
[65] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), letter from August 1982 (date missing).

behavior free of all hysteria and desire to impress, and of boasting. In short, you just really are direct and boyish."[66]

Another transman, Martin, then still with a female name, also actively pursued the resolution of his case. At a meeting discussing his request for hysterectomy in March 1979, the committee experts also gave him their permission to change his name from an identifiably female to a more neutral form in March 1979. But a few weeks after his hysterectomy, expressed his frustration that the change of his name to a more neutral version had not yet materialized, as had been recommended by the expert committee from earlier in the year. In his letter to a regional health care authority in July, Martin wrote that having a female name was causing him "significant problems" and requested that he be allowed to change his name to a fully male form. His work required him to travel frequently and showing his ID card to prove his identity was creating difficulties because he looked different. He also wanted to marry his partner "as soon as possible" after the name change was completed.[67]

Nothing happened, and so Martin's next letter, written in six months later, framed his request strategically:

> On the recommendation of my doctor [doctor's name], my supervisor has informed my colleagues about the change of my name. Some, particularly older colleagues, refuse to accept it until my personal documents are changed as well. It's been five months since my request and nothing's happened. People around me are beginning to doubt the truthfulness of the entire situation. I've started to lose their trust, and I've even encountered an opinion that I've made it all up.[68]

Martin was finally able to change his name and sex in the birth registry a few months later, in May of 1980.

---

[66] *Ibid*.
[67] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated July 11, 1979.
[68] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated December 12, 1979.

Tom, David and Martin were among the petitioners who pushed medical experts to reconsider their opposition to legal sex change, and urged both experts and regional administrators to request that the Ministry of Health Care issue directions for how to proceed in cases of legal sex change. Birth registry authorities did not always follow the recommendations of medical committees to change a transsexual's name to a neutral version: Martin's name change was delayed for months because of a "poorly informed clerk."[69] Changing an individual's sex in the birth registry was a step further, indeed was unprecedented and had possible legal ramifications, so administrators were perhaps rightly concerned to act without official direction from the government.[70]

The Ministry of Health Care issued instructions to "unify the process" of name/sex change in February 1980. The instructions mandated that it would be possible to change sex in the birth registry only if surgical procedures created a "compelling look of the opposite sex while simultaneously destroying reproductive functions" of the given individual.[71] Crucially, it did not explicitly prohibit marriage, thus opening up a way for Czechoslovak transsexuals to marry as soon as they received new documentation—an option that many Western transsexuals did not have until much later. The state's permission for transsexuals to change their sex in the birth registry was, however, a deeply moral decision about who was a full citizen, one worthy of procreation, and thus came at a significant price to transsexuals. This provision for sterilization

[69] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.č. 203 (nezprac.), report dated September 22, 1979.
[70] We do not know how many transsexuals, if any at all, bypassed the medical system, obtained hormones and surgeries on their own, and changed their documentation by individually convincing authorities of the need to get the "correct" documents; Polish sexologists noted that they encountered only a small proportion of all transsexuals.
[71] *Věstník Ministerstva zdravotnictví České socialistické republiky* Vol. 29, n. 1-2 (1980): 3. Sterilizations of transsexuals were not unique to Czechoslovakia. As of 2017, twenty countries still required sterilizations, most of them former socialist countries, but also Luxemburg, Finland or Switzerland. See Peter Dunne, "Transgender Sterilisation Requirements in Europe," *Medical Law Review*, Vol. 25, I. 4, 1 (Nov 2017): 554–581.

of transsexuals is still in place, constituting one of the deeply problematic legacies of the socialist past.[72]

As the extensive communication in the files suggests, experts had created an enormously complicated bureaucracy in their efforts to control transsexual bodies. It is not clear to me that there were any state instructions requiring expert committees to meet and approve every step in the process of transsexual transitions but it is clear that the experts claimed that right for themselves. Almost each report among the files I have seen contained a clause that stated that any future changes the individual may petition for would have to be "newly assessed by an expert committee," creating complications and delays for their transsexual patients.

However, Martin's documents in particular are also a testament to what I would call the professionalism of the regional health care official, Lubomír Ficker. Trained as a doctor himself, Ficker was prompt in responding to questions and requests made by one of the involved parties, sometimes asked clinics to provide the necessary recommendations as an urgent matter, and would patiently explain the complicated bureaucratic procedures to both petitioners and city officials. In at least one documented case, one I noted above, Ficker even intervened on behalf of the petitioner. This example challenges the image of unwelcoming authorities we have from anecdotal evidence.

FtMs in Eastern Europe

Martin, David and Tom were all transmen. In fact, only five out of the twenty-six files in the collection belong to MtF individuals, a proportion that is common to the socialist countries.[73]

[72] The Czech Republic has been repeatedly criticized by international human rights organizations for the violation of human rights of transsexuals.

[73] While many scholars claim that the numbers are not a good way to think about transsexuality, the East/West difference seems to suggest that the numbers may be significant. For some of the previous literature on the prevalence of transsexuals, see I.B. Pauly, "Female Transsexualism;" Weitze, Cordula, and Susanne Osburg,

Socialist sexologists noted the difference at the time but it does not seem to have piqued their curiosity. The only explanation they offered was that women's position in a socialist society was harsh (harsher than in the West), "which probably makes it easier for [female transsexuals] to make a decision to become men, whereas it decreases male transsexuals' desire for a woman's social role."[74] Others just stated that the difference meant that men perhaps still had power in the society. To be sure, I am not interested in psychologizing East European transsexuals, what I find puzzling are the conditions for who makes it to the sexological clinic to petition for help with their transition. Due to the lack of archival sources, absolute lack of data on MtF transsexuals, and critically minimal number of personal accounts, I can only speculate about the reasons of the East European FtM:MtF statistics. Additionally, the US bias in the literature on transgender history available in English makes the effort of explaining the East European uniqueness difficult.

Scholars offer several explanations for why there was a higher prevalence of MtF transitions through official, medical channels in many Western countries. Mid-century sexologists understood "transsexualism" to be a male phenomenon, and did not deem access to testosterone to female-bodied "inverts" appropriate.[75] Psychologists thus labeled female "inverts" as homosexuals with an ingrained homophobia, persons with a "mind problem not a body problem," and denied them access to sex change.[76] Also, media reports on sex transitions focused on the more sensational MtF transitions and inspired more biological males to request transitions, which, as Joanne Meyerowitz claims, confirmed the bias of sexologists.[77] Biological

"Transsexualism in Germany: empirical data on epidemiology and application of the German Transsexuals' Act during its first ten years," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 25, no. 4 (1996): 409-425.
[74] Šípová, I. "Intelektová úroveň transsexuálek."
[75] Henry Rubin, "The Logic of Treatment," *Transgender Studies Reader* edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2013): 489; Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*.
[76] Rubin, "The Logic of Treatment," 494.
[77] Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*.

males generally also had more access to financial resources to acquire both hormonal treatment and surgeries,[78] whereas, as Henry Rubin argues, US FtM transsexuals did not prefer surgeries for aesthetic and political reasons, opting for hormonal therapy and living within butch communities instead. Rubin sees the emergence of FtM identity in the 1970s as a result of the "debates about the essence of lesbian identity," which helped sharpen the differentiation between butch lesbians and transsexuals.[79] Jan Wickman connects the increasing public visibility of female masculinity over the course of the 1990s to the "increased societal sexualization and commodification of the male body as an aesthetic object, which emphasized bodily volatility."[80]

In Eastern Europe, media reports were either nonexistent (Czechoslovakia) or very infrequent (Poland), hormones unavailable for purchase,[81] and non-normative communities were not consolidated. The nonexistence of lesbian subcultures as well as feminist political consciousness further meant there was also no rejection of sex reassignment surgeries for political reasons. Since both hormonal treatment and surgeries were paid for by health insurance, a gender pay gap would not have played a role in a decision to undergo therapy. And, finally, sexologists clearly did not deem female masculinity problematic – or at least not to the extent as to deny FtMs access to hormones.

