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## Transformation of Women in the Czech Lands of Austria-Hungary (1900–1907)

### Abstract

Based on the analysis of the articles published in the magazine “Ženský svět”, the author of the research completed the image of “a new type of woman” in the Czech lands. The period of study was defined by an active struggle for women’s suffrage taken in 1900–1907. It was also shown how the deliverance of women’s consciousness from gender stereotypes took place. It was presented in their desire to go beyond the usual framework defined by the society and through the expansion of women’s secondary education, the development of vocational education and the creation of a higher education system strengthened their professionalism and independence.

**Keywords:** celibacy, female education system, universal suffrage, advertising

## PRZEMIANY KOBIECE NA ZIEMIACH CZESKICH AUSTRO-WĘGIER (1900–1907)

### Streszczenie

Opierając się na analizie publikacji zamieszczanych w czasopiśmie „Ženský svět”, autorka artykułu prezentuje obraz „kobiety nowego typu” w realiach czeskich. Zakres chronologiczny opracowania wyznaczają lata 1900–1907, gdy zapoczątkowana została walka o prawa wyborcze Czech. Autorka ukazuje również przebieg procesu uwalniania świadomości kobiet z ram stereotypów społecznych. Przykładem przełamywania tych ograniczeń było dążenie do rozwoju szkolnictwa średniego i zawodowego kobiet oraz otwarcie perspektywy korzystnych dla nich zmian systemowych w szkolnictwie wyższym. Postępujące upodmiotowienie kobiet znajdowało swoje odzwierciedlenie np. w treści reklam prasowych i w likwidacji takich relikwów jak celibat nauczycielek.

**Słowa kluczowe:** postulat zniesienia celibatu nauczycielek, system edukacji kobiet, prawa wyborcze kobiet, „kobiety nowego typu” w świetle reklam prasowych

### Research assumptions

The end of the 19th – early 20th century in the Czech lands<sup>1</sup> is traditionally characterized as a transitional period marked by qualitative changes in economic, political, social and cultural life, which eventually led to the transformation of the “inner world” of a person (both men and women), their place and role in society, as well as a public perception of those changes.

It should be noted that there has been a stable interest in women’s history of the late 19th – early 20th century in the Czech historiography. The problems of the development of “women’s issue”, “women’s movement” have a long tradition of study, however, unprecedented interest rose in the last decade of the 20th century<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The term “Czech lands” is used in reference to the territories which were part of the Habsburg monarchy. The lands historically attached to the Czech crown consisted of three provinces (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia).

<sup>2</sup> Marie Bahenská, *Počátky emancipace žen v Čechách. Dívčí vzdělávání a ženské spolky v Praze v 19. století*, (Praha: Libri/Sociologické nakladatelství, 2005); Pavla Horská, *Naše prababičky feministky*, (Praha: 1999); Milena Lenderová, *K hříchu i k modlitbě. Žena v minulém století*, (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2016); Marie Neudorffová, *České ženy v 19. století. Úsilí a sny, úspěchy a zklamání na cestě k emancipaci*, (Praha: Janua, 1999); Pavla Vošahlí-

To characterize women at the turn of the 19th – 20th centuries such definitions as “a new woman”, “an emancipated woman” are widely used in historiography. In fact, they reflect the personality of a woman who has new traits indicating “movement” towards emancipation. The mentioned terms limit the phenomenon of emancipation exclusively to women’s struggle for the opportunity to participate in the social and political lives of the country, the desire to break from patriarchal family bonds, to weaken the influence of church norms and traditions on everyday life (mainly domestic). The use of the term “a new type of woman” in this research study seems reasonable, because it reflects not only the struggle “against” or “for”, but also the process of transformation of women’s consciousness on their way to freedom in the widest sense. This term refers to the systemic changes in women’s worldview of those times, which could not fail to be noticed and reflected in periodical columns, among others was the magazine “Ženský svět” also. On the other hand, the authors of the publications themselves contributed to the formation of a new picture of the world and, thus, “a new type of woman”.

### Historical context

The analysis of today’s events shows that the position of women in the modern world, as well as their role, has been strengthening. Women favorably compete on equal terms with men in various spheres of society and state. However, it was not always the case.

The movement for women’s rights, in particular, and gender equality, in general, began in the 19th century, when social structure had been changing. Thus, then stratification criteria in the Habsburg monarchy were family origin, religious and national affiliation, class and gender characteristics. The position of women in the Czech society in the so-called “long” 19th century was determined both by laws (like Austrian Civil Code or General Civil Code of 1811; the Trade Regulations Act of 1859, etc.), and by latent attitudes. The latter means the delimitation of spheres of

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ková, Jiří Martinek, *Cesty k samostatnosti. Portréty žen v éře modernizace*, (Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2010).

employment between men and women<sup>3</sup>. Naturally, the possibility of realizing their own abilities and participation in the social division of labor were higher among representatives of aristocratic and wealthy families. Thus, the degree of equality depended on belonging to one or another social group. Therefore, fighters for women's rights constantly emphasized the importance of emancipation for a woman "not as a part of the society, but as a person", so that she, regardless of her status and position, could achieve "personal happiness"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, they claimed that modern woman was drawn into the "struggle for her existence" so that she could realize herself in the best way and become independent<sup>5</sup>.

The formal barrier to women's emancipation was traditionally the inaccessibility of education. So, only in the 1870s girls began to study in secondary schools for boys (the so-called visiting<sup>6</sup> pupils). And only after the founding of the female gymnasium "Minerva" in Prague (1890) women's education began as a separate direction. As for higher education in the Czech lands, the circulating ideas that the humanities and medicine were "feminine" have led to the fact that women had the right to attend classes in the German part of Charles University as visiting students since 1896, and in the Czech part of it (faculties of philosophy and medicine. later) but already as full part students since 1897<sup>7</sup>.

The expansion of women labor activity took place with formidable difficulties. It depended on social and class affiliation mainly. The most common phenomenon of paid work was among representatives of the working class (especially before marriage). Thus, in 1880 among factory workers women accounted for 34.4%, men – 63.2%, adolescents (up to 14 years old) – 2.4%<sup>8</sup>. The highest percentage was found in textiles and food production. At the same time, the discrimination in the level of wages should be in our mind. Thus, the average women's salary was about 60% of men's

<sup>3</sup> Men should be engaged in the public sphere – the domain of politics, paid work, commerce and law; women's "proper sphere" is domestic life – childcare, housekeeping, etc.

<sup>4</sup> "Moderní emancipační snahy ženské", *Ženský svět*, 20.01.1905, 19.

<sup>5</sup> „Moderní emancipační snahy ženské”, *Ženský svět*, 5.03.1905, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Visiting pupils (students) were girls who could attend classes, but they could not come to the front and answer, during breaks they had to be in a separate from the schoolboys' room.

<sup>7</sup> *Hospodářský vzestup českých zemí od poloviny 18. století do konce monarchie*, Zdeněk Jindra, Ivan Jakubec (ed.), (Praha: Karolinum, 2015), 138

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 139.

salary<sup>9</sup>. In some sectors of the economy, that difference started to decline by the end of the 19th – early 20th century.

And it was quite natural that all those and other urgent questions were reflected in periodicals columns, one of which was “Ženský svět”. First published in 1896 it was intended for women, more precisely, from cities. One of the reasons for its making was the desire to support the emancipation movement of Czech women. Besides, its founder Teréza Nováková also sympathized with those ideas. The emergence of those kind of liberal periodicals regularly and in detail spotlighting every day, socio-political and cultural life helped with the deliverance of women’s consciousness, their life-style and behavior. Initially, the pages of the magazine were full of stories from women’s everyday life, reports of the latest books and information about women’s achievements of the struggle for their rights all over the world and in various branches and professions. Later, the articles on political topics, mainly concerning active and passive women’s suffrage, appeared. Acquaintance with those materials promoted broadening of women’s outlook and making new representations of the world and themselves. An essential part of the magazine was the advertising block. The analysis of posted materials also makes it possible to determine how Czech women lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, their desires and concerns.

While conducting the research the issues published in the magazine from 1900 to 1907 were analyzed. The decision to make “Ženský svět” as the organ of the Central Union of Czech Women limited our choice of 1900. As for the choice of 1907, on January 26th that year an Electoral Law was passed. It is referred to the direct, universal, equal and secret ballot for men. It abolished the curial system and declared any Austrian citizen who had reached the age of 24 a voter. Passive legation was given to the persons who had reached the age of 30 and had been Austrian citizens for at least three years. In this regard, a campaign was put on the pages of the magazine to provide women equal rights with men.

