

have benefited by drawing on some other theoretical perspectives, such as social movement theory and theories of the public sphere, and from broadening its scope to consider the influence on decision-making of other institutions, such as the media. Overall, however, this detailed case study is a welcome addition to the literatures on both transformation and governance.

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#### **Melissa Feinberg: *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950***

Pittsburgh 2006: University of Pittsburgh Press, viii + 275 pp.

Melissa Feinberg explores disputes about the position of women in Czechoslovak society and situates them at the heart of the debates about the role of the state, the construction of the nation, and the nature of democratic citizenship. The book presents a gripping story of the ups and downs of the Czech women's movement. It spans from the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the time of the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic to the first Communist show trial in 1950, which ended with the execution of one of the leading figures of the movement – Milada Horáková. How-

ever, it strives to be more than a history of one particular movement in one Eastern European country. Feinberg addresses general questions about the intricacies of building a democratic society in conditions where different visions of state, family, equality, and individual freedom co-exist in conflict with each other. Thus, the significance of the analysis goes far beyond Czechoslovakia and the selected historical period. The book will therefore be of interest to diverse audiences including historians, sociologists, political scientists, and legal scholars.

Feinberg's approach to the history of the Czechoslovak First and Second Republics, the aftermath of the Second World War, and the immediate aftermath of the Communist takeover of 1948 is refreshing. Rather than emphasising the role of 'external' geopolitical pressures of fascism and totalitarian communism, she reveals how the Czechoslovak democratic system was undermined from within. In this way, she problematises the image of the 'Czech nation' as essentially receptive to democracy. Instead of taking for granted the idea that Czechs always wanted democracy, Feinberg's analysis invites us to 'think about how and why they feared it' (p. 9). It is in this context that she situates her scrutiny of the Czech feminist movement as an example of the potentials and limits to progressive politics in Czechoslovakia.

The story begins with an account of the surprisingly quick success of women's suffrage activism in Czechoslovakia. The newly independent country was exceptional also in other respects. Its first President, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, openly supported and strongly influenced the women's movement for equal rights, and the country's first Constitution of 1920 abolished privileges of sex, birth, and occupation. Rather than dwelling on the maternalist discourses dominant in the neighbouring countries, Czech feminists grounded their activism in demands for equal citizenship

rights for men and women. The polity of equal citizens was seen as a necessary precondition for a functioning democracy, and democracy was to be the key feature of the newly established republic. The emphasis on gender equality was a break with its backward past as part of the Habsburg Empire. The association of women's rights with democratic citizenship and the process of nation-building brought some remarkable results for Czechoslovak women and strengthened Czech feminists' position in the public domain. The right to vote was followed by equal access to educational opportunities and end to discriminatory policies in the civil service. While these achievements were not limited to Czechoslovakia, the wide scale of popular support for women's suffrage and the strong backing from political elites was unique. The radical rhetoric of equality of the early First Republic fully embraced gender equality. But what did it mean for the position of women in society beyond the right to vote?

The initial euphoria about the promise of gender equality codified in the Constitution was followed by the hard work of implementing it in the laws and institutions of the interwar republic. Feinberg debates this process in four contexts: 1) the new Civil Code where the rule of gender equality was virtually refuted by regulations of marriage and women's and men's rights in the family; 2) the existing citizenship law and the issue of married women's lack of power over their and their children's citizenship status after marriage; 3) the civil service policies where the position of female employees and their right to be gainfully employed alongside their husbands was being contested; and 4) the abortion politics that defined abortion as a felony and disproportionately burdened working class women.

Feinberg's detailed scrutiny of parliamentary disputes and her analysis of debates in newspapers and magazines document that, when applied to women, equality became a much more complicated con-

cept than it appeared to be in general proclamations about democracy. Her discussion of the Civil Code, citizenship law, and women's employment in the civil service could be read as an account of the wins and (more often) the losses of the Women's National Council (WNC) – the most vocal umbrella organisation for Czechoslovak women's groups established in 1923. Feinberg shows various strategies used by the WNC in order to convince the public and the politicians that democracy needs to rely on the rule of the Constitution not only in the realm of political rights but also within the family and in the sphere of employment. Despite a number of progressive changes that the WNC managed to push through, it is a story of how the promise of gender equality was gradually watered down in all these areas. It shows how patriarchal gender ideologies embedded in Czech society overruled the Constitutional guarantee of equality. This has become especially clear in times of economic crisis, when the rights of individuals – women in particular – became perceived as subordinate to the 'needs of the nation'.

The analysis of abortion politics follows a similar line of argument. It is particularly interesting because it also sheds light on the diversity of views about the question of women's control over their bodies and its relation to economic inequalities. Opposing views existed within the public and political domain as well as within the Czech women's movement. The campaign for the legalisation of abortion was led by those identified as socialists or communists rather than the feminists. It was seen primarily as a class issue because the criminalisation of abortion most adversely affected working class women. The WNC remained conspicuously silent in this campaign. As an umbrella organisation for various groups it could not find a consensus among its members. However, the WNC's stance also signals the middle-class bias of its activism. This bias is acknowledged but,

unfortunately, not elaborated upon in the book. That is despite the fact that it could help us to better understand the massive support Czechoslovak women gave the Communists in the late 1940s.

Feinberg explains the meagre success of the women's movement in the First Republic. It was constantly losing the battle with the dominant view that keeping the family (with its unequal gender division of power) intact is essential for preserving national stability. In other words, women's rights were accepted and supported only as far as they did not seriously challenge the existing power inequalities in society. The guarantee of individual freedoms remained fragile and susceptible to being overruled by 'national interests'.

The perverse effects of the primacy of 'the nation' over the individual freedom and the rule of law soon became clear at the time of the Second Republic. It followed after the Munich Conference of 1938 and the surrender of the Sudetenland to Germany. Czechoslovak politics shifted dramatically to the Right and the idea of 'authoritarian democracy' as the only possible method of governance capable of preventing the 'Czech nation' from extinction gained much support. During the Second Republic and under the Protectorate of Nazi Germany, the notion of citizenship was explicitly redefined as a service to the nation. Its gendered character became obvious when it drastically worsened the position of women in the public sphere and denied them previously granted rights on the basis of their womanhood.

The book concludes with the developments of the women's movement after the Second World War. It offers a fascinating analysis of dramatic events leading to the Communists' takeover of power in February 1948 from the perspective of the Council of Czechoslovak Women. This organisation was established to continue the legacy of the WNC but it operated in a very different political environment. This environ-

ment was characterised by bitter partisan warfare and the increasing domination of politics by the Communists. The Czechoslovak Communist Party put women's rights at the top of its political agenda and managed to quickly achieve most of what the interwar feminists were trying to push through for almost two decades. The Constitution of 1948 equalised the positions of women and men in the family and the legalisation of abortion followed in the late 1950s. Social and economic equality gained in importance while individual freedoms were being undermined. Yet again, Feinberg shows how the idea of citizenship was radically redefined while the issue of gender equality was pivotal to this process.

The book's contribution lies in connecting debates about citizenship and democracy with a detailed analysis of struggles over gender equality in the emerging Czechoslovak political system. Moreover, developments in Czechoslovakia are situated in a broader context of the international women's movement. Its main weakness however is the exclusive focus on the Czech women's movement. Feinberg briefly refers to the extensive scholarship about conflictual relations between different national or ethnic groups including Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Jews, Ruthenians, and others. She acknowledges that interwar Czechoslovakia was far from an ethnically homogeneous society. Yet these tensions are virtually absent from her analysis. One cannot but ask: was all feminist activism carried out under the framework of Czech nationalism? The book cannot offer answers to this question because Feinberg decided to focus exclusively on a single group – the Czechs. She argues that 'turning from a more exclusive focus on minority politics to gender politics gives us a new way of examining democracy in Czechoslovakia' (p. 7). Despite all its merits the book demonstrates how the exclusion of ethno-political issues from the analysis of gender politics and citizenship produces

only a limited account of the multifaceted social and cultural struggles that characterised the period in question. Choosing between the focus on gender and minority politics turns out to be a less productive strategy than would be an attempt to integrate the two perspectives. As the author herself concedes, the question of dealing with difference is crucial to democracy and remains as pertinent to debates about gender as to those about national or ethnic identities. Feinberg's exclusively Czech version of the women's movement's struggle for democracy risks reproducing the dominant version of history in the style of Czech history textbooks. It reproduces the silencing of other groups overshadowed by Czech nationalism. One of the important arguments made in the book is that democracy in interwar Czechoslovakia was both egalitarian and ethno-nationalist. The analysis reveals how the Czech feminist movement thrived in conjunction with the nationalist movement. Although women were among the first groups to have their rights subordinated to the 'needs of the nation', the book offers surprisingly little analysis of the relationship between feminism and nationalism.

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**Irena Kogan, Michael Gebel and Clemens Noelke:** *Europe Enlarged: A Handbook of Education, Labour and Welfare Regimes in Central and Eastern Europe*  
Bristol 2008: Policy Press, 389 pp.

To assess structural and institutional changes of almost two decades in their entirety and complexity is a difficult task, particularly in view of the considerable differences that exist between countries, of which the editors of this book were clearly aware.

Their book focuses on three 'regimes', which are argued to be the main systemic determinants of social stratification: education, labour markets, and welfare provision. Changes in the institutional setting of any of the three systems have important consequences both in terms of individual life chances and of countries' abilities to respond to new socio-economic challenges and risks. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), 1989 marked the start of the simultaneous transformation of the economy, the political structure, the legal system, everyday life and political ideology – all of this at an astonishing speed. By 2004, eight countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) became members of the European Union, followed by Bulgaria and Romania three years later. To what extent were the education, labour market and welfare systems of these countries altered during this 'great transformation'? Where do we find major differences between them? To what degree were policy choices and outcomes shaped by country-specific factors? These are the main issues that are addressed in the first three chapters of this book. A set of core indicators the editors compiled for each of the three topics helps to identify national variations. However, most of these are standard Eurostat indicators.

On education, Irena Kogan provides a comprehensive description of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the education system, highlighting, in particular, the differentiations that exist both within the secondary and tertiary level. Kogan's chapter is full of valuable and interesting information with the potential to explore a wide range of issues. For instance, the gradual shift away from vocational training programmes towards general secondary education, which can be observed across all CEE countries, raises a number of questions about changes in the value and the quality of education in these countries. Is