One of the ways to explain the higher rate of FtM transitions can be gleaned from autobiographical accounts published in the Polish book *Apokalipsa płci* in 1989, and has to do with sexuality and family life. Both transmen and transwomen, whose personal accounts are published in the book (and largely follow medical discourse of "have always known themselves

[78] In the early years, some US and French transsexuals had to travel out of the country to get surgeries (to Europe and Morocco respectively), but even when surgeries in the US became more readily available in the later decades, treatment was costly. Joanne Meyerowitz, "A 'Fierce and Demanding' Drive," in *Transgender Studies Reader*, 373
[79] Rubin, *Self-made Men*, 64.
[80] Lucas Gottzén, and Wibke Straube, "Trans masculinities," *NORMA*, Vol. 11, n. 4 (2016): 217-224.
[81] Interviews with bodybuilders suggest that there was no black market with artificial hormones. But the literature is only emerging and further research is necessary.

to be in the wrong body") show that around their late teens and early twenties, the paths of transwomen and transmen diverged. While it is impossible to make general conclusions, it seems that transwomen decided to get married to "cure" themselves of what they considered unnatural or deviant selves. Their wives would tolerate their crossdressing desires, letting them express their femininity within the confines of their home and sometimes in sexual acts. All (three) of the Polish transwomen included in *Apokalipsa płci* said that, to varying degrees, their wives tolerated them dressing up in skirts and blouses and performing women's roles in the household. None of the FtM transsexuals had a similar story to tell about their, however short-or longer-lived, partnerships; on the contrary, their testimonies generally claim that sexual encounters with male partners were unimaginable or very brief (one of them got married but quickly divorced). The male partners would also most likely be far less tolerant, and perhaps hostile, to the idea of a female partner playing the male role sexually. In other words, being in a "heterosexual" relationship may have kept transwomen from deciding to go to a sexology clinic.[82]

By the time they entered sexological clinics, these transwomen had already had children. Transsexuals were not explicitly banned from sex reassignment surgeries in cases where they had children (as in the US, for example), but having children added a serious complication for transwomen to make the decision to transition, not least because experts warned transsexuals against traumatizing children. Since transmen requested a sex change and began treatment at a younger age, it made them much less likely than transwomen to have children, and thus have one less complicating factor in their decision-making less.[83]

But perhaps getting to the place of even thinking about transition was neither a matter of having children nor tolerance in the bedroom, but of culturally sanctioned ideas about

[82] Imieliński and Dulko, *Apokalipsa płci*.
[83] Cordula Weitze, and Susanne Osburg, "Transsexualism in Germany: Empirical Data on Epidemiology and Application of the German Transsexuals' Act During Its First Ten Years," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1996): 409-425.

appropriate gendered performance. The socialist project of women's emancipation opened up ways for biological females to perform masculinity in relatively safe and culturally sanctioned ways. A lot has been written on the ways in which women were recruited to traditionally male jobs, celebrated as Stakhanovite worker heroes, and portrayed in overalls. Masculinity, too, was subject to cultural reimagination. As Lilya Kaganovsky argues in her analysis of Stalinism, while Western culture creates a link between masculinity and the male body, constructing a naturalized relation between masculinity and power, Stalinism "stages the incommensurability of these terms, producing hybrids of female masculinity, of injured and paralyzed male bodies, of weakness that appears as strength, and powerlessness that appears as power."[84] In other words, while the ideal Stalinist subject was masculine, the relationship between masculinity and subjectivity did not, or not always, rely on the biologically male body.

Male bodies were not free from the demands of normative masculinity, however. As Věra Sokolová notes, male bodies were under stricter control by both the repressive apparatus and society. Just as police repressed gays more than lesbians, parents brought their male children to sexological offices for "deviant" behavior much more often than they brought their female children.[85] Sokolová also notes that while experts considered the so-called "virile homosexuals" perfectly "normal," apart from their pathology of being sexually attracted to men, the so-called "feminine homosexuals" were deemed deviant in more, and more damning, ways (there was no similar discourse distinguishing "masculine" and "feminine" female homosexuality). In other words, male bodies and their nonconforming behavior were more strictly policed by all strata of society.

---

[84] Kaganovsky, Lilya. *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008): 158.

[85] Sokolová, "State Approaches to Homosexuality," 90. For the policing of masculine demeanor see also Lišková, 'Perverzní sex a normalizační gender—Normalizační sexuologie promlouvá o sexu a genderu *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* (2012) 13: 40, 46.

Trans embodiment itself is "more work intensive" for MtF transsexuals because of the "norms surrounding appearance, demeanor and the body are more stringent for women."[86] If impeccable gender performance was stipulated as *the* condition for sex change (see the above-mentioned directions by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Health Care), what Kristen Schilt calls the "passability differential" between MtFs and FtMs – hormonal change of a body is generally easier and faster with testosterone than estrogen – would have been a crucial factor: deciding to even petition an expert committee for sex reassignment would have been much easier for FtM individuals.[87]

Finally, the different ways MtFs and FtMs construct their identities may add another factor in explaining why more FtM transitioned in Eastern Europe. Henry Rubin's work on transmen shows that FtM identities are "related to 'essentialist' narratives of self."[88] What this means is that transmen claim they were *never* women, that they were always in the wrong bodies, betrayed by their bodies. If Czechoslovak experts preferred biological explanations of transsexuality, and particularly sought to identify "true transsexualism" in their patients, they would have been inclined to mistrust those MtFs who did not have a solid story of always feeling female, let alone those who had been married. This, of course, does not explain why more transmen would even get to sexological offices but it may have added a factor in diagnosing "true transsexuals."

Normalization of difference

Since the beginning of the medical treatment of transsexuals in Czechoslovakia, the burden has been on transsexuals to conform rather than on society to address challenges to the

[86] Douglas Schrock, Lori Reid, and Emily M. Boyd. "Transsexuals' Embodiment of Womanhood." *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (2005): 321.
[87] Schilt, *Just One of the Guys?*
[88] Rubin, *Self-made Men*, 189.

notions of equivalence between sex, gender, and the body. For example, when discussing Martin's petition for sex change, the experts noted particularly his childhood "boy-ish interests" and his attraction to women since his teenage years. They pointed out that in the previous few years Martin "had exclusively worn pants and sweaters, no women's clothing," which they considered one of the signs that his "transsexual leaning has been getting deeper."[89] They also found that in his sexual life—Martin was in a relationship with a 29-year-old, divorced woman who was raising an eight-year-old son—Martin "perform[ed] the male role."[90] Satisfied with his masculine performance, the committee recommended both hysterectomy and the change of his name. It also stated that it would meet in the near future to determine whether a change to a fully male name (and sex) was warranted.

The pressure for transsexuals to be "normal" came from both experts and society, and did not include just appropriately looking bodies. In her autobiography, published in 2003, transwoman Tereza Spencerová writes that transsexuals were dismissed and mocked by sexologists and psychiatrists—biological males because their hands looked too masculine for the individual to ever become a transwoman, biological females for being too short and slender to ever become transmen.[91] When they did transition, their lives were not necessarily easy. They were harassed by co-workers, frequently transferred to different jobs, often ending up employed in manual labor, and more often than not fired altogether. Spencerová recounts a story of an allegedly well-known transwoman living in Prague in the late 1980s, who kept being fired from one job after another until she had no place to turn to and began prostituting herself. Since prostitution was listed as "parasitism" and was illegal, the transwoman was frequently detained

[89] ZAO, fond Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.c. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated January 20, 1979.
[90] *Ibid*.
[91] Spencerová, *Jsem tranďák!*

by the police.[92] Several files noted that the petitioners wanted to start a new life in a new city after completing their transitions, suggesting hostile attitudes from both family members and neighbors.

Experts (and society) strove to normalize transsexuals' bodies and demeanor as well as their behavior as socialist citizens. David's case file, for example, demonstrates that petitioners' success with the expert committees also depended on whether they were good socialist citizens—lead productive lives, worked good jobs, and followed standards of life set out for proper Czechoslovaks. The practice of requesting personality evaluations from the workplace and landlords or neighbors was hardly unique to Czechoslovak medical experts, but it shows that in their decision-making, medical experts were guided by non-scientific, cultural ideas about who was a good citizen.

The experts' insistence on transsexual assimilation on all levels—gender, sexuality, work, relationships—shows that they had a vested interest in, or else were part of, managing the social order. While Czechoslovak sexologists had always adhered to traditional notions of gender, in the period after the upheaval and suppression of the Prague Spring they mobilized essentialized notions of gender in order to normalize non-conforming citizens, thereby helping to stabilize the regime.[93] Drawing on Petr Roubal's analysis of the symbolism of the Czechoslovak mass exercises, I would suggest that mobilizing essentialized ideas about gender and the body and ideas associated with socialist citizenships indirectly buttressed the stability of the regime in the period of late socialism.[94]

---

[92] Spencerová, *Jsem tranďák!*. There is also some evidence among the files that, as with most socialist institutions, the committees sought to obtain evaluations of a respective petitioner from their workplace and living place and were reluctant to grant a transition to a person without an impeccable background.
[93] Sokolová, "State Approaches to Homosexuality."
[94] Roubal, *Spartakiády*.

For their part, transsexuals may have not, at least not necessarily, desired to directly challenge the cultural notions of gender and sex. In an environment of significant social pressures to conform, they may have simply wanted to "belong." In addition to revealing disciplinary mechanisms, the files are also a testament that at least some transsexuals led fairly unremarkable lives in Czechoslovak society. David headed a marriage counselling center; Martin was a well-established worker at a local factory, and a Party functionary, who also served as a member of the executive committee of the local sports organization (ČSTV).[95] Many of the files reveal that transsexuals had been in stable, long-term relationships with a partner at the time of their name change and/or surgery requests, and quite a few lived in households with children. In fact, many requested to have their bodies transformed and names changed in part so they could legitimize their relationships by marrying their partners.[96]

A FtM transsexual requested, for example, to have his breasts removed by claiming that "this uniquely female feature depresses me and is depressing in my partnership as well. It also bothers me a lot in my educational influence on my partners' six-year-old boy, who calls me a man."[97] Such a request is in part strategic, demanding a change to the body so as to appease contemporary fears of the more psychologically oriented experts and lay population that transsexuals corrupt children, perhaps also drawing on the heteronormative conviction that children should have an identifiable mother and a father. But it also speaks to the desire and the possibility for transsexuals to live relatively indistinguishably from the majority of the population.

[95] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.c. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated August 10, 1979.
[96] This is consistent with the findings of I.B. Pauly (1974), who looked at the sexological material published up until 1974 about transsexual changes. See Pauly, I.B. "Female Transsexualism," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* Vol 3, N. 6 (1974): 509-526.
[97] ZAO, Sm KNV Ostrava, ka 101, i.c. 203 (nezprac.), letter dated March 30, 1985.

Conclusion

The Czechoslovak practice of treating transsexuals was far from specifically socialist. Czechoslovak sexologists drew on interwar Hirschfeldian discourses, and they also kept up with developments in the West, adopting medical categories and practices for the Czechoslovak context. While scholars have recently begun exploring the ways in which knowledge-exchange flowed across the Iron Curtain, sexological discourses seem to have been particularly open, with practices directly adopted from the West. Yet the peculiarities of the socialist gender order, with arguably higher acceptance of female masculinity, gave the transsexual phenomenon its particularly East European feature: higher ratio of FtM transitions.

Czechoslovak transsexuals were most likely "found" by their doctors rather than acting on an awareness of transsexuality. But once transsexuality was determined as a diagnosis, and if transsexuals fulfilled criteria of gender appropriate performance and were good socialist citizens, they were often permitted to transition. This was neither a straightforward nor an easy process, rather it was one that entailed submission to ridicule, extensive and invasive examinations, and years of therapy, petitioning, and navigation of both medical and administrative bureaucracies. It also meant that transsexuals were forced to undergo sterilization and give up one of the fundamental rights as citizens and human beings.

While the 1970s were a decade of institutional and legal change for Czechoslovak transsexuals, there were no expert articles published and no instructions issued by the Ministry of Health Care throughout the 1980s. Paradoxically, then, the decade historians of Czechoslovakia associate with political retrenchment was arguably one of liberalization for transsexuals; the decade, which historians associate with gradual liberalization – at least over its second half – did not see any changes to the status quo.

After the collapse of communism, social attitudes and medical approaches changed only slowly. It was not until Tereza Spencerová published her part-memoir, part-feminist/transsexual manifesto *Jsem tranďák!* (I am trans!) in 2003 that transsexuality came to public consciousness, providing an impetus for the creation of trans activism. More striking, however, is the continuity of socialist-era Czechoslovak approaches to sexology in the present day in which contemporary sexologists still view transsexuality as a conflict between the body and the soul in a binary system of masculinity and femininity. Sexologist Hana Fifková, who began her career in the 1990s and has been applauded for her progressive approach, claims that transsexuality is inborn, a result of the "pathological formation of the center for sex identity in the diencephalon [a part of the brain] during the early stages of pregnancy."[98] While in this perspective transsexuality is not viewed as a moral pathology any more, it still treats gender as a fixed, binary category, as Dita Jahodová points out; it does not provide the space for an undetermined identity.[99] The transsexual community has been advocating to change sexology discourse.

[98] She follows the theory of the controversial Günter Dörner. See Hana Fifková, "Transsexualita z pohledu sexuoložky," *Gender and Research* 3 (2001): 3.
[99] Dita Jahodová, "Representations of Transsexuality in the Czech Medical Discourse and Documentary Films After 1989," in *Dějiny, teorie, kritika*, no 2 (2011): 296.

Conclusion

The memorial for the victims of the Czechoslovak communist regime at the foot of the Petřín hill in Prague depicts six figures in a progressively disintegrating state. Five of the figures are male, the last one is in such a stage of disintegration that it lost gender identification. But even the first, complete figure is no muscular hero. Portrayed as an elderly man, his arms loosely dangling along his torso, he looks frail. The author of the memorial, sculptor Olbram Zoubek, claims to have depicted political prisoners working in uranium mines (*mukl*), but the existing plaque does not mention this information and so the figures are open to visitors' interpretation. In fact, the nearby plaque reads: "The memorial to the victims of communism is dedicated to all victims; not only those who were jailed or executed but also those whose lives were ruined by totalitarian despotism." Considering the fraught memory of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, arguably just about anyone could identify with the memorial.

That the memorial associates the victim of communism with the male body is no coincidence. The forty-year communist rule in Czechoslovakia is remembered as a period that aligned women with the state but crushed men's lives; while emancipating women, the state took over the role of the paterfamilias. By the 1970s, models of Stakhanovite workers and communist leaders were unappealing, and not all men could or would want to become career soldiers. While the disintegrating figures evoke male suffering, the memorial could arguably by women as well as a depiction of them being overworked and exhausted from trying to combine their roles as mothers, workers and household managers.

This dissertation argues that far from destroying bodies of the Czechoslovaks, whether by violence, neglect or forced labor – though that happened too – the Czechoslovak regime cultivated bodies of its citizens. The promotion of a socialist lifestyle in the post-1968 period was

accompanied by a variety of incentives to create a "quiet life" for the Czechoslovaks, including the expansion of consumer products and advancement of privatized and familial life. At the center of these changes, and the Czechoslovak "quiet life," were ideas about the biological destiny of the gendered body. Contrasting with the focus on equality in the previous period, the body was now being viewed through notions of gender difference and was supposed to embody them; fit, healthy and, above all, appropriately gendered bodies were being promoted. Moreover, the late socialist period "added" one more type of a body into the Czechoslovak landscape: that of the transsexual.

I argued that it was experts rather than the Communist Party who strove to shape the bodies of the Czechoslovaks, even though experts would not exist without the Party support and worked in state funded institutions. I focused on medical experts – obesitologists, dermatologists, sexologists, gynecologists, etc. – who were not only mediators between the goals of the Communist Party and everyday experiences, but also lifestyle coaches, and interventionists who directly shaped the lives of the Czechoslovaks. The Czechoslovaks were by no means passive recipients of expert and state efforts; they actively shaped them, negotiated, and sometimes simply avoided expert advice and state public health campaigns. The late socialist body's looks and demeanor was thus a matter of constant negotiation and (re)definition that took place among the experts, citizens and the political leadership.

That the state and experts intervened in Czechoslovak bodies was not unique to socialism. All modern states intervene in their populations' health and reproduction. The Czechoslovaks had, moreover, a long tradition of *Sokol* of mass exercises that was directly adopted by the communist regimes (and in fact *Sokol* functionaries returned to direct the late socialist *Spartakiads*, bringing back naturalized imagery of femininity and masculinity) as was the interwar public health and, in part, sex reform discourse. The Stalinist years of the 1950s

placed attention on creating an ideal environment for the best development of workers and citizens, only to shift towards individualized responsibility for the body over the course of the 1960s.

The dissertation examined five different areas related to the gendered body that shaped the late socialist "quiet life." Two of these areas relate to bodily aesthetics. I explored beauty industry and anti-obesity discourses to show that they mutually reinforced the construction of elegant and slender bodies. Both dieting and beauty advice were largely directed at women and both developed out of everyday practices of the population; they legitimized women's interest in their appearance and reformulated it as a duty of a socialist woman. In beauty discourse, indeed, harmony and demographic stability of the Czechoslovak society depended on women's good, attractive looks.

Both anti-obesity and beauty discourses were linked to consumption, which was a profoundly problematic area for Communist leaders, nurturing desires and needs that threatened to undermine the socialist system and so had to be managed. But while beauty was managed by discourses of health and *kulturnost*, the anti-obesity campaign itself managed socialist consumption, promoting bodily discipline and consumer moderation. I argued in these chapters that consumer capitalism and socialism both used (gendered) bodies to manage internal tensions, but in different ways: whereas in capitalism the body manages tensions between hedonism and discipline, in socialism the body managed the tension between the effort to maintain the systemic identity of socialism and the (threat of) socialist societies looking similarly to the West.

The next two chapters are connected by the notion of citizenship, where the state highlighted citizens' duty to the society. Focusing on reproduction and soldiering as defining attributes of femininity and masculinity, these two themes underscored the persistence of the decidedly gendered ways in which biological bodies were imagined. Both chapters showed that

the Czechoslovaks interpreted and experienced reproduction and mandatory military service in a variety of ways that were sometimes at odds with the state's ideas and how little control over citizens the late socialist state had. Czechoslovak authorities defined reproduction as the highest form of self-realization but despite the mother-centered rhetoric, Czechoslovak women's experiences were less important than low rates of infant mortality. I showed that women had different, sometimes rather ambivalent experiences of their pregnant bodies, and often evaded medical authority. Similarly, while army service was presented to men as the school of socialist masculinity and the cultivation of muscular bodies, it failed to inculcate soldierly habits. Even though men did not become soldiers, the army service did serve to turn men's attention to the shape and weight of their bodies

The final chapter of the dissertation explores transsexuality, as a "new type" of body that emerged in expert discourse in the late 1960s. It shows that sexologists accepted transsexuality as a "treatable" condition largely because, unlike homosexuality, it allowed to reconcile "difference" with heteronormativity. Sex reassignment (gender confirmation) procedures were conditioned by a perfect performance of gender attributes as well as sterilization, revealing the normative foundation of citizenship. The chapter calls into question the association of the normalization regime with political retrenchment.

The late socialist body discourse was not just gendered but cultivated a particularly able-bodied, and middle-class body culture. The state also adopted a plethora of policy measures to increase the allegedly uncultured and unhygienic habits and behaviors of the Roma. With the promotion of "quality" population in the late socialist period, Roma reproduction came under the scrutiny of demographers and medical experts, and Roma women started being involuntarily sterilized. The notion of (un)cultured manners connoted not only racialized but also class distinctions, promoting bourgeois or middle-class bodily habits. However, the notion of

kulturnost clashed not only with the shortage of products to cultivate cultured looks and demeanor but also with the ideological support for the working-classes.

One of the lingering issues of the dissertation is a question of individualism, the family, and society. In some chapters, I have argued that the focus on self-realization and individualized approaches to health introduced individualism into the Czechoslovak society. Aesthetic discourses of beauty encouraged women to know their bodies, accentuate their advantages and create their own style. Anti-obesity discourses framed body fat and health as a matter of individual responsibility. Yet, individual beauty, health and fitness continued to be framed as mattes of familial and social obligation, and the Czechoslovaks retained a high degree of familialism throughout the late socialist period. These approaches are not necessarily in contradiction, connected as they are by the notion of a heteronormative gender order. As well, they easily coexisted in the various "types" of bodies this dissertation explores – aesthetic practices were individualized, maternity largely a matter of a family, and conscription a matter of citizenship duty. To put it differently, the Czechoslovaks were mobilized differently in different areas of their lives.

Did the body have a Cold War? I hope to have shown that it did both on the symbolic and material level. The Cold War competition between the two superpowers meant that their body cultures were defined against one another, engendering both similarities and differences. Both capitalist and socialist regimes mobilized the body and used it as a tool of legitimacy, arguing that their respective systems provided a more desirable life for their citizens. Both labeled a plethora of phenomena, ranging from body weight, nutrition, fashion choices, to sports, medical procedures, and rates of infant mortality, as evidence that their citizens were happier, healthier, and more prosperous. Both strove to shape material bodies for military confrontation, creating systems of military drills for their population, from schoolchildren to adults. In the all-

encompassing ideological battle of the two systems, the body, whether in its representation through population statistics or mass media images, figured prominently.

The rivalry and different trajectories led to differences between the two systems; Socialist countries put a stronger emphasis on preventative medicine, continued to mobilize its male population for a mandatory military service, and the much smaller consumer market curtailed possibilities of self-fashioning. Further, socialist countries upended gender hierarchies and mobilized women into the labor market in unprecedented ways; while by the 1970s, the differences between Western and Eastern employment rates and policies were narrowing, their different trajectories allowed for a different imagination of bodily transgression, female specifically. The campaign of women's emancipation in the Soviet bloc opened up the space to imagine female masculinity as a legitimate expression of a gendered identity in ways that contrasted with male femininity and that was vastly different from any Western country.

Yet, as they competed over who provides better conditions and more happiness to their populations, socialism and capitalism inevitably brought the two systems together, creating a "cultural landscape that was international and collective in character."[1] Youth and music subcultures were identified by fashion and hairstyles that circulated around the globe. Czechoslovak physicians fashioned medical treatment, such as sex therapy or transsexuality, on American models; beautification advice in the Czechoslovak media was sometimes inspired and sometimes directly copied from West German media; and obesitologists measured Czechoslovak bodies by standards developed by US or French researchers. The "West" may have been imagined for many Czechoslovaks, but Western discourses and practices directly shaped their bodies. The proliferation of practices that copied or adapted Western practices demonstrates that the differences between the East and the West were becoming increasingly blurred.

[1] Marko Dumančić, "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Histories of Gender and Sexuality during the Cold War," *Gender, Sexuality and the Cold War*, 9.

Further research into the lives of various "Third World" groups in Czechoslovakia, including regulations of sex, would also complicate the idea of the Cold War as an East-West affair. Finally, the continuities in discourses, practices, and institutions across the 20th century and beyond, as my dissertation showed, suggest that the Cold War framework is inadequate. The Czechoslovak socialist period emerged as a phase in a longer trajectory of the body; Czechoslovak experts and authorities drew on and adopted pre-war practices, the practices developed during the socialist period have repercussions into the 21st century.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Letters (in author's personal possession)
KH, 1981-1983.
IH, 1981-1983.
RA, 1982-1983.

Interviews
Eva A., Ostrava, August 8, 2018
Richard A., Ostrava, August 5, 2016
Vlastimil Bursa, Plzeň, November 9, 2015
Zdena C., Prague, July 24, 2018
Iva H., Hradec Králové, June 22, 2015, and July 24, 2018
Pavel H., Prague, December 11, 2015
Tomáš Kydlíček, Plzeň, November 3, 2015
Jiří M., Lhotka, January 31, 2015
M. Nováková, Prague, Nov 2, 2015
Beata S., Velký Šariš, July 11 and July 12, 2015
Dobroslav Šiška, Bratislava, June 9, 2015
Dušan Záruba, Prague, November 13, 2015
Vladislav Z., Bělečko, Sept 1, 2016.

Archives
AMO Archiv Ministerstva obrany (Archive of the Ministry of Defence)
AZK Archiv západoslovenského kraje (West Slovak Regional Archives)
MZA Moravský zemský archiv v Brně (Moravian Land Archive in Brno)
NA Národní archiv (National Archives Czech Republic)
SNA Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives)
ŠAB Štátný archív Bratislava (Bratislava State Archives)
ŠAK Štátny archív v Košiciach (Košice State Archives)
ZAO Zemský archiv v Opavě (Opava Land Archive)
Personal archive Marie Nosková

Periodicals
Eva
Mladý svět
Rudé právo
Slovenka
Student
Věstník Ministerstva zdravotnictví České socialistické republiky
Vlasta

Online sources
Digitální repozitář, Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky (https://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?k=82)

Jozef Sedlák Photography (http://www.sedlakjozef.com/)
Symposium *O soudně lékařských otázkách transsexualismu* (http://www.translide.cz/knihovna)
The Czech Social Science Data Archive (http://archiv.soc.cas.cz/pristup-k-datum)

Films and clips
Bakaláři (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4-qiZKBlvs)
Majáles 65 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5pX_gD5r2E)
Miss Moskva https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsPuVX2PjTs)
Pověz, miláčku (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRBaN-QTpM4)
Silvestr 1979 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3TI04MGy6U)
Woman on the Rails (1966)

Published primary sources
Books
Encyklopedie mladé ženy. Prague: Avicenum, 1978.

Adamec, Čeněk, et al.. *Veřejné mínění a otylost*. Prague: Ústav zdravotní výchovy, 1969.

Benjamin, Harry. *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: The Julian Press, 1966.

Burian, František, *Plastická chirurgie*. Praha: ČSAV, 1959.

Burian, Vlado. *Ideální člověk*. Prague: Merkur, 1978.

Doleček, Rajko. *Nebezpečný svět kalorií*. Praha: Olympia, 1977.

Dráč, Pavel et al. *Příprava ženy na mateřství*. Praha: Ústav zdravotní výchovy, 1981.

Hejda, Stanislav, and Kateřina Ošancová. *Problém otylosti u obyvatelstva*. Praha: Avicenum, 1974.

Holecová, A., and M. Hyžová. *Redukčné diéty pre deti a mládež v pionierskych táboroch ČsČK a na liečbu tučnoty v rodine.* Martin: Osveta, 1985.

Majorová, Marie. *Dámy a pánové, život začíná.* Prague: Mladá fronta, 1980.

Pešková, Helena. *Plastická chirurgie kosmetických vad*. Prague: Státní zdravotnické nakladatelství, 1968.

Polák, Ladislav. *Péče o pleť: pro ženy v zaměstnání i v domácnosti* (Praha: Státní zdravotnické nakladatelství, 1961.

Prokopec J, et al., Zdravotní výchova a socialistický způsob života: sborník materiálů přednesených na celostátní konferenci pořádané 24.–26. 11. 1982 v Praze pod záštitou ministra zdravotnictví ČSR prof. MUDr. J. Prokopce, CSc., k 30 letům socialistické zdravotní výchovy v ČSSR. Praha: Ústav zdravotní výchovy, 1983.

Šonka, Jiří, et al. *Za štíhlou linii*. Praha: Merkur, 1971.

Šonka, Jiří. *Boj proti otylosti cvičením a dietou*. Praha: Olympia, 1981.

Václav Vokálek, *Vojínův nářek.* Praha: Věra Nosková, 2011.

Zahálka, J. *100 a 1 jídel pro štíhlou linii*. Praha: Merkur, 1982.

Articles

"Pracovní schůze komise pro psychosomatiku v gynekologii a porodnictví," Praha, 17. června 1988, *Československá gynekologie* 54, no. 2 (1989).

"Reflections on Aesthetic and Functional Reconstruction in Plastic Surgery," *Acta Chirurgiae Plasticae*, 21, 4 (1979): 204.

Ambrožová, J. "Chirurgická a psychologická problematika léčby stárnoucího obličeje," *Rozhledy v chirurgii* 57, 2 (1978): 167-170.

Benjamin, Harry. "Newer Aspects to the Transsexual Phenomenon," *The Journal of Sex Research* 5, 2 (1969): 135-141.

Brucháč, Dušan. "Lekárske vedenie pôrodu," *Československá gynekologie* 43, 2 (1978): 140-142.

Břešťák, M. "Zkvalitníme péči o ženu." *Československá gynekologie* 50, 3 (1985): 161-163.

Čepický, Pavel, T. Lomíčková, and J. Presl. "Jaký je současný názor na indikace císařského řezu?" *Československá gynekologie* 54, 8 (1989): 604-609.

Čepický, Pavel, K. Ludvíková and A. Mellanová. "Současný stav porodnické psychoprofylaxe v Praze I. Způsob provádění přípravy." *Československá gynekologie* 49, 8 (1984): 568–572.

Černoch, A. "Úvodní slovo ke konferenci o perinatální úmrtnosti v chorobnosti," *Československá gynekologie* 47, 1 (1982): 13-15.

Dlhoš, E. "Závery z konferencie venovanej problematike sterilizácie žien a mužov." *Československá gynekologie* 33, 4 (1968): 302.

Fahoun K. "Estetické operace," *Prakický lékař* 59, 1 (1979): 14-18.

Gazárek, F., et al. "Cesty ke snížení perinatální úmrtnosti v ČSSR pod 10 promile." *Československá gynekologie* 47, 1 (1982): 24-28.

Gazárek, F., Z. Krikal, and H. Kavalová. "Programovaný porod." *Československá gynekologie* 48, 7 (1983): 542-546.

Hrbáč, L., L. Novotný, and R. Tupý. "Zdravotní stav branců: Odvodní řízení a léčebně preventivní péče o brance," *Prakticky lékař* 56, 19 (1976): 697-700.

Hrubý, J., and F. Maňas. “Výživové doporučené dávky pro průměrného obyvatele,” *Výživa lidu* 32, 3-4 (1977): 33-36.

Hynie, Josef, and Iva Šípová. 1975. “Transsexuálky.” *Československá psychiatrie* 71, 1: 48-52.

Knobloch, Viktor. 1970. “Bolest za porodu.” *Československá gynekologie* 35, no. 4: 223.

Kopecký, Miroslav, Kateřina Kikalová, and Jiří Charamza. “Sekulární trend v tělesné výšce a hmotnosti dospělé populace v České republice.” *Časopis lékařů českých* 155, 7 (2016): 357-364.

Luhanová, Zdeňka. “Důsledky obezity v dětském věku.” *Výživa a zdraví* 26, 12 (1971): 166–167.

Mann, Michael. “The Roots and Contradictions of Modern Militarism,” *The New Left Review* I/162 (1987).

Martincik J, and M. Uher. “Naše stanovisko k náplni pojmu ‘lékařské vedení porodu.’” *Československá gynekologie* 43, 2 (1978): 142-143.

Mašek, Josef. “Pro štíhlou linii: Otylost proti tělesné kráse.” *Výživa lidu* 26, 2 (1971): 22.

Medvecký, J., E. Medvecká, and Š. Sajko. “Prípad transsexualismu.” *Československá psychiatrie* 69, 4 (1973): 236-239.

Melkes, Vladimir. “K problémům struktury naší výživy.” *Výživa lidu* 21, 6 (1966): 85-86.

Mellanová, A, K. Ludvíková, and P. Čepický. “Současný stav porodnické psychoprofylaxe v Praze. 1. Způsob provádění přípravy.” *Československá gynekologie* 49, 8 (1984): 568-572.

Nosková, B. “Dieta při dětské otylosti.” *Výživa lidu* 25, 3 (1970): 42.

Ošancová, Kateřina. “Obezita ve městě a na venkově.” *Výživa lidu* 27, 4 (1972): 52.

Ošancová, Kateřina, and Stanislav Hejda. “Výživa v těhotenství.” *Výživa lidu* 31, 9 (1976): 139-141.

Poradovský, K., et al. “Lekárske vedenie pôrodov koncom pánvovým.” *Československá gynekologie* 43, 2 (1978): 160.

Presl, J. “Vzpřímená poloha ženy za porodu.” *Czechoslovak Gynecology* 47, 1 (1982): 10-12.

Rath, Ratmír. “Obezita ženy a těhotenství.” *Výživa lidu* 31, 1 (1976): 5-6.

Sirotný E., et al. “Súčasný stav anestézy pri cisárskom reze.” *Československá gynekologie* 35, 9 (1970): 557-561.

Skalický, Jan, "Změny indexu step-testu u vojáků v základní službě v průběhu dvouletého výcviku," In *Vojenské zdravotnické listy* 37, no. 1 (1968): 3-9.

Slezák, L, and M. Stimpl. "Nejde o experiment." *Československá gynekologie* 51, 7 (1986): 565-567.

Sochor, J. "Koncepcia starostlivosti o tehotne ženy ohrozene predčasným pôrodom a jej realizácie." *Československá gynekologie* 39, 5 (1974): 349-351.

Stiksa, E., and J. Budínský. "Technika lékařského vedení porodu s použitím neuroplegické analgetické směsi." *Československá gynekologie* 27, 5 (1962): 395-6.

Šípová, Iva. "Terapie LSD u homosexuálů a transsexuálek." *Časopis lékařů českých* 113, 48 (1974): 1491-1493.

Šípová, Iva. "Intelektová úroveň u transsexuálů," *Československá psychiatrie* 71, 2-3 (1975): 131-136.

Šlégl, J. "K výživě a životosprávě dospívající mládeže." *Výživa lidu* 37, 2 (1982): 22-23.

Šráčková, Dagmar. "Historie kojení 2." *Praktická gynekologie* 4 (2004): 26-28.

Zajacová, E., E. Šomská, and J. Chabada. "Komplikácie pri medikamentóznom vedení III. pôrodnej doby." *Československá gynekologie* 43, 2 (1978): 155.

Cohen-Kettenis, P. T., and J. Wålinder.. "Sex reassignment surgery in Europe: A survey." *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 75, 2 (1987): 176-182.

Secondary sources

Secondary media sources

*iDnes (*http://ona.idnes.cz/)
Jaromír Nohavica website
Maminka.cz (https://www.maminka.cz)
O Tereze a Tomovi (http://otereze.blog.cz)
Pogoda na życie (http://pogodanazycie.pl/)
Porodnice.cz (http://www.porodnice.cz/)
Radiožurnál (http://www.rozhlas.cz)
Retro (https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10176269182-retro/)
SME (http://komentare.sme.sk)
Vital (https://vitalplus.org/)
Československá armáda (http://armada.vojenstvi.cz/)
ZAM, zdravotnictví a medicína (https://zdravi.euro.cz)

Secondary published sources

Ahlbäck, Anders. *Manhood and the Making of the Military Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917-39*. New York and London: Routlege, 2014.

Alamgir, Alena. "Recalcitrant Women: Internationalism and the Redefinition of Welfare Limits in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Labor Exchange Program." *Slavic Review* 73, no. 1 (2014): 133-155.

Bělinová, Helena. 2013. *Ideál ženské krásy před a po roce 1989 - analýza diskurzu v časopise Vlasta.* Prague: FHS UK. Unpublished MA Thesis.

Bell, John D. "Giving Birth to the New Soviet Man: Politics and Obstetrics in the USSR." *Slavic Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 1-16.

Benjamin, Harry. *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: The Julian Press, 1966.

Benstock, Shari, and Susanne Ferriss. eds. *on fashion*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

Betts, Paul, and Katherine Pence eds. *Socialist Modern*: *East German Everyday Culture and Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Betts, Paul. *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Bickford, Andrew. "The Militarization of Masculinity in the Former German Democratic Republic," In *Military Masculinities: Identity and State*, edited by Paul Higate (Praeger Publishers, Greenwood Press, 2003.

Black, Paula. *The Beauty Industry: Gender, Culture, Pleasure.* London: Routledge, 2004.

Bockmann, Johanna. *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Boero, Natalie. "Fat Kids, Working Moms, and the 'Epidemic of Obesity': Race, Class and Mother Blame." In *The Fat Studies Reader*, edited by E Rothblum. and S Solovay, 113-119. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Bordo, Susan. *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1999.

Bourke, Joanna. *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Bren, Paulina. “Women on the Verge of Desire: Women, Work, and Consumption in Socialist Czechoslovakia.” In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, 177-196. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

Bren, Paulina. *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.

Brenner, Michael, and Gideon Reuven, eds. *Emancipation Through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

Brown, Melissa T. *Enlisting Masculinity: The Construction of Gender in US Military Recruiting Advertising during the All-Volunteer Force*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Brimblecombe, F.S.W., M.P.M. Richards, and N.R.C. Roberton, eds. *Separation and Special-care Baby Units*. London, William Heinemann Medical Books, 1978.

Brockermann, Heiner. *Landewsverteidigung und Militarisierung: Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik der DDR in der Ära Honecker 1971-1989* Berlin: Links Verlag, 2011.

Brotherton, Sean. *Revolutionary Medicine: Health and the Body in Post-Soviet Cuba*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Carolan, Michael. “The Conspicuous Body: Capitalism, Consumerism, Class and Consumption.” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 9, 1 (2015): 82-111.

Cohen, Ballerino, Richard Wilk Colleen, and Beverly J. Stoeltje. eds. *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Colton, Timothy, and Thane Gustafson, eds. *Soldiers and the Soviet State: Civil-Military Relations from Brezhnev to Gorbachev.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Cronin, Mike. “Projecting the Nation through Sport and Culture: Ireland, Aonach Tailteann and the Irish Free State, 1924-32,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 3 (July 2003): 395-411.

Crowley, David and Susan E. Reid. eds. *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

Davis, Kathy. *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

de Grazia, Victoria, and E. Furlough. eds. *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Devor, Holly (now Aaron). *FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997.

Donert, Celia. *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

Drakulić, Slavenka. *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993.

Dudová, R. *Interrupce v České republice: zápas o ženská těla*. Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2012.

Dumančić, Marko. "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Histories of Gender and Sexuality during the Cold War." In *Gender, Sexuality and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, edited by Philip E. Muehlenbeck, 1-12. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2017.

Dunne, Peter. "Transgender Sterilisation Requirements in Europe," *Medical Law Review* 25, no. 4, 1 (Nov 2017): 554–581.

Edele, Mark. "Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945-1953," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50 (2002): 37-6.

Edwards, Margot. *Reclaiming Birth: History and Heroines in American Childbirth Reform*. Traumansburg: Crossing Press, 1984.

Eichler, Maya. *Militarizing Men: Gender, Conscription, and War in Post-Soviet Russia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Elias, Ana S, Rosalind Gill, and Christina Scharf, *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Featherstone, Mike. "Body in Consumer Culture." In *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory* edited by Bryan Turner, 170-196. (London: SAGE Publications, 1991).

Fehervary, Krisztina. *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Feinberg, Melissa. *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2006.

Fidelis, Malgorzata. "Equality through Protection: The Politics of Women's Employment in Postwar Poland, 1945-1956," *Slavic Review* 63 (Summer 2004), 301-324.

Fidelis, Malgorzata. "Are You a Modern Girl? Consumer Culture and Young Women in the 1960s." In *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, edited by Shana Penn and Jill Massino, 171-184. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Fidelis, M. 2010. *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fielding, Stephen A. “The Changing Face of Little Italy: The Miss Colombo Pageant and the Making of Ethnicity in Trail, British Columbia, 1970-1977.” *Urban History Review* 39, no. 1, Special Issue: Encounters, Contests, and Communities: New Histories of Race and Ethnicity in the Canadian City, Part 2 (Fall 2010): 45-58.

Fifková, Hana. “Transsexualita z pohledu sexuoložky.” In *Gender and Research*, 3 (2001): 2-3.

Foerster, Maxime. “On the History of Transsexuals in France,” *Transgender Experience: Place, Ethnicity, and Visibility*, edited by Chantal Zabus and David Coad, 19-30. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Franc, Martin. “Socialism and the Overweight Nation. Questions of Ideology, Science and Obesity in Czechoslovakia 1950–70,” *The Rise of Obesity in Europe: A Twentieth Century Food History* edited by D.J. Oddy, P.J. Atkins, V. Amilien, 193–205 Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2009.

Franc, Martin. “Tlouštík a socialismus. Obezita jako vědecký a společenský problém v Československu 1948–68,” *Kuděj. Časopis pro kulturní dějiny* 11, n. 1 (2009): 28–42.

Franc, Martin. *Řasy, nebo knedlíky? Postoje odborníků na vý- živu k inovacím a tradicím v české stravě v 50. a 60. letech 20. století*. Praha: Scriptorium, 2003.

Franc, Martin, and Jiří Knapík. *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948–1967*. Praha: Academia, 2011.

Frančíková, Dáša. “‘A Matter of Physical Health and Strength‘”: Disciplining the Female Body and Reproducing the Czech National Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.” *Journal of Women’s History* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 59-81.

Gabriel, Richard A. *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: A Combat Assessment*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983.

Gan, Susan, and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Gard M, and J. Wright. *The Obesity Epidemic. Science, Morality and Ideology*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005.

Ghodsee, Kristen. “Potions, Lotions and Lipstick: The Gendered Consumption of Cosmetics and Perfumery in Socialist and Postsocialist Urban Bulgaria,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 30, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 26-39.

Gilman, Sander. *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Gilman, Sander. *Fat: A Cultural History of Obesity*. Polity, 2008.

Godlewski, J.. 1988. “Transsexualism and anatomic sex ratio reversal in Poland.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 17: 547-8.

Gorsuch, Anne E. “The Dance Class or the Working Class: The Soviet Modern Girl,” *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* edited by Alys Eve Weinbaum and the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, 174-193. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Gottzén, Lucas and Wibke Straube, “Trans masculinities,” *NORMA* 11, no. 4 (2016): 217-224.

Gradskova, Yulia. “We Were Upset If We Weren’t Fashionable.” In *Gender, Equality and Difference During and After State Socialism*, edited by Rebecca Kay, 21-40. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Grosz, Elisabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1994.

Grant, Sarah. *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s*. New York and London: Routledge, 2013.

Gurova, Olga. “Ideology of Consumption in Soviet Union: From Asceticism to the Legitimating of Consumer Good.” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 24, no. 2 (2006): 91-98.

Harries-Jenkins. Gwyn, ed. *Armed Forces and the Welfare Societies: Challenges in the 1980s.* New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983.

Hainer V. et. Al. *Základy klinické obezitologie*, Praha: Grada, 2011 (2004).

Haney, Lynn. *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.

Hausmann, Bernice. *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology and the Idea of Gender*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1955.

Havelková, Barbara. “Three Stages of Law.” In *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*, edited by Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, 31-56. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Havelková, Barbara. “Blaming all Women: On Regulation of Prostitution in State Socialist Czechoslovakia,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 165, n. 36 (2016): 165-191.

Havelková, Hana, and Libora Oates-Indruchová, “Expropriated voice. Transformations of gender culture under state socialism; Czech society, 1948-89.” In *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*, edited by Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, 3-27. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Havlová, Barbora. “Móda 20. let na stránkách prvorepublikových časopisů: životní styl a odívání žen v době ‘zlatých dvacátých’.” Hradec Králové: Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2016. Uunpublished BA Thesis.

Healy, Dan. “The Sexual Revolution in the USSR: Dynamics Beneath the Ice.” In *Sexual Revolutions*, edited by G. Hekma and A. Giami, 236-248. London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2014.

Heitlinger, Alena. *Reproduction, Medicine & the Socialist State*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978.

Herzog, Dagmar. "Syncopated Sex: Transforming European Sexual Cultures." *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1287-308.

Hlaváčková, Konstantina. *Móda za železnou oponou: Československo 1948-1989*. Prague: Grada, 2017.

Hoad, Neville. “Miss HIV and Us: Beauty Queens Against the HIV/AIDS Pandemic.” *The New Centennial Review* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 9-28.

Hockey, John. *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture.* Exeter: University of Exeter, 1986.

Hoffmann, David. *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Hrešanová, Ema. “Midwives, women, and the professionalization of midwifery: an ethnographic study of two maternity hospitals in the Czech Republic,” *Cognition, Brain, Behavior*, Volume 11, n. 2 (June 2007): 371-396.

Hrešanová, Ema. “Porodní péče a zkušenosti českých žen: kvalitativní studie.” *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 12, no. 2 (2011): 63-74.

Hrešanová, Ema. “’Nobody in a maternity hospital talks to you’: Socialist Legacies and Consumerism in Czech Women’s Childbirth Narratives,” *Czech Sociological Review* 50, no. 6 (2014): 961-985.

Hrešanová, Ema. “The Psychoprophylactic Method of Painless Childbirth in Socialist Czechoslovakia: from State Propaganda to Activism of Enthusiasts.” *Medical History* 60, no. 4 (2016): 534–556.

Huebner, Karla. “Fire Smoulders in the Veins: Toyen’s Queer Desire and Its Roots in Prague Surrealism.” *Papers of Surrealism* 8 (Spring 2010): 1-22.

Hynes, Samuel. *A Soldier’s Tale: Bearing the Witness to the Modern War.* New York: Allen Lane, 1997.

Imieliński, Kazimierz, and Stanisław Dulko. *Apokalipsa płci.* Szczecin: Glob, 1989.

Irving, Dan. “Normalized Transgressions: Legitimizing the Transsexual Body as Productive.” In *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, edited by Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, 15-30. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Jacobs, Sue-Ellen, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, eds. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Jahodová, Dita. “Representations of Transsexuality in the Czech Medical Discourse and Documentary Films After 1989.” *Dějiny, teorie, kritika*, no. 2 (2011): 289-308.

Kaganovsky, Lilya. *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.

Kelly, Catriona. *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Kenney, Padraic. “The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland." *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 399-425.

Kerr-Boyle, Neula. “The Slim Imperative: Discourses and Cultures of Dieting in the German Democratic Republic, 1949-90.” In *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities After Hitler*, edited by Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I, 158-179. Port New York: Berghahn Books, 2013.

Keys, Barbara. “The Body as a Political Space: Comparing Physical Education under Nazism and Stalinism.” *German History* 27, no. 3 (July 2009): 395–413.

Kligman, Gail. *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Kohlrausch, Martin, Katrin Steffen, and Stefan Wiederkehr, eds. *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I*. Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2010.

Kolář, Pavel, and Michal Pullmann, *Co byla normalizace? Studie o pozdním socialismu*. Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, ÚSTR, 2016.

Kolářová, Kateřina. “The AIDSed *perestroika*: discourses of gender in negotiations of ideological consensus on late socialist Czechoslovakia.” In *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism. An Expropriated Voice*, edited by L. Oates-Indruchová and H. Havelková, 234-245. New York and London, Routledge, 2015.

Kovář, Pavel. *Příběh české rekordwoman: Zákulisí největšího sportovního skandálu první republiky*. Pejdlova Rosička, 2017.

Kravets, Olga, and Özlem Sandıkçı. “Marketing for Socialism: Soviet Cosmetics in the 1930s.” *Business History Review* 87, no. 3 (Autumn 2013), 461-468.

Krch, F., and I. Málková. *SOS nadváha. Průvodce úskalím diet a životního stylu.* Praha: Granit, 1993.

Kuhar, Roman, and Judit Takács, eds. *Beyond the Pink Curtain: Everyday Life of LGBT People in Eastern Europe*. Ljubljana: Mirovni Institut, 2007.

Kulpa, Robert, and Joanna Mizielińska, eds. *De-Centering Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*. Burlington, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011.

Brian Lande, "Breathing Like a Soldier: Culture Incarnate," *The Sociological Review* 55, no.1 (2007): 95-108.

LeBesco, K. *The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

Lenderová, Milena. "Tělo estetické: péče ženy o sebe." In *Tělo mezi medicínou a disciplínou: proměny lékařského obrazu a ideálu lidského těla a tělesnosti v dlouhém 19. století*, Milena Lenderová, Daniela Tinková and Vladan Hanulík, 168-207. Praha: Nakladatelství LN, 2014.

Lišková, Kateřina. 'Perverzní sex a normalizační gender—Normalizační sexuologie promlouvá o sexu a gender." *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 13, no. 2 (2012): 40-49.

Lišková, Kateřina. *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style. Communist Czechoslovakia and the Science of Desire, 1945–1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Longhurst, Robyn. "Breaking corporeal boundaries: Pregnant bodies in public places." *Contested bodies*, edited by John Hassard and Ruth Holliday, 91-104. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.

Macek,Václav. *Jan Kadár. Režisér*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 2008.

Martin, Emily. *Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 (1987).

Mazierska, Ewa. *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble*. New York: Berghan Books, 2008.

Mazower, Mark. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century.* New York: Vintage Books, 1999.

McCullough, M.B., and J. A. Hardin. *Reconstructing Obesity. The Meaning of Measures and the Measure of Meanings*. New York, Oxford: Berghan, 2013.

McDevitt, P.F. "Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports, 1884-1916." *Gender & History* 9, no. 2 (August 1997): 262-284.

McLellan, Josie. *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

McRuer, Robert. “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence.” In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 87-99. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Meyerowitz, Joanne. *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Michaels, Meredith W., Lynn M. Morgan, et al. *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

Michaels, Paula. *Childbirth Pain Relief and the Soviet Origins of the Lamaze Method*. Seattle: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2007.

Michel, Martin L. “Conscription and the Decline of the Mass Army in France, 1960-1975.” *Armed Forces & Society* 3, no. 3 (April 1977): 355–406.

Moore, Bradley. “For the People's Health: Ideology, Medical Authority and Hygienic Science in Communist Czechoslovakia.” *Social History of Medicine* 27, no. 1 (Feb 2014): 122-143.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Nakamura, Masako. “’Miss Atom Bomb’ Contests in Nagasaki and Nevada: The Politics of Beauty, Memory, and the Cold War,” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 37 (2009): 117-143.

Neuburger, Mary.“Inhaling Luxury: Smoking and Anti-Smoking in Socialist Bulgaria 1947-1989.” In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, 239-258. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

Neuburger, Mary, and Paulina Bren, *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Nicholas, Jane. *The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Nolte, Claire. *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Oates-Indruchová, Libora “The Beauty and the Loser: Cultural Representations of Gender in Late State Socialism.” In *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*, edited by Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, 188-210. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Oddy, D., P. J. Atkins, and V. Amilien, eds. *The Rise of Obesity in Europe: A Twentieth Century Food History*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

Paces, Cynthia. “Czech Motherhood and Fin-de-Siècle Visual Culture.” In *Gender in 20th Century Eastern Europe and the USSR,* edited by Catherine Baker, 25-48. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Péteri, Gyorgy. “Introduction: The Oblique Coordinate Systems of Modern Identity.” In *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, edited by Gyorgy Peteri, 1-13. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2010.

Petterson, Patrick H. *Bought & Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Petrov, Michal. *Retro ČS: Co bylo (a nebylo) za reálného* socialismu. Brno: Jota, 2013.

Pospíšil, Filip, and Petr Blažek. ‘*Vraťte nám vlasy!‘: první máničky, vlasatci a hippies v komunistickém Československu*. Prague: Academia, 2010.

Presner, Todd S. *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration.* New York and London: Routledge, 2007.

Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press

Rákosník, Jakub. *Sovětizace sociálního státu. Lidově demokratický režim a sociální práva občanů v Československu 1945-1960*. Praha: Filosofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2010.

Rákosník, Jakub, and Radka Šustrová. *Rodina v zájmu státu: Populační růst a instituce manželství v českých zemích 1918-1989*. Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2016.

Rámišová, Šárka. “Podporované, či opovrhované?: Životní úroveň svobodných matek v období normalizace.” *Paměť a dějiny*, no. 4 (2013): 40-47.

Reddy Gayatri. *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Rogg, Matthias. *Armee des Volkes? Militär und Gesellschaft in der DDR*. Berlin: Links Verlag, 2008.

Ron, Igor S. *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today*. New York: The Free Press, 1995.

Roper, Michael. “Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History.” *History Workshop Journal* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 57–72.

Roper, Michael. “Maternal Relations: moral manliness and emotional survival in letters home during the First World War.” In *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh, 295-316. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Ross, Kristin. *Clean Bodies, Fast Cars: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Boston: The MIT Press, 1995.

Roubal, Petr. *Československé Spartakiady*. Praha: Academia, 2016.

Rothblum E., and S. Solovay, eds. *The Fat Studies Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Rubin, Eli. *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Rubin, Henry. *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment Among Transsexual Men*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003.

Rubin, Henry. "The Logic of Treatment." In *Transgender Studies Reader*, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, 482-498. New York and London: Routledge, 2013.

Ručková, Eliška. *Představy o kráse ženského těla ve veřejném prostoru první republiky*. Prague: Charles University, 2015. Unpublished MA thesis.

Sandelowski, Margaret. *Pain, Pleasure and American Childbirth: From the Twilight Sleep to the Read Method, 1914-1960*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984.

Schilt, Kristen. *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Schrock, Douglas, Lori Reid, and Emily M. Boyd. "Transsexuals' Embodiment of Womanhood." *Gender and Society* 19, no. 3 (2005): 317-335.

Scott, Hilda. *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences from Eastern Europe*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974.

Seidl, Jan. *Od Žaláře k oltáři: emancipace homosexuality v Českých zemích od roku 1867 do současnosti*. Brno: Host, 2012.

Serlin, David. *Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Shibutani, T. *The Derelicts of Company K.* Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978.

Smith, Tom. "Narrative and the Body in Uniform: East German Military Masculinities in Claus Dobberke's Ein Katzensprung and Jurgen Fuchs's Fassonschnitt." *The Modern Language Review* 110, no. 1 (2015): 204-22.

Stauter-Halsted, Keely, and Nancy M. Wingfield. "Introduction: The Construction of Sexual Deviance in Late Imperial Eastern Europe." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 2 (2011): 215-224.

Stoller Shaw, Nancy. *Forced Labor: Maternity Care in the United States*. New York, Pergamon Press, 1974.

Sommer, Vítězslav, Matěj Spurný, Doubravka Olšáková, and Jiří Janáč, "Technokratischer Socializmus in der Tschechoslowakei," *Bohemia* 57, no. 1 (2017): 12-24.

Sokolová, Věra. *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity: Discourses on Roma in Communist Czechoslovakia*. Stuttgart, Hannover: ibidem Verlag, 2008.

Sokolová, Věra. "'Don't Get Pricked!' Representation and the Politics of Sexuality in the Czech Republic." In *Over the Wall/After the Fall: Post Communist Cultures through an East West Gaze, edited by Sibelan Forrester,* Magdalena J. Zaborowska, and Elena Gapova*,* 251–67. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004)

Sokolová, Věra. "State Approaches to Homosexuality." In *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*, edited by Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, 82-108. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Spencerová, Tereza. *Jsem tranďák!* Prague: G plus G, 2003.

Stitziel, Judt. *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics and Consumer Culture in East Germany.* Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005.

Středa, Leoš. *Univerzita hubnutí*. Praha: www.euroinstitut.cz, 2009.

Šidlíková, Zuzana. *Stratená (m)óda*. Bratislava: Slovart, 2016.

Štroblová, Soňa, and Karel Fahoun, *Tvář*. Prague: Somix, 1998.

Timm, Annette. *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010.

Tikhomirova, Anna. "Soviet Women and Fur Consumption in the Brezhnev Era." In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, 283-310. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

Tolhurst, David. *Pioneers in Plastic Surgery*. London: Springer, 2015.

Trentmann, F. "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption." *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, 3 (2004): 373–401.

Tulbure, Narcis. "Drink, Leisure, and the Second Economy in Socialist Romania." In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, 259-282. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

Vodňanská, Jitka, *Voda, která hoří*. Prague: Torst, 2018.

Volkov, Vadim. “The Concept of ‘Kultumost’: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process.” In *Stalinism: New Directions*, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, 210-231. New York and London: Routledge, 2000.

Watson, Etwood, and Darcy Martin, eds. *There She Is, Miss America: The Politics of Sex, Beauty and Race in America’s Most Famous Pageant.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Weinrib, Alice. *Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Weitze, Cordula, and Susanne Osburg. “Transsexualism in Germany: Empirical Data on Epidemiology and Application of the German Transsexuals' Act During Its First Ten Years.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 25, no. 4 (1996): 409-425.

Wen, Hua. *Buying Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery in China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013.

Wertz, Richard W., and Dorothy C. Wertz. *Lying In: A History of Childbirth in America*. London, Collier Macmillan, 1977.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women.* New York: W. Morrow, 1991.

Wolchik, Sharon, ed. *Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1985.

Wright, Jan. “Biopower, Biopedagogies and the Epidemic of Obesity.” In *Biopolitics and the ‘Obesity Epidemic’: Governing Bodies*, edited by J. Wright and V. Harwood, 1–14. New York and London: Routledge, 2009.

Yang, Jie. “*Nennu* and *Shunu*: Gender, Body Politics, and the Beauty Economy in China.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36, n. 2 (2011): 333-58.

Young, Iris M. “Pregnant Embodiment: Subjectivity and Alienation.” In *Female Body Experience: ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ and Other Essays*, 46-62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Young, Iris M., “Breasted Experience: The Look and the Feeling.” In *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice*, Philosophy and Medicine 43, edited by D. Leder, 215-230. Springer, Dordrecht, 1992.

Zakharova, Larissa. “Dior in Moscow: A Taste for Luxury in Soviet Fashion Under Khruschev.” In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, 95-120. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

Zapletal, Miloš, and Jan Drbohlav, *20 let s Miss aneb říkali mi presidente*. Brno: Jota, 2008.