### **Professional world**

The professional world was presented, first of all, by materials about teachers’ lives and the organization of the educational

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

process for girls. So, at the beginning of the 20th century one of the most debated problems was a vow of celibacy among teachers. It was established from the very moment when women were allowed to teach. At the turn of the century its legitimacy started to be discussed<sup>10</sup>, but opinions differed even among women themselves. The majority of them wanted to preserve it. Women were afraid that on its cancelling wages would decrease<sup>11</sup> and home workload would increase simultaneously. At the same time, adherents of its abolition believed that it was necessary to fight, first of all, for equality with men, because then celibacy would be automatically cancelled, because "men had the right to marry without the subsequent need to change their profession"<sup>12</sup>. And for those who were afraid of a lot of work at home, they offered to find themselves "a reliable assistant"<sup>13</sup>. Upon that, the question of what to do if "God sends a child" to a married teacher soon<sup>14</sup>, how then she would combine "her sacred duty of caring for a child" with her professional duties<sup>15</sup>. It was believed that the heart of a mother who worked at school would be restless (especially in the case of child's or husband's illness), and that should immediately affect the quality of teaching. It was also said that the intensive schedule of a married teacher's life with the tension of mental and physical strength ("double exhausting work") was said not to be endured for a long time by "a normal woman"<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, such mothers, having provided their children with bread, deprived them of the most valuable thing – "correct upbringing"<sup>17</sup>.

The supporters for celibacy preservation assessed it as "the fetters that limited the freedom of teachers"<sup>18</sup>. However, they were convinced that there were many such fetters and that absolute freedom was simply unattainable. And in the response to the appeal of celibacy opponents "to throw off celibacy shackle," it was wondered: "What kind of shackles these are, in which I generally

<sup>10</sup> „Celibát učitelek”, *Ženský svět*, 20.06.1900, 133.

<sup>11</sup> „Celibát učitelek”, *Ženský svět*, 20.09.1900, 185.

<sup>12</sup> „Celibát učitelek”, *Ženský svět*, 20.06.1900, 133.

<sup>13</sup> „Celibát učitelek”, *Ženský svět*, 20.07.1900, 146.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 147.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> „Celibát učitelek”, *Ženský svět*, 5.09.1900, 172.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> „Celibát učitelek”, *Ženský svět*, 20.09.1900, 186.

feel good and which I can easily throw off as soon as a suitable groom has been found? Eventually, so many teachers got rid of them without much difficulty ...”<sup>19</sup>. And unlike the vow of chastity of priests, which they made it once and ever, women were free in their desire to adhere to celibacy or not.

Celibate supporters also disagreed with the fact that it was against women’s nature. The argument was the lack of medical reports and statistical observations about its effect on women’s health<sup>20</sup>.

Thus, as before, taking care of the family and home was regarded as the first and primary task of women. The society stayed conservative in its views and was not yet ready for “working woman” and, as a result, for the need to change working conditions adjusted for her possible pregnancy and childcare.

Opponents of celibacy got the opportunity to express themselves on the pages of the magazine in 1901. In particular, celibacy was considered as a humiliation of teachers and advocated its abolition, because “family happiness and peace of arranged everyday life are a mirror of harmonious, continual and joyful work, therefore it benefits the whole society”<sup>21</sup>. She called for collective efforts to fight for universal human rights and “conscious freedom”<sup>22</sup>, because a teacher was firstly a person, and teaching was only a profession and way of earning money<sup>23</sup>. Dispelling the fears of those who were worried about how married teachers could combine professional and household duties, there was noted that it was everyone’s personal business: it depended on the person himself and herself to organize life, and all the more “emotional life is no less important and legitimate as mental one”<sup>24</sup>. As a way to break “the stalemate” – the potential teacher’s pregnancy – it was proposed to give her an opportunity to let her work with “primary classes”, when her time job would be only four hours<sup>25</sup>. The accusations that a married teacher would not be able to educate her own children properly, she also regarded as bankrupt. After all, the representa-

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> Božena Valjevská, „Celibát učitelek. Hlas proti němu”, *Ženský svět*, 5.02.1901, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Božena Valjevská, „Celibát učitelek. Hlas proti němu”, *Ženský svět*, 20.02.1901, 39.

<sup>25</sup> Božena Valjevská, „Celibát učitelek. Hlas proti němu”, *Ženský svět*, 5.03.1901, 52.



tives of the working class and sellers also worked, and often it was hard physical work. However, they found time “to instruct, advise, and educate the children properly. While not every representative from the upper strata and bourgeoisie, either out of fear of losing comfort, or because of incompetence, entrusts their children to strangers, sometimes even servants”<sup>26</sup>. And the example of an intelligent mother-teacher could become a model for her children. It corresponds with today’s approaches to parenting and personal socialization. Thus, the opponents of celibacy, using the slogans of freedom and equality, called the society and women themselves to adapt to changing conditions, to be flexible and active in defending their position.

### Female education

The authors of the magazine paid a lot of attention to issues related to female education. Most often that education was limited to the elementary level, and older girls mostly studied (if they were even taught) at home, which directly depended on their parents’ finances. But since the 1860s high schools for women were opened, where broad and comprehensive knowledge was given to the extent that was previously available only for boys. But all the same there was no opportunity for girls to pass an exam and obtain any qualification. Women’s right to get vocational education was still concerned as an infringement of the sacred institution of marriage and a threat of men’s dominance. And only by the early 20th century more frequent declarations of the necessity to provide women with economic independence were made. It could only be achieved if they received a serious vocational education. After the pedagogical gymnasium opened in 1870 in Prague, that process intensified. An undoubted success was the opening of the private women’s gymnasium Minerva in 1890, nevertheless until 1907 it did not have the right to confer a school diploma. As, for example, it was reported in the magazine on June 9–13, 1901, an oral exam took place in the male academic gymnasium in Prague. Among 21 girls (only one was not a Minerva graduate) who had previously successfully passed a written exam, 20 of them expressed their desire to take an

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.



oral exam. As a result, among ten of those who successfully passed their final exam, one girl received “an excellent” mark. It happened for the first time in the history of the Czech gymnasium in Prague<sup>27</sup>.

Naturally, one of the most serious factors prevented from increasing the amount of girls who went to secondary schools was financial affairs. If for the wealthiest it was not so acute, for girls from poor families, even if they had shown an inclination for study, it often became an formidable obstacle. To support such a category of students in Minerva women’s gymnasium a scholarship was provided. Czech ethnographic collector and activist in of women’s movement Barbora Hoblová, in her message to the unions of Czech women, motivated to intensify work in that direction, as well as to open cheap dormitories, because “a family is afraid of the very thought that it is necessary to send a daughter somewhere to study”<sup>28</sup>. As an example, the organization of life in the dormitory for girls in Old Brno<sup>29</sup> was mentioned as classic. The acuteness of the problem was sharpened by the fact that along with the natives of Bohemia and Moravia, representatives of other lands of Austria-Hungary also studied in Czech gymnasiums<sup>30</sup>.

In “Ženský svět” there were also numerous proposals for the development of vocational education. Thus, the creation of agricultural and gardening schools for girls was considered useful, as well as inclusion of “housekeeping courses” in “male peasant schools”. Those schools existed at the expense of subsidies, both from land and regional bodies<sup>31</sup>, and private donations<sup>32</sup>. Their target audience was mainly girls from peasant families, who would have to become not only excellent housewives, but also to strengthen the position of the peasants in shifted economic conditions<sup>33</sup>. Thus, they wanted to cover one of the most conservative parts of society – the peasantry – by those advanced ideas. In those schools, the emphasis was placed on the connection theory with practice, which is also placed in the forefront today. For example, in the district school of housewives in Louny, in order to organize practical train-

<sup>27</sup> „Maturitní zkouška dívek ústní”, *Ženský svět*, 20.07.1901, 168.

<sup>28</sup> „Na prahu století”, *Ženský svět*, 20.09.1901, 186.

<sup>29</sup> „Divčí penzionát na Starém Brně”, *Ženský svět*, 20.09.1901, 190.

<sup>30</sup> „Spolek «Minerva» v Praze”, *Ženský svět*, 20.10.1901, 214.

<sup>31</sup> „Na prahu století”, *Ženský svět*, 20.09.1901, 186.

<sup>32</sup> „Spolek «Minerva» v Praze”, *Ženský svět*, 20.10.1901, 213.

<sup>33</sup> „Školy zemědělsko-zahradnické pro ženy”, *Ženský svět*, 20.01.1900, 17.

ing, the girl-students were divided into four classes (cooks, housekeepers, laundresses, milkmaids) or, like in the culinary school in Kodaň, after lecture courses all the girl-students were divided into "families", five people of each, and then they were engaged in the organization life at home (wiping dust, cleaning dishes and fireplace, etc.)<sup>34</sup>. One of the forms of organizing training was visits to Prague enterprises and exhibitions<sup>35</sup>. Based on the understanding that school should prepare a child for life, the idea to add an additional year of training in existing schools or organize additional courses for those girls whose education was limited to the elementary level was expressed as valuable and utility. In this case, they would have the opportunity to acquire skills in organizing home life (sewing, cooking, etc.)<sup>36</sup>.

The equal access to education in industrial schools was more seen as a vital issue. It was grounded on its best "conformity with the female character"<sup>37</sup> and the fact that women had got on that direction for a long time. Firstly, women often were real assistants to their husbands in their family business (they kept shops and craft workshops, etc.). Secondly, in some industries, due to their labor and talent, they had achieved serious results (tailoring, weaving, ceramics, etc.). Co-education in those schools was supposed to promote boys and girls mutual development: healthy competition as a guarantee of desire to improve labor and production skills. And it, in turn, was supposed to contribute to the prosperity of the entire Czech nation: an improvement of the morale of society, growth of the social standards of living and consolidating its economic potential.

Gradually, the voice of supporters for opening of a state lyceum for girls with a full humanitarian cycle and the possibility of obtaining a certificate had been growing. According to the representative of the first Minerva graduate Marie Věra Babáková-Opolecká, it was necessary because it helped "a small nation like ours" to take a worthy place among other nations<sup>38</sup>. The acutest situation, as was noted, was in Prague, where schools were overcrowd-

<sup>34</sup> „V kodaňské školní kuchyni”, *Ženský svět*, 5.09.1903, 187.

<sup>35</sup> „Okresní hospodyňská škola v Lounech”, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1902, 71.

<sup>36</sup> „Vyučování domácích zručností na školách dívčích”, *Ženský svět*, 20.12.1900, 256.

<sup>37</sup> Baruše Jandová, „Ženské studium na školách průmyslových”, *Ženský svět*, 5.07.1906, 171.

<sup>38</sup> „Naše ženy a studium humanitní”, *Ženský svět*, 20.04.1902, 93.

ed, and there was no any Czech lyceum. According to Czech teacher, editor, translator and literary critic Pavla Maternová, it was unacceptable, particularly the fact that the lyceum for girls from “German minority” families had been functioning successfully in Prague since 1876. The threat, from her point of view, was that its Czech graduates while rising up the social escalator “finally split bond with their Czech environment, denied their origin”. Moreover, it was suggested in “Ženský svět” that if the flow of girls leaving for study abroad was not urgently stopped, it would become “a new national sin”<sup>39</sup>. In response to the growing pressure in 1900 the Austro-Hungarian government decided to open women’s lyceums. Thus, the authorities wanted to kill two birds with one stone: at least partially satisfied demands for providing higher education for women and at the same time postponed the decision of providing them with access to secondary male schools. Girls’ education, in their opinion, should be organized independently of male schools. Six-year women’s lyceums were opened with the state financial support and subsequent supervision. The first Czech lyceum was founded in 1901 in Brno on the basis of the former high school for women of “Vesna” society, and two years later another Czech lyceum was founded in České Budějovice, but in Prague only in 1906.

The struggle for higher education for women was going on with greater difficulties. Only a few of them could attend some faculties on equal terms. For example, on January 5, 1900, as it was reported there were only eight female visiting students in Prague high schools<sup>40</sup>. In this regard, notes with the success of women in their studies at universities and especially their takings of a scientific degree were regularly published in the magazine. So, on the front page of the magazine dated June 20, 1901, there was a report about the first dissertation on philosophy successfully defended by a woman at the University of Prague (famous Czech botanist and zoologist Marie Zdeňka Baborová)<sup>41</sup>. Another significant fact was noted on March 20, 1902 – the representative of the first Minerva graduate, Anna Honzáková (later the first specialist with private practice in the Czech lands; publicist and member of the women’s

<sup>39</sup> Pavla Maternová, „Zy české dívčí lyceum v Praze“, *Ženský svět*, 20.07.1906, 186.

<sup>40</sup> „Nové úspěchy žen ve vyšším studiu“, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1900, 6.

<sup>41</sup> „První česká doktorka filozofie v Praze promovaná!“, *Ženský svět*, 20.06.1901, 133.

movement), got a diploma as a general practitioner<sup>42</sup>. Those and other similar facts were regarded as an important tool for changing public opinion, when women's higher education was considered as a luxury and absolutely unnecessary thing. Meanwhile among women themselves, it was spurred into popularity. Thus, in October 1901, the Committee for the Organization of Public Lectures of the Czech part of Charles-Ferdinand University analyzed the degree of gender participation in them. Thus, women accounted for 40.7% (or 1,143 people) of the total number of participants. Women dominated two history, two medical and one theology courses. In turn, men held the majority in three natural science courses (73.9%)<sup>43</sup>. Elsewhere it was reported that the Faculty of Law was still for men only<sup>44</sup>. However, the situation has changed with time. For example, in winter semester of 1906–1907 academic year at the Charles-Ferdinand University, 20 women visiting students attended a course at the Faculty of Law, there were already eight full part students at the Faculty of Medicine, 28 full part students, 100 course participants and 105 women visiting students at the Faculty of Philosophy. In the summer semester at the Faculty of Law, 18 women visiting students attended a course, there were already eight full part students at the Faculty of Medicine, 29 full part students, 81 course participants and 35 women visiting students at the Faculty of Medicine<sup>45</sup>.

Those data can be explained by the fact that the opportunity to study law at the university was provided for women later not only in comparison with other faculties of Charles University, but also with other states. So, in particular, women could study philosophy in Austria-Hungary from 1897, to study at the Faculty of Medicine (study pharmaceuticals) from 1900<sup>46</sup>. As Czech researcher Vendulka Valentová noted, representatives of the Faculty of Law of the Czech part of Charles-Ferdinand University promoted the idea of the necessity to study law by women in 1900. However, the first women's applications to study at the Faculty of Law were sub-

<sup>42</sup> „Slečna Anna Honzáková”, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1902, 66.

<sup>43</sup> “Universitní extenze”, *Ženský svět*, 5.09.1901, 179.

<sup>44</sup> “Studentky universitní”, *Ženský svět*, 5.11.1901, 222.

<sup>45</sup> “Studentky české university”, *Ženský svět*, 5.12.1907, 250.

<sup>46</sup> Vendulka Valentová, „Počátky řádného studia posluchaček Právnické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy”, *Právněhistorické studie*, No 1, 2013, 312.

mitted only in 1908, and the first admission to the full-time study took place in 1918.

One of the factors that hampered women regular training for lawyers was the prejudice that they did not perform any public duties, as well as the widely spread image of women as too soft, indecisive, dependent, etc. Only the most progressive people saw the possibility of women's development through getting not only secondary education, but also higher. Thus, in 1904, the teaching staff of the Women's Academy in Brno and the University of Prague was interviewed on the subject of what they thought about women's higher education and coeducation, as well as how they assessed the success of female students. 61 people took part in the survey. Most of them, if they had previously doubted the possibility of girls studying at universities, were now fully convinced that it was necessary to make equal opportunities for both genders for admission to universities. As for coeducation, along with the ideas that certain subjects could be taught only to women, they assumed great importance of it. It was explained by the impossibility of a new start of women-only universities, in addition, in their daily life women doctors, women lecturers, etc., were constantly in touch with men, so coeducation should only help them better understand each other<sup>47</sup>. With high assessments of educational and scientific activities of female students, teachers noted that some of them preferred not to study much but to get married as soon as possible<sup>48</sup>.

### **In the struggle for universal suffrage**

If in the early 20th century the magazine "Ženský svět" most often raised issues related to women's education, their position in the economy, later their social and political activities came to the fore. A particular subject was the discussion of women's suffrage, who politically were "a complete zero"<sup>49</sup>. Its absence was regarded as injustice: for example, a master's widow, already a master herself, gave birth and raised an adult son, but could not elect and thereby take part in the management of society, while a young man

<sup>47</sup> "Studium žen na vysokých školách", *Ženský svět*, 5.12.1904, 260.

<sup>48</sup> „Studium žen na vysokých školách”, *Ženský svět*, 20.12.1904, 270–272.

<sup>49</sup> Teréza Nováková, „Volební právo žen u nás”, *Ženský svět*, 20.01.1904, 21.

who did not have sufficient life experience, had such opportunity<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, active and passive suffrage was announced as something that “belongs to us” by right<sup>51</sup>.

The first public women meeting in the Czech lands demanding the right for women to vote took place only on June 14, 1904. The organizers of the meeting were the Central Union of Czech Women, some parliamentarians and politicians. As a result a resolution was adopted. The first demand was an active suffrage to all competent women of 21 years and upwards on equal and secret basis. Passive suffrage was supposed to be provided to women on the same conditions as men. The resolution also called women's unions and associations to organize discussions on women's suffrage in all Czech lands and to prepare appropriate petitions. Besides, there was an appeal to Czech deputies and politicians of all parties with a request to provide all possible support for women in achieving their goal<sup>52</sup>.

Women were convinced that if they, like men took part in the development of state and society through their daily household work and care for family or as employees, they had either an equal right with them to make decisions on certain issues in the organization of state and society. Therefore, they wanted to participate in working out laws, so that “without them, the decision concerning them would not be made”<sup>53</sup>. Moreover, men were not always able to understand what women really needed. Supporters for women's suffrage were convinced that right, like women's position in society, indicated “the level of culture of the nation”<sup>54</sup>. More and more often calls for women to be active appeared in the pages of the magazine. On December 10, 1905, a meeting was held, in which representatives of various political parties and associations took part. As a result of its work, the Declaration to the Czech nation was adopted, in which the main concern of all political and state leaders was equal, direct and secret suffrage to all citizens. The importance of work to achieve civil freedom for that “half of the nation” was also stated because “in the most difficult times they preserved their na-

<sup>50</sup> Teréza Nováková, „Volební právo žen u nás”, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1904, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Teréza Nováková, „Volební právo žen u nás”, *Ženský svět*, 20.01.1904, 20.

<sup>52</sup> „Schůze o volební právu žen”, *Ženský svět*, 20.06.1904, 151.

<sup>53</sup> Teréza Nováková, „Volební právo žen u nás”, *Ženský svět*, 20.01.1904, 21.

<sup>54</sup> „Schůze o volební právu žen”, *Ženský svět*, 5.07.1904, 166.



tive language and identity”<sup>55</sup>. A petition campaign was spread out in the Czech Lands, and an increasing number of Czech political parties put it forward in their program demands. Moreover, some of the leaders of those parties were convinced that providing Czech women with universal suffrage would be an important tool in the struggle against the Germanization of the Czech people<sup>56</sup>.

However, there were many opponents of giving women the right to vote. They argued their position as follows. Firstly, women did not carry military service and did not pay “the blood tax”, so girls who had reached the age of 20 were offered to work a year as “volunteers” in hospitals, homes for orphans, shelters, etc.<sup>57</sup>. Secondly, they firmly believed in women’s conservatism and thought that due to their nature they would always oppose progressive ideas and “move the state backward”<sup>58</sup>. Such sentiment made additional difficulties in the struggle for women’s suffrage. Nevertheless, a wave of protest activity swept through the Czech society: Prague became the center of mass demonstrations. Czech women participated in demonstrations along with men. Nevertheless, they understood that they had to defend their interests themselves primarily: “At this serious moment women should not be silent, because in 20 years they will not have any rights”<sup>59</sup>. After all, until “women achieve equality before the law, ... they will bear the imprint of legitimate deficiency”<sup>60</sup>. However, as it was already mentioned above, they never succeeded. Only in 1918 women took part in the elections. Czech activists were convinced that if they were supported by women of the other nations living in Austria-Hungary, success would be guaranteed earlier.

### Life in advertising pictures

A special interest to the researcher has advertisements which complete the picture of everyday lives and practices. As for the magazine “Ženský svět”, their analysis showed that women

<sup>55</sup> Olga Stránská-Absolonová, „Všeženská schůze pro volební právo”, *Ženský svět*, 20.12.1905, 304.

<sup>56</sup> „Protestní schůze za volební právo”, *Ženský svět*, 5.04.1906, 86.

<sup>57</sup> Teréza Nováková, „Volební právo žen u nás”, *Ženský svět*, 20.02.1904, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>59</sup> „Schůze a manifestace”, *Ženský svět*, 5.12.1905, 290.

<sup>60</sup> Olga Stránská-Absolonová, „Výbor pro volební právo žen”, *Ženský svět*, 20.11.1906, 260.



were gradually getting positions in the world of production and trade. In particular, Pavla Wagnerová's atelier<sup>61</sup>, Fanna Kassíková's knitwear workshop<sup>62</sup>, Anna Pfeilerova's own ties and scarves production<sup>63</sup>, Anna Válová's fabric store<sup>64</sup>, etc. We see that those enterprises were just still in the traditional spheres of female labor. However, the growing number of advertisements where rental housing was searched both by students<sup>65</sup> and by "an independent woman"<sup>66</sup> affirmed that despite the established stereotypes the number of women who worked and got education had been steadily growing. It spurred the activity of the banking sector. In particular, the First Czech Discount Society offered to make "passbook savings"<sup>67</sup>, Bank "Slavia" offered to insure life<sup>68</sup>, National Bank accepted deposits<sup>69</sup>. Those were timid steps but steps forward, when the Czech banking system was just strengthening and was fighting for every client.

The amount of sale advertisements of fabrics, hats, ready-made clothes and shoes indicated that sewing and buying clothes for themselves and their family members were ordinary duties of Czech women and took most of their time. Meanwhile, we see that new forms of production and trade organization were actively created (joint-stock companies<sup>70</sup>), shopping malls<sup>71</sup> etc.), and a variety of methods were also used to attract clients. Those were sales and discounts<sup>72</sup>, and sales by installment<sup>73</sup>, distribution of fabric catalog samples by mail (1900, 10.03), wholesale and retail trade<sup>74</sup>, etc. Common practices were different verbal marketing tricks that caught the attention of potential consumers. There were such

<sup>61</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.03.1901, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.09.1901, 192.

<sup>63</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1902, 74.

<sup>64</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.05.1902, 124.

<sup>65</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.07.1904, 171.

<sup>66</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.02.1900, 46; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.01.1902, 23; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.06.1905, 171.

<sup>67</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.07.1904, 171.

<sup>68</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1906, 80b.

<sup>69</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.06.1901, 142.

<sup>70</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1904, 14.

<sup>71</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1901, 71.

<sup>72</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.05.1901, 107; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1904, 15.

<sup>73</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1900, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1900, 70.

bright and lively slogans as “Fair prices!”<sup>75</sup>, “Excellent Service!”<sup>76</sup>, “Shoes like in Paris!”<sup>77</sup> and others.

The magazine often called to support the Czech manufacturers and buy only Czech goods – “Own to own!”<sup>78</sup>. After all, as the authors who wrote for “*Ženský svět*” were surprised, “it is still necessary to awaken love for Czech thing”<sup>79</sup>. Members of the Central Union of Czech Women even compiled a list of Czech merchants and offered to use special identification marks so while a customer walking by the store could immediately “recognize the Czech seller”<sup>80</sup>. That slogan also confirmed that National Revival ideas were still relevant, especially in the light of the periodic escalation of Czech and German conflict. Moreover, they were closely tied with the struggle for women’s rights. In particular, “*Ženský svět*” contained an appeal to speak Czech, everywhere wrote down Czech names and “not be ashamed of their language”<sup>81</sup>. Besides families, school had to take on that responsibility either. On the lessons of history pupils acquainted with Czech history, therefore, in order for her or him felt proud of being Czech, it was necessary to offer “not a dry language of textbooks, but an emotionally deep story”<sup>82</sup>.

The analysis of those advertisements was of great interest because it helped to understand which segments in the service sector were worked just for women. In particular, a vegetarian canteen (the first one) with “a coffee shop for ladies”, the owner of which was also a woman (Wagnerová), was mentioned<sup>83</sup>. Naturally, those were hairdressing and beauty salons, and a whole range of medical services (stomatology, gynecology, massage, healing waters, etc.) and sports (sale of tennis rackets, soccer balls<sup>84</sup>). There was also a very interesting advertisement about “an epoch-making novelty”

<sup>75</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1901, 71.

<sup>76</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.04.1900, 81.

<sup>77</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.03.1901, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.06.1905, 172; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.11.1907, 231.

<sup>79</sup> „Schůze a manifestace”, *Ženský svět*, r. IX, č. 21, 5.12.1905, 289.

<sup>80</sup> Popelka Bilianová, „K článku o «Součinnosti žen jako nutná podmínka hospodářského rozvoje národního»”, *Ženský svět*, 20.06.1907, 144.

<sup>81</sup> „Svět k svěmu”, *Ženský svět*, 20.05.1901, 111.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem, 112.

<sup>83</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1900, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.05.1906, 125.

– a women's corset (elastic, not harmful to health, providing freedom of breathing and useful for women going in for sports, especially tennis)<sup>85</sup>.

Taking into account that some ads contained information about "a fellow traveler" searching<sup>86</sup>, it can be concluded that tourism became more popular among women. Mostly it concerned representatives of aristocratic families and wealthy city women. But in those years, the involvement of women in tourist activities increased due to the representatives of other social groups (for example, the urban intelligentsia). Travel hunger was associated with the desire to get new cultural and intellectual impressions and was also a consequence of general liberation of women's consciousness. "A new type of women" was characterized by finding direct ties with the outside world, which, on the one hand, appeared oneself as making business contacts, on the other hand, as overcoming the closed female world through travel arrangements, both in the Czech lands and beyond their borders with cultural, educational and entertainment purposes (before, recreational purