The Image of Soviet Woman in the Slovak Communist Newspapers in the Interwar Period

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After the First World War, a new idealised perception of a woman-Communist arose due to fundamental political and social changes in the Soviet Union, which served as a desired horizon for working women, mothers, sympathisers, and voters adhering to the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period. More broadly, this newly emerged idealisation also shaped gender relations. The aim of this study is to characterize the image of an ideal Soviet woman and a communist, as both presented and produced within the Slovak women's communist movement in the 1920s. In doing so, I will examine texts, speeches, and reactions published in the Communist women's biweekly "Proletarka", whose primary audience was female. A new role model of a woman reflected idealized Soviet state and a Soviet woman's lifestyle. At the same time, it employed a rather simplified referential framework of the Marxist canon, consisting of writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and mainly Vladimir I. Lenin. Within a conservative and mostly rural Slovak environment, such an idealised image of a new communist woman as well as the interrelated 'revolutionary' idealisation of both marriage and motherhood represented a mobilising potential of a questionable, if traceable, force. On the contrary, it could provoke rather controversial reactions from the targeted recipients.

Keywords: Slovakia, women, Soviet role model, new ideal-type, Marxism-Leninism.

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Образ советской женщины в словацких коммунистических газетах в межвоенный период

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После Первой мировой войны (1914–1918 гг.) в связи с принципиальными политическими и социальными изменениями в Советском Союзе возникло новое идеализированное представление о женщине-коммунистке, которое послужило желанным идеалом для рабочих женщин и матерей, стоящих на политических позициях Коммунистической партии в Чехословакии в межвоенный период (1918–1939 гг.). В более широком смысле эта новоявленная идеализация повлияла также на формирование гендерных отношений. Целью исследования является характеристика разных представлений об идеальной советской женщине и коммунистке, созданных и действовавших в словацком женском коммунистическом движении 1920-х гг. Статья рассматривает оригинальные тексты, выступления, речи и реакции, опубликованные в женском коммунистическом двухнедельнике Proletarka, ориентированном на словацких читательниц. Новый идеальный тип женщины стал результатом идеализации советского общества и способа жизни советской женщины, использовав в довольно упрощенной форме идеи К. Маркса, Ф. Энгельса, а главным образом В. И. Ленина. Однако в консервативной и в основном деревенской словацкой патриархальной среде такой идеализированный образ нового типа женщины, а также революционной идеализации брака и материнства вызывали скорее недоверие и стали предметом дискуссий в женском коммунистическом движении, поскольку агитация подобных идей могла спровоцировать довольно противоречивую реакцию большинства словацких женщин.

Ключевые слова: Словакия, женское движение, советский образец, новый идеальный тип, классики марксизма-ленинизма.

Introduction

Thousands of women had to overtake the responsibility for family livelihood and farmstead management in the period of the First World War. In many European countries, women were mobilized in masses to serve the needs of the war economy. Simultaneously, they had to juggle paid work with housework and childcare. The existing social roles were disrupted and the traditional bonds between genders gradually became weakened as a result of the diversification of female work[1]. Despite the fact that most women returned to their homes after the war, the problem of balancing between paid job and taking care of their households and children remained acutely present. Female socialist and communist politicians and intellectuals attached considerable importance to the solution of this issue, attempting to reflect on the long-term experience of female factory workers who were trying to manage earning money together with family care-taking, as well as on new visions and social system measures taken in the Soviet Russia. The new ideal or role model for the working women, mothers, Communist Party sympathizers, and voters in interwar Czechoslovakia was therefore a communist woman, with the idealized image of gender relationship management in Soviet Russia, or Soviet Union.

[1] *Bocková G.* Ženy v evropských dějinách od středověku do současnosti. Praha, 2007. P. 230.

The aim of this article is to depict the image of an ideal Soviet and communist woman the way it was presented in the Slovak feminist communist movement circles of the 1920s in written works, speeches, and reactions of their representatives, and published on the pages of the bi-weekly magazine "Proletárka", which aimed at and campaigned among women readers. The Czechoslovak Communist Party did not have a monopoly of political power at that time and fought for attention and votes of Slovak voters, both men and women. This new ideal reflected the Soviet role model and the fascination by the reality in the Soviet Union, as well as very superficial and overly simplified referencing of the ideas of Karl Marx, Fridrich Engels, and mostly Vladimir I. Lenin[2]. I consider the new ideal to be a social construct and a system of symbols, distant from the everyday experience, yet with a far-reaching meaning for the reality of a human[3]. The article will explore the extent of a mobilizing potential of this communist ideal and the role model of a communist woman together with the idealization of a new type of marriage and motherhood in the Slovak environment.

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 granted women civil and political rights which enabled them to actively participate in political, economic, and social life of the country. The newly founded state was a democratic republic which guaranteed women the same rights as men. The constitution safeguarded civil liberties and equality in the eyes of law[4] for all Czechoslovak women, and granted them general, equal, direct, secret, active and passive right of vote[5]. Liberal and left-oriented female activists tried to really implement the statutes of the Czechoslovak constitution about equality among genders into life. While liberal and democratic women clubs of the middle class stressed the importance of the intellectual empowerment of women, as well as employment of women in state and public service, representatives of the lower class turned their attention mainly to the social issues of the industry and agriculture workers, to the problems of balancing paid jobs and family care, and to the social system policies of the republic.

Woman in the Ideology of Marxism and Leninism

When formulating their visions, communist women as radical socialists were inspired by the ideologies of Marxism and Leninism, respectively by the Russian Bolshevism[6]. The Bolshevik revision of the orthodox Marxist doctrine partly reflected the character and

[2] In her works, the inspiring Czech historian Denisa Nečasová analyses the construct of a new socialist man in Czechoslovakia (in the Czech part of the republic) after 1948. See: *Nečasová D.:* 1) Buduj vlast — posílíš mír! Ženské hnutí v českých zemích 1945–1955. Brno, 2011; 2) Nový socialistický člověk. Československo 1948–1956. Brno, 2018.

[3] *Berger P. L., Luckmann T.* Sociální konstrukce reality. Pojednání o sociologii vědění. Brno, 1999. P. 44–45.

[4] Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, Act No. 121/1920. Sb. z. a n. Article V. § 106 "The benefits of gender, birth and profession are not conceded".

[5] Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, Act No. 121/1920 of Collection of Acts and Amendments from the 29th of February, 1920 valid from 6th of March, 1920, Article II. § 9, 10, 14 and 15. Act No. 75/1919 of Collection of Acts and Amendments from the 31st of January, 1919 on election procedure in the municipalities in Czechoslovakia and Act No. 123/1920 of Collection of Acts and Amendments from the 29th of February, 1920 on election procedure in the Parliament.

[6] Marxism-Leninism was codified as the official ideology of the regime and introduced into political practice after Lenin's death by the leading Soviet regime representative J. V. Stalin. See: *Brown H. A.* Marx on Gender and the Family. A Critical Study. Leiden; Boston, 2012. P. 1.

the state of the Russian society at the turn of the 20th century. Lenin solved the dispute between the Marxist theory and the social and political reality by significantly revising the theory itself. The result was a definition of the working class as a passive mass which was supposed to be intentionally, systematically and permanently formed and shaped by the leading group — the political party. Only under its leadership did the revolution take place[7]. Bolshevism can be characterized as Lenin's radical and complex interpretation of the essential works of Marxism, which was in line with the revolutionary political orientation of the Bolsheviks[8]. Marxism-Leninism is more or less a summary of the elementary classical works of Marxists in a form of an authoritarian digest of the basic ideas, their compilation and simplified interpretation that puts the thoughts of Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin into a different context and connection compared to the those in which they were originally formed[9]. The goal of this ideology was to stabilize the Soviet regime in Russia after 1917 and to secure its survival and function in the following periods[10].

In their works, the classic representatives of Marxism-Leninism did not convey a deep analysis of the woman's role in society and of her liberation from oppression and exploitation in the societal distribution of work in the family. However, Marxists considered women a crucial target group of political activity and mobilization[11]. It was Friedrich Engels who in his works focused on the role of women in the society and their emancipation. In his opinion, the basic condition of freeing women was incorporating them into the public work-life (productive work for the society) and liberating them from housework. Such circumstances could only arise, though, when women were employed massively, and when the private housework was transformed into public industry (generally available service)[12]. German Marxist August Bebel linked the oppression of women to the rise of private property, and, therefore, their liberation was supposed to be connected with the destruction of exploitation and social oppression, in short, with a socialist revolution. Harmonization of employment and taking care of the family and household via collective boarding, upbringing, and housekeeping was seen as inevitable[13]. Marxist-Leninist ideology also took a stand on the issue of the role of a woman in the society, and the meaning and role of a family[14]. Karl Marx considered family a form of exclusive private property[15]. Friedrich Engels elaborated further, labelling a monogamous marriage a servitude of one gender to another, a class oppression of the female gender by the masculine one. A monogamous marriage would, he thought, lose all its negative traits which stem from relations of property. The dominance of men and the inseparability of spouses would eventually cease

[7] *Benko J.:* 1) Masy, idey a skryté túžby: export ruskej revolúcie po prvej svetovej vojne // Storočie propagandy: Slovensko v osídlach ideológií. Bratislava, 2005. P. 21–30. 2) Boľševizmus medzi Východom a Západom (1900–1920). Bratislava, 2012. P. 39–40.

[8] *Benko J.* Boľševizmus medzi Východom a Západom (1900–1920). P. 74.

[9] *Brown H. A.* Marx on Gender and the Family. P. 1.

[10] *Benko J.* Na hranici paradiem: ortodoxný marxizmus a jeho boľševická revízia // Forum historiae. 2014. Vol. 8, issue 1. P. 17.

[11] *Brown H. A.* Marx on Gender and the Family.

[12] *Engels F.* Pôvod rodiny, súkromného vlastníctva a štátu. Bratislava, 1962. P. 164.

[13] *Bebel A.* Žena a socializmus. Bratislava, 1977.

[14] *Marx K., Engels F., Lenin V. I.* K ženské otázce. Praha, 1973; *Slušná N.* Postavení ženy ve společnosti: K problematice postavení ženy v socialistické společnosti. Praha, 1988.

[15] *Marx K.* Ekonomicko-filosofické rukopisy z roku 1844. Praha, 1961. P. 90.

to exist. In certain situations, Engels therefore considered divorce a *"benediction"* for the spouses as well as for the society[16].

Lenin supported a complete freedom of divorce, too. He regarded it a democratic right which could hardly ever be enabled in capitalism[17]. At the same time, he required an unconditional abolishment of such laws which punished abortion or distribution and promotion of contraceptives[18]. In his talks with a leading female representative of the German communist and feminist movement, Clara Zetkin, Lenin unambiguously encouraged complete equality for women. Nonetheless, he chastised Clara Zetkin and other women — party members — for their debates on sex-related topics, and on the past, present and future forms of marriage. He demanded their focus on the issues of the class fight and on distancing themselves visibly from the emancipation movement of the bourgeoisie[19]. When Lenin spoke on the liberation of women and their free development, he only had in mind the rise of the women's participation in building the socialist society in industrial production, political campaigning, etc. He was advocating a bigger portion of female representatives in public life, and their direct participation in the socialist coup since women made up at least one half of the Russian population[20]. The published opinions on the role of women in the society, their emancipation from ineffective and non-economic housework as well as the demand for divorce were all possible in the Bolshevik Russia environment. After the takeover of power, the regime started putting their ideas on female issue into motion. In December 1917, the Bolsheviks issued a decree, according to which giving birth to children was identified as a social role of women[21]. Simultaneously, they permitted divorce and, in 1918, also legalized abortion[22]. Women-mothers were supposed to join the production outside of their household, were given a so-called maternity leave (eight weeks before and after giving birth) including a monetary compensation, and a six-hour working day with breaks for nursing their child. The Bolshevik regime, in line with Lenin's views on housework, tried to free women from the "household slavery" by creating collective upbringing and collective housekeeping organization via public service[23].

The seeming success of the Soviet regime inspired communist movements and parties across Europe, including the interwar Czechoslovakia. The success and experience promoted by the Soviet regime as well as an idealized image of the functioning of the Soviet society, without the knowledge of and personal experience in the real state of things, were presented as role models and inspiration for the expected transformation of the Czechoslovak, respectively Slovak, society, according to the communist ideal.

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[16] An important factor of dissolving a marriage was the duration of individual sexual love. See: *Engels F.* Pôvod rodiny, súkromného vlastníctva a štátu. Bratislava, 1962. P. 83.

[17] *Lenin V. I.* O karikatúre marxizmu a o "imperialistickom ekonomizme" // Marx K., Engels F., Lenin V. I. K ženské otázce. Praha, 1973. P. 200–201.

[18] *Lenin V. I.* Robotnícka trieda a novomaltuzovstvo // Zobrané spisy, marec — september 1913, zv. 23. Bratislava, 1984. P. 321–324.

[19] *Zetkinová K.* Ze zápisníku: Vzpomínky na Lenina // Marx K., Engels F., Lenin V. I. K ženské otázce. P. 207, 211, 219.

[20] *Nečasová D.* "Bez žen nic nevybojujeme". Lenin a ženská otázka // Lenin: Kontinuita a/nebo diskontinuita ruských dějin? Brno, 2013. P. 107–115.

[21] *Bocková G.* Ženy v evropských dějinách od středověku do současnosti. Praha, 2007. P. 250.

[22] *Ashwin S.* Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia. London, 2000.

[23] *Bocková G.* Ženy v evropských dějinách od středověku do současnosti. P. 250–251.

Communist Women in Czechoslovakia

The constitution of the 1920s granted women in Czechoslovakia the right to vote and the declared equality of genders. Social and political activity of women was on the rise, since due to the sheer numbers of votes they started playing an important role in the political life of the country[24]. Communist women were very active in the political struggle of individual parties. The Czechoslovak Communist Party, established in 1921 by separation from the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, was a massive political party from the very beginning, mostly appealing to the working population (in industry and agriculture), and partly to intellectuals, and encouraging their activity. There were many women among its members. The party went through a complicated evolutionary process in the 1920s, being intervened by Moscow via Comintern[25]. They were triumphant in the parliamentary 1925 elections, getting the second largest win of votes (943 thousand) in the Czechoslovak Republic after the Agrarian Party[26]. This success was a result of a widespread and expensive electoral campaign and political promotion[27]. Following the Bolshevization of the party (since 1924–1925), which reached its peak in 1929 when a group of pro-Stalin and pro-Moscow young generation of Communists took over, the member and voter headcount dropped[28]. In some ways the member base in Slovakia was different from the Czech one, resulting from the general cultural, social and political quality of life of labourers and poor countryside inhabitants[29]. The communist movement in Slovakia was more radical, hugely supported predominantly among the poor agricultural population[30]. It is interesting that a large number of the party members were Catholics (70 %), with only few proclaiming to be atheists. Almost 52 % of the party members did not regularly subscribe to the Party press and, up 40 % of the member base had not been politically organized or active prior to joining the party[31]. The age stratification of the party was also particular, much younger than that in Slovakia, with the average member being 20–25 years

[24] *Burešová J.* Společensko-politická aktivita a veřejná činnost žen za první Československé republiky (1918–1938) // Československo 1918–1938. Osudy demokracie ve střední Evropě 2. Praha, 1999. P. 394.

[25] In March 1919, the Third Comintern an international organization of socialist parties was founded, initiated by the Russian Bolsheviks in Moscow, with the aim of uniting various radical socialist organizations (Marxists, anarchists and socialists). Comintern demanded strict discipline and subordination to the Moscow leadership. See: *Benko J.* Masy, idey a skryté túžby: export ruskej revolúcie po prvej svetovej vojne // Storočie propagandy: Slovensko v osídlach ideológií. Bratislava, 2005. P. 26; *Kárník Z.* České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938): Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918–1929). C. 1. Praha, 2000. P. 374–376.

[26] *Kárník Z.* České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938). P. 377.

[27] *Osyková L.* Volebné kampane politických strán na Slovensku počas 1. ČSR. Bratislava, 2012. P. 92–96.

[28] *Rákosník J.* Strana mladých, indifenrentních a nezaměstnaných? Proměny členské základny meziválečné KSČ // Forum Historiae. 2015. Vol. 9, issue 2. P. 90–91; *Rupnik J.* Dějiny Komunistické strany Československa: Od počátků do převzetí moci. Praha, 2002. P. 57–88.

[29] According to the interwar population census (in 1921 and 1930), economically active percentage of inhabitants in Slovakia was approximately 44–46 %. Low inclusion of women in work market was characteristic (in 1930, the share of women did not reached 29 %). In Slovakia, people were predominantly working in the primary sector (more than 56 %), industry employed approximately 16–17 % of inhabitants. See: *Šprocha B., Tišliar P.* 100 rokov obyvateľstva Slovenska. Bratislava, 2018. P. 320, 329.

[30] *Rákosník J.* Strana mladých, indifenrentních a nezaměstnaných? Proměny členské základny meziválečné KSČ // Forum Historiae. 2015. Vol. 9, issue 2. P. 93, 97.

[31] *Plevza V.* Prehľad dejín KSČ na Slovensku. Bratislava, 1971. P. 135–136. — PhD Viliam Plevza, Dr. Sci., historian and university professor. In his works he was focusing on the history of the revolutionary labour movement and the Communist Party. From 1969 he was the head of the History Institute of the

old[32]. Internal Communist Party campaigning committees were created to enable political work among women (with the positions of a trustee, a treasurer, and three supervisors), changing into educational and campaigning female units in 1924 called *"ženodely" (respectively ženoddely)* after the Bolshevization of the party in 1924[33]. They were subjected to supervision of the International Secretariat of the Communist Women in Moscow via the Party Headquarters. The campaigning and educational activity of the *"ženodely"* was based on personal initiative of the individual committee representatives appointed from above. Following the requirements of Moscow, the *"ženodely"* were supposed to try to boost the share of women factory workers, which was relatively low. According to the statistics, up to 73 % of the female members of the party were stay-at-home women[34]. Besides everyday work for the party, in the framework of campaigning and educational activities, communist women focused on setting themselves apart from other female clubs and charity organizations, which were aiming for various educational and informational activities, and social work during the whole interwar period. To the communists, the fight of the proletariat for power was more important than establishing feminist agenda in the party, against which feminist communists actively protested. Active, intellectual and independently speaking women-communists were expected to become only campaigners for the common class fights of the proletariat. Those who opposed the newly emerged situation were expelled from the party[35].

Communist women affiliated themselves with the program of the party, the goal of which was to remove the existing political system. At the same time, they realized they could not eliminate the democratic and liberal system in Czechoslovakia in the foreseeable future, they could not replace it with a socialist or Communist regime and, therefore, they temporarily accepted parliament as a space where they could be politically active, campaign and speak in the name of the labourers. Communists actively participated in the workload of the parliament: they came up with drafts of laws, took seats in committees and interpellated the members of parliament[36]. Socialist left-wing female members spoke in favour of legal drafts, adjusting the position of women-mothers and their children (on forbidding nursing for pay, on legal conditions of motherhood and pregnancy in the healthcare system, on state care of mother and child, on the obligatory state upbringing courses in taking care of toddlers and children)[37]. Overall, in-between 1920 and 1939, there were 29 active women[38] working at the National Assembly of the members

Slovak Communist Party (renamed to Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Slovak Communist Party Central Committee in 1971).

[32] *Plevza V.* Prehľad dejín KSČ na Slovensku. P. 136.

[33] The word *"ženodely (ženoddely)"* has come to life via strange overtake from the Russian language (ženskije otdeli — ženotdeli). See: *Uhrová E.* Ženy v KSČ a textilní dělnice v Čechách ve 20. letech // Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu 2. Praha, 2004. P. 29.

[34] Ibid.

[35] For example, one of them was Anna Malá, theoretician of the communist movement. See: *Báhenská M., Heczková L., Musilová D.* Ženy na stráž! České feministické myšlení 19. a 20. století. Praha, 2010. P. 209.

[36] More about the active role of women in the parliaments of the Czechoslovak Republic, see: *Musilová D.* Z ženského pohledu: Poslankyně a senátorky Národního shromaždění Československej republiky 1918–1939. České Budějovice, 2007.

[37] Ibid. P. 63–68; Matka a dieťa // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 11. P. 5.

[38] There were 10 women among 256 members of the National Revolutionary Assembly; in the first elected period (1920–1925) out of 284 members of the Parliament there were 15 women; in the second period (1925–1929) there were 10 women among 300 MPs; during the third period (1939–1935) — 13 women

of parliament and 16 female senators in the Senate[39]. In the interwar period, the biggest number of seats in Parliament and Senate were taken by the female representatives of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (together 15)[40].

Women Communist Press in Slovakia

Depending on their financial situation, Slovak women in the interwar Czechoslovakia had free access to a variety of daily newspapers and magazines. Women communist press was produced with the single-minded aim to motivate simple working class of women or those staying at home. It was written and edited by women themselves and targeted a female audience, while its content spoke to working women and socially least prosperous groups of them. Apart from direct criticism of the political and social situation in Czechoslovakia, the women communist press focused on positive description of the economic, political, and social development in the Soviet Union, especially dwelling on issues connected with the life of the Soviet women (work of women, children care-taking, collective education and upbringing, new legislation regarding marital and family law). As soon as in December 1920, a magazine of the Marxist left wing called "Ženský list" started being published in Czech part of the republic, renamed "Komunistka" in 1922 (Moravian and Silesian version was called "Žena")[41]. In November 1922, the first political magazine of communist women called "Proletárka"[42] was published in Vrútky[43], with ideologically defined and revolutionary views on working women and their issues. Regarding communist propaganda and its content, the magazine was published as a sort of compromise between the Marxist view on women issues and the opinions of V. I. Lenin[44]. The bi-weekly "Proletárka" was meant for women, especially working women (labourers, small-scale farmers, servants, clerks), in line with the programme and the goals of the Communist Party. In years 1922–1925, its editor was Barbora Rezlerová-Švarcová[45]. After her it was edited by

out of 303 MPs, and in the fourth electoral period (1935–1939) out of 301 MPs there were 9 women. See: *Musilova D.* Z ženskeho pohledu. P. 154.

[39] In the first electoral period (1920–1925) 4 women-senators were active (out of 143); in the second period (1925–1929) there were 4 (out of 150); in the third period (1929–1935) — 7 women (out of 153 members of Senate), and in the fourth (1935–1939) out of 150 there were 5 women-senators. See: Ibid.

[40] Ibid. P. 156–157.

[41] "Žena" was a weekly magazine of the communist women in Moravia and Silesia with the print of 7000 copies. Czech weekly "Komunistka" was published in 9000 copies. Initially, they were published in larger number of copies (12–13 thousand). In 1923, the content of both magazines was unified, though the names remained the same. See: *Burešová J.* Reflexe společenského postavení žen v komunistické ideologii a politice ve 20. a 30. letech 20. století v Československu // Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu 2. Praha, 2004. P. 42. — In April 1926, the communist feminine weekly "Komunistka" was renamed to "Rozsévačka". See: *Uhrová E.* Ženy v KSČ a textilní dělnice v Čechách ve 20. letech. P. 28.

[42] "Proletárka" was published in 1922 and 1923 as a supplement to the magazine called "Hlas ľudu". From 1924 until 1927, when it was stopped, it existed as an individual magazine. The research has yet not been able to determine the overall number of its copies.

[43] *Plevza V.* Prehľad dejín KSČ na Slovensku. P. 137.

[44] *Kučma I.* Časopis Proletárka (1922–1927) a vývin komunistickej propagandy // Kniha'90. Zborník pre problémy a dejiny knižnej kultúry na Slovensku. Martin, 1990. P. 117.

[45] Barbora Rezlerová-Švarcová (1890–1941) — feminist and communist journalist of Czech origin. In her articles she mainly focused on the situation of working women (labourers and small farmers) in Slovakia. See: *Švarcová B.* Stav ženské práce na Slovensku // Komunistická revue. 1925. Vol. 2, issue 1. P. 13–14.

Gizela Kolláriková[46] until 1926, followed by Zuzana Holánová, and Irena Káňová[47] The publishing of the magazine came to an end in 1927 due to financial problems. The women-editors of "Proletárka" were active members of the Communist Party; they participated in political activities; they educated and campaigned among Slovak women. Their reports, opinions and speeches, published on the pages of the aforementioned magazine form an interesting, and due to insufficient research, also unique view on the feminist communist discourse in the Slovak environment in the 1920s when the opinions of the communist movement in Czechoslovakia were trying to prove themselves in the tough competition of other democratic and socialist parties in the context of liberal democratic regime.

In accordance with the spirit of the party ideology, the newspapers declared a joint fight of the proletariat, men and women, and common class struggle for a socially just society. The leaders of the Communist Party accepted the process of women emancipation; however, the fight of the proletariat overshadowed the specifically feminist topics and demands, with women-communists' activities remaining political campaigning and class struggle[48]. The content of the magazine was devoted to the joint class fight as well. Campaigning and mobilizing articles prevailed, presenting the need to strive for a new society which would remove social problems and solve the suffering of the economically weakest women, who had to balance work life with care-taking of children and housekeeping. The magazine editors strongly protested against the contemporary promotion of an ideal woman — married, having children and taking care of them and the household. They argued that labourer women had to make sure they managed essential needs and that was their reason for hard work to earn the necessary wages. At the same time, women were supposed to take care of children, small farmsteads, households and families. The role of a labourer woman was therefore seen as side by side with men-labourers[49]. Campaigning articles were directed against priests, and the influence of the Catholic church in Slovak politics and Slovak environment in general, yet also against liberal and Christian female clubs[50]. This fact is interesting also due to a large number of Catholics among members and sympathisers of the Communist Party. "Proletárka" blamed feminist movement in Slovakia for being apolitical, and the women/female press — for succumbing to bourgeois sentimentality and romanticism[51]. Communists challenged women to revolutionary ideas and opinions when it came to earning money, family life, love between man and

[46] Gizela Kolláriková (1892–1960) — originally a textile factory worker, born in Budatín nearby Žilina, a social democrat who entered the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1921, member of the National Assembly of parliament in 1925–1929, editor of the "Proletárka" magazine, active in the feminist movement, the only female representative of Hungarian nationality in the Czechoslovak parliament.

[47] Irena Káňová (1893–1965) — member of parliament of the National Revolutionary Assembly in 1919–1920. She had been a member of the social-democratic party, and after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party decided to join it (1921). She was the only female political representative of the Slovak nationality in the interwar Czechoslovak parliament. See: *Musilová D.* Z ženského pohledu. P. 102.

[48] Similar in character was also the Czech communist magazine for women "Rozsévačka". See: *Jahodářov Á. L.* Zpátky k plotne? Ženský komunistický tisk a kritika úsporných opatření ve veřejné správě (1932–1933) // Forum Historiae. 2015. Vol. 9, issue 2. P. 102–118.

[49] Poslanie ženy // Proletárka. 1923. Vol. 2, issue 17. P. 2–3.

[50] *Kolláriková G.:* 1) Nepriatelia rovnoprávnosti žien. Ako vyzerá názor na ženské pohlavie u ľudákov // Proletárka. 1925. Vol. 4, issue 2. P. 2–3; 2) Ženy a ľudová strana // Proletárka. 1925. Vol. 4, issue 14. P. 3–4; 3) Žena a klerikalizmus // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 4–5. P. 3–4.

[51] *Braunová L.* Meštianske hnutie žien (feminizmus) // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 16. P. 2.

woman, children and their education and upbringing[52]. Their pivotal interest was a working woman's double workload — earning money and housekeeping. Equality and liberation of women was to be a *"simplification of household work"*[53]. The authors presented the problem of a huge workload of the working women who then did not have enough time and energy to bring up children and properly take care of them. Besides, they noted that housekeeping was not a paid job, and men did not even consider it work[54]. Sharp criticism was addressed to their male party colleagues for showing no interest in the *"class upbringing"* of women and for not supporting political activities of women inside the party[55]. The function of a proletariat marriage and family was also one of the topics the female journalists analysed.

New Working Woman

In the eyes of the leading communist activists, women were supposed to be the decisive actors in the revolutionary fight of the proletariat. A communist woman was expected to be spirited, active, engaged, and supporting her husband in political work as well. She was to constantly educate herself so that she had no need to be subordinated to her man and could freely build a strong labour movement by his side and, at the same time, bring up new generations in the communist ideal[56]. Communism was supposed to give women their human dignity back, uproot them from the oppression of men by making them fully equal. The programme of communist women had to basically be the same as the programme of men, only *"amended by special feminist demands arising from their different position in the state, family, and profession"*[57].

This new communist woman ideal could be seen, according to the editors of "Proletárka", in Soviet Union, where women-manual workers were put on the same footing as men. Based on their opportunity to make money, they were indeed completely free and able to live independently. They did not have to resort to *"selling themselves like our women who marry any man promising at least a meagre life support"*. Soviet women could require a fully compensated vacation two months before and after giving birth, an allowance for breastfeeding, and a possibility to place their child into day-care, as well as exemption from heavy work during their period[58]. In 1926, "Proletárka" informed its readers of a new transformed marriage law in Soviet Union. According to the report, this Act equalized officially registered marriages (probably the ones that were officially sanctioned by the state administration) with the non-registered ones (co-habitation of a man and a woman), thus completely eradicating the term "child born out of wedlock" from Soviet legal practice[59].

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[52] *Malá A.* Komunistická zásadovosť a ženy // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 19. P. 4–5.

[53] *Švarcová-Rezlerová B.* Muž, otec a komunista. Pomer muža k žene // Proletárka. 1923. Vol. 2, issue 21. P. 4–5.

[54] *Pfeilmajerová H.* Domáca gazdina // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 4. P. 2–3; *Švarcová-Rezlerová B.* Otroctvo domácej malovýroby a komunizmus // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 5. P. 4; Postavenie ženy v spoločnosti a v rodine // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 9. P. 3–4.

[55] Bola si na prejavu žien? // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 5. P. 1; Povinnosti komunistických mužov voči ženskému komunistickému hnutiu // Proletárka. 1925. Vol. 4, issue 19. P. 3–4.

[56] *Habanová K.* Súdružka píše // Proletárka. 1923. Vol. 2, issue 22. P. 1; *Šímová A.* Jaká rodina, taková společnost // Komunistka. 1922. Vol. 1, issue 1. P. 6–7.

[57] *Malá A., Křenová A.* Program, organisace a taktika komunistických žen. Praha, 1921.

[58] *Pezlár Ľ.* Zo Sovietskeho Ruska… // Proletárka. 1926. Vol 5, issue 12–13. P. 2–3.

[59] Reforma manželského práva v SSSR // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 23–24. P. 7.

Communist women tried to clearly distance themselves from a contemporary ideal of the so-called new woman. According to them, as a result of the complicated economic and social situation, millions of women had to come to terms with other issues than happy or tragic love, loyalty and unfaithfulness in relationships. A new (both physically and mentally) working woman was still not a *"stable type"*, but as an economically independent woman she prevailed over *"stupidity and female morale inherited from the past"*[60]. The ideal new woman-communist had to realize that *"household was a burden of a working woman, a cage of soul, a prison of heart able to fly, a dependence on man, degradation and degrading of a woman as a human being"*[61]. The representatives of feminist communist movement considered household a transition mode without future and therefore did not desire to go back to the household and the family. Equality of women had to emerge from simplification of housekeeping or its complete abandonment because, according to the Soviet experience, women enclosed only in households were the least (politically) conscious[62].

At their meetings, the editors of "Proletárka" presented Slovak working women with a concept of so-called housing communes: extensive houses with rooms to live in, with a big and modern kitchen, a laundry room, a clothesline room and an ironing room at their disposal downstairs, as well as a shared room for children where they were supposed to be placed day and night together. Inhabitants of such a housing commune would dine together in a big dining room. Women were expected to work only a certain number of hours (at their work, cooking, taking care of children) and spend the rest of the time on their hobbies and entertainment (such as reading)[63]. The housing commune's concept of living and sharing work was unrealistic and unimaginable vision of a distant future for the Slovak women. The editor of "Proletárka" considered it doable since it was already being introduced in Soviet Russia at that time.

An important role model that the Slovak women-communists used was, undoubtedly, V. I. Lenin. Quoting his works, they also presented the thought of *"Leninism as a way to women liberation"* in Slovak environment[64]. According to Lenin, the first step to free a woman labourer was disposing of private property, the second step was banishing legal inequality between men and women in marital, family, and motherhood law, and, finally, — liberating women from small-scale farming. In terms of the bond between men and women, excited about the situation in Soviet Russia, communist women started to speak about the marriage as *"an institution of voluntary love"*[65]. Discussions on marriage and voluntary or free love took place mostly among communist women and women in general not only at party meetings but in the public, too. Although such topics are mentioned on the pages of "Proletárka" only occasionally, still they show interest and fascination with the topic. The issue of interpretation of free love was a decisive factor for some women when sympathizing with, or considering membership in the Communist Party. In the future, love was to be freed from class denominators and was to become a free community of free people, not dependent on each other in any way[66]. That is why they predicted the

[60] *Malá A., Křenová A.* Program, organisace a taktika komunistických žen. P. 12.
[61] Ibid. P. 13.
[62] *Švarcová-Rezlerová B.* Muž, otec a komunista. P. 4–5.
[63] Vznešený komunizmus // Proletárka. 1923. Vol. 2, issue 4. P. 1–2.
[64] Leninizmom k slobode žien // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 3. P. 1–2.
[65] *Malá A., Křenová A.* Program, organisace a taktika komunistických žen. P. 8.
[66] Manželstvo, rodina a voľná láska // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 2. P. 7.

"dying out" of family in the future, which was supposed to be replaced by a healthy, joyful and free relationship between a man and a woman[67]. Marriage was deemed an economic bond or a form of prostitution, therefore, in communist regime it was to become an institution based on mutual love and agreement of two independent sexes[68]. Thus, communist women refused inseparability of marriage and welcomed the validation of the so-called "separation law"[69]. They viewed the possibility of separation *"a true benediction for women"* but demanded acceptance of an improved law to make sure the marriage between men and women was a free choice and an institution to run only on principles of mutual love and agreement[70]. The possibility of choosing a partner for life freely was expected to enable both men and women to have a happier life. This case also required *"setting women free"* and a state-guaranteed protection of motherhood. Marriage arranged for financial reasons was seen as oppression, enslavement, and a form of prostitution by the female communists. The life of a man and woman was deemed to stem from physical and mental harmony, respect and love[71].

Motherhood as a Social Function of a Communist Woman

An important place was reserved for the issues connected with motherhood and birth control in the feminist communist campaigning and political work. In line with the generalized views of V. I. Lenin, communist women stressed that motherhood was a voluntary, responsible and important social role of women and, therefore, must be protected by the state. The state was expected to take responsibility for the nutrition and upbringing of children[72]. Communist women in the "Proletárka" magazine presented the opinion that *"motherhood cannot remain a private affair of a woman because it is a responsible and demanding role"*[73]. Women thus unambiguously rejected a private character of motherhood. Communist member of parliament Anna Malá[74] noticed that poor mothers paid dearly for the ideal of motherhood praised by the society because there was nobody to help them to bear the burden of motherhood and to earn wages[75]. They could neither be perfect mothers, nor could they be role models of social progress. Glorifying motherhood was seen by Malá only as a *"social ruse"*. She criticized celebratory songs on the holiness of motherhood, and rejected motherhood as the only way of measuring a woman's worth. State, like a good father, was supposed to be playing a decisive role in taking care of a child. Russia was again considered an ideal where *"they no longer spoke of empty hearts, wasted*

[67] Z myšlienok našich vodkýň // Proletárka. 1923. Vol. 3, issue 8. P. 7–8.

[68] Manželstvo a voľná láska // Proletárka. 1927. Vol. 6, issue 12. P. 7–8.

[69] Act No. 320/1919 Collection of Acts and Amendments from 22 May 1919 changed the civil law attitude to marital initiation ceremonies, separation, and obstruction of marriage. Marriage thus arose facultatively in both ways (religious and state) and ceased to exist due to death, declaration of being dead, or divorce. See: *Vojáček L., Kolárik J., Gábriš T.* Československé právne dejiny. Bratislava, 2011. P. 129–130.

[70] Manželstvo // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 7. P. 2–4.

[71] Myšlienky o ženách // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 7. P. 1–2.

[72] Postavenie ženy v kapitalistickom poriadku // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 20. P. 3.

[73] *Malá A.* Mateřství a výdělečná práce // Ženský list. 1922. Vol. 4, issue 3. P. 2–3.

[74] Anna Malá (1886–1948) — member of the National Assembly in 1920–1925, originally the member of social democratic party, after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Communist Party she participated in creating a communist parliamentary club in 1921. She worked as an office clerk.

[75] *Malá A.* Materstvo a zárobková práca žien // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 11. P. 3–4.

life without love or of motherhood as the last safe haven for women"[76]. Anna Malá passionately protested against "middle-class" sentimentality, against praise of perfect motherhood as well as against *"bitter-sweet"* lessons for mothers. Inside the party, she was trying to lead women campaigners and representatives to reject a "middle-class" set of views on women earning wages, on family life, on love between men and women and on children[77]. In communist propaganda, terminology, which was borrowed from the Soviet Union in Russia, appeared: happy motherhood (the right of one's body, abolishing the law that prevented abortion) and liberated work (the state care of children and housekeeping)[78]. Happy motherhood was declared a programme of feminist communists — motherhood was a prized institution and deserved state support[79]. Anna Malá also expressed her view on fatherhood in her talks on motherhood. She demanded that fathers also fulfill their parental roles sufficiently. Still, it was the state that was seen as the partner of a woman when taking care of a child[80]. The other father of the child was thus not only an individualized and specific male but also state as a collective. This idea was attractive especially when considering the social support of single mothers.

From Individual to Collective

Collective upbringing and care-taking of children was seen as ideal, including the common sharing of housekeeping and dining[81]. Labourers represented a huge number of women who had to balance their time between earning money and taking care of the family and household. Their experience with the double workload needed a solution — dealing with the problem of housekeeping. Feminist communist housekeeping and family care-taking was supposed to be done outside of home, in common kitchens, laundry rooms, day-cares and kindergardens. Common management (chores, dining rooms, laundry rooms) became a synonym of *"liberating unity"* because it freed women, and simultaneously raised humankind to a higher level of culture. Preparing food together was less time-consuming, included good ingredients, improved the quality of food, reduced waste of leftover food. In addition, common dining reinforced collective experiencing of a new life[82].

Female journalists showed the Slovak labourer women "positive" examples of women support in Soviet Russia, especially when it came to the management of household chores and childcare[83]. The authors accentuated this role of the Soviet state in the context of high employability of Soviet women (also married ones and the ones with families) who did not have to compromise their family life, public organizing, public activism in various organizations, etc. At the same time, they pointed out that employed Soviet women did not have

[76] *Malá A.* Mateřství a výdělečná práce. P. 2–3.

[77] *Malá A.* Komunistická zásadovosť a ženy. P. 4–5.

[78] *Uhrová E.* Ženy v KSČ a textilní dělnice v Čechách ve 20. letech. P. 32.

[79] *Malá A., Křenová A.* Program, organisace a taktika komunistických žen. P. 19–20.

[80] *Malá A.* Mateřství a výdělečná práce. P. 2–3.

[81] Ako sú opatrované deti po dobu matkinho zamestnania v ZSSR // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 14. P. 4–5.

[82] *M. H-á.* Kus nového života // Komunistka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 14. P. 2–3; *Ml.* Kus nového života // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 8. P. 2.

[83] *Holánová Z.* Tkalcovňa // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 7. P. 4; *Pfeilmajerová H.:* 1) Zo sovietskej vlasti // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 16. P. 3; 2) Zo sovietskej vlasti // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 17. P. 3–4; O odstránení domácej práce // Proletárka. 1925. Vol. 4, issue 8. P. 5-6.

to fear being left without an income or worry what would happen to their children in the future. Soviet Russia was thus presented as an ideal caretaker of employed women's children in common factory day-cares with nurses and medical assistance. Every child had a regular medical check-up with help, medicine prescription, and baby nutrition formula at hand. Day-cares for children existed also at "labourers' clubs" so that women -mothers could participate in political, social, and cultural life and did not only have to stay at home with children. Older children could be put into children's homes (probably kindergartens) with medical care, education, and food programme[84].

Communist Woman and Free Motherhood

The capitalist society, according to communist women, did not enable women the right for free motherhood and could not really provide for manually working mothers; quite the opposite, such a thing could only become reality in socialist society ("a worker's state") and therefore women-workers had to fight for a new social order. The motif of a poor mother who cannot provide for her children yet the capitalist society pressurizes her into having more children — other slaves — was used as an incentive to fight for a new, just society[85].

The "Proletárka" journalists often shared their views on abortion and birth control from an ideological standpoint. Abortion was illegal during the interwar period. In Slovak lands, the Hungarian Act on crimes and offences from 1878 was still valid[86], pursuant to which a woman intentionally aborting a foetus could be punished by a 2–3 years of imprisonment[87]. The democratic Czechoslovak state was open to discussion about birth control, contraception, sexual education. Improvement of the social support of pregnant women, especially single ones, was required in the public debate. Those who advocated a complete abolishment of punishing for abortion argued that women had the right for self-defining when it came to pregnancy and giving birth. They refused to accept the punishment of women who had abortion based on a bad social situation. The so-called social indication — abortion because of an unfavourable social situation of the woman — sparked off a political debate among politicians, doctors, and sociologists. It was mostly the left-wing female members of parliament Louisa Landová-Štychová[88], Irene Kirpal[89], Franziska

[84] Ako sú opatrované deti po dobu matkinho zamestnania v ZSSR // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 14. P. 4–5.

[85] Proletárske materstvo // Proletárka. 1927. Vol. 6, issue 11. P. 3–4.

[86] Act of Law V/1878 on crimes and criminal offences.

[87] In the Czech ad Moravian territory, the General Criminal Codex from 27 May 1852 was valid (§ 144–148). After the establishing of the Czechoslovak Republic criminal acts and codex were kept valid due to the Act of No. 11 from 28 October 1918, and there was a legal dualism existing in the lands of the republic, with legal amendments, until 1950. See: *Nikšová G.* Nedovolené prerušenie tehotenstva v československom trestnom práve. Bratislava, 1971. P. 73.

[88] Louisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1969) — an activist in the Anarchy-communist and feminist movement, member of the National Assembly (for Czechoslovak National Socialist Party and later Czechoslovak Communist Party); she proposed a few changes of laws connected with the protection of motherhood, women education, social politics, and family law; since 1925 she was a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

[89] Irene Kirpal (1886–1977) — member of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, was elected a member of the National Assembly in 1920, re-elected three consecutive times, later was also active in London emigration.

Blatny[90], Maria Deutsch[91], and a member of parliament who later became a senator Betty Karpíšková[92] who spoke about accepting a more liberal legal option of abortions as well as about including sexual education at schools, making contraception widely accessible, and enabling a thorough care-taking of mothers and newborn babies[93]. Female representatives of socialist parties introduced a few novel proposals to change the legal status of abortion, but without success[94]. During the existence of the bi-weekly "Proletárka", its journalists were constantly calling for attention to birth control among working women and unanimously stated that a woman was fit to decide on her number of pregnancies and children[95]. They viewed it through the lens of communist ideology, superficially inspired by the development of population politics and opinions on motherhood in the Soviet Union, of which they knew very little. If they had the opportunity to travel there, they only saw the facade version of the Soviet Bolshevik regime, which it intentionally offered. The journalists of "Proletárka" excitedly informed their readers of the validity of the act on abortion in the Soviet Union (interruption). Issuing of this legal act meant liberation of motherhood for the journalists: *"They gave women a freedom of motherhood and they put foundation under it via real deeds. Neither will our mother ever be free until she gives birth only according to paragraphs and until she breaks free of the oppression that exploits and degrades her"*[96].

The Soviet way of living was seen as a high ideal since abortions were performed in state hospitals in the form of a surgery, free of charge, and by a professional, i.e., by a doctor. The "Proletárka" writers emphasized that working women in Czechoslovakia did not have opportunities to see a doctor, could not get access to effective and safe contraceptives, could not avoid unwanted pregnancies, and thus many had to undergo abortions which directly put their lives at risk[97].

The writers and editors tried to lead their readers into manifesting and participating in the political struggle. Their common political goal was to achieve a socially just socialist society alongside with men. Only then and there could the feminist attempts to socially equalize women, to enable them to decide freely about their life, marital status or other relationship, and motherhood become true[98].

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[90] Franziska Blatny (1873–1949) — member of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, elected a member of the National Assembly in 1920, re-elected in 1925 and 1929, focused on political and public work, active in the feminine movement.

[91] Maria Deutsch (1882–1969) — member of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, was elected a member of the National Assembly in 1920, was active in the German social democracy and feminist movement.

[92] Betty Karpíšková (1881–1942) — a member of parliament and senator; she was one of the most important personages of the socialist democratic politics in Czechoslovakia, active in feminist movement and international organizations (International Women Committee at the Socialist Labour International, International Work Office).

[93] *Musilová D.* Z ženského pohledu. P. 77.

[94] *Škorvanková E.* Otázka regulácie pôrodnosti na stránkach ženskej komunistickej tlače na Slovensku // Populačné štúdie Slovenska. 2017. Vol. 10. P. 17–43.

[95] *B. R. Š.* Dá sa príroda ovládať? // Proletárka. 1924. Vol. 3, issue 8. P. 3.

[96] Sovietsky zákon o potrate // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 15. P. 5–6.

[97] Postavenie ženy v kapitalistickom poriadku // Proletárka. 1926. Vol. 5, issue 19. P. 3; Ibid. Vol. 5, issue 20. P. 3.

[98] Medzinárodný deň robotníčiek // Proletárka. 1923. Vol. 2, issue 5. P. 2.

Conclusions

In their campaigns, the feminist communist movement appealed mostly to women with lower education, working and small-farming proletariat, servants and stay-at-home women. Active female members of the party could not really achieve leadership positions of the party or influence the inner development but they were ready to fight for a new socialist society which would ensure employment, higher wages, quality healthcare, and to struggle for women in order to free them from housekeeping and enable them access to individual childcare.

Communist women intensely participated in political work, campaigned, and tried to appeal especially to working women by showcasing the ideals of a socially just society. They used a very simplified argumentation base inspired by classical Marxist authors and by the works of V. I. Lenin. An important source of inspiration proved to be the excited glorification and imitation of communist role models and ideals, without a deeper knowledge of the state of the Soviet society. The Soviet woman was depicted as a strong personality in control of her life, one that was active, politically and socially engaged, a dutiful mother and partner at the same time. Soviet regime indeed enabled women to find purpose in paid work as well as in family and motherhood.

The issue of unpaid work and its functioning along with marriage and motherhood was a staple in the communist political propaganda and their educational activities. An interesting and undoubtedly controversial topic was the definition of a new ideal marriage and mutual relation between a man and a woman. Communist women dealt with the term *free love* which, after a future successful revolution, was supposed to become a new idealized image of the relationship between men and women. Love was to be washed out of the class character and to be a free expression of a man and a woman. That is the reason why communist women foretold a "dying out" of family, which was expected to be replaced by voluntary and loose ties between man and woman, which could easily be separated and terminated by divorce. The possibility of divorce was considered *"a true benediction for women"*. Traditional marriage was, in line with the Marxist teaching, considered an economic bond and a form of prostitution. A free choice of a partner for life and his/her abandonment or exchange was supposed to ensure a happier life for both men and women.

The contemporary ideal of motherhood was thoroughly questioned, and its private character was rejected. In line with the general views of V. I. Lenin, communist women stressed that motherhood was a voluntary, responsible, and important social role of a woman and thus should be protected by the state. They ostentatiously distanced themselves from the contemporary sentimental middle-class ideal of a woman -mother and a housewife who patiently and selflessly served the family and impeccably fulfilled her housekeeping tasks. Communist women in leading positions dreamt of a career of women for whom motherhood and housekeeping would not pose a threat to further social and economic self-development because they would not have to deal with the children care and housekeeping alone but their responsibility would be shifted to the society as a collective unit. Household chores had to be performed by the state services (laundry rooms, dining facilities), and children were expected to grow up among their peers in day care, kindergartens and school clubs. In the context of idealized views about the new forms of motherhood and children care, the absence of a specific biological father and breadwinner was accepted in line with the effort to make individuals a collective part of the social

reality. While campaigning, the feminist communists presented Slovak women with an idealized image of a commune housing with a shared kitchen, dining room, laundry room and children playroom, which was supposed to be inhabited by several families. Women were not expected to do housework in their joint house or take individual care of the children, they were to relax and educate themselves after the time allocated to work. The ideal programme was the collective, shared living, joint dining, and common education and upbringing. Family was to be replaced by the collective sharing of a common household — a house equipped for a shared life. This ideal seemed to be a distant future. From a long-term perspective, family was expected to dissolve and re-create itself into a collective of free people. Thanks to the provided service replacing housekeeping, common education, and the upbringing of children, the material support of all family members was to be managed under the auspices of the state. Birth control could only become a free expression of woman's will and would not be a consequence of social reality.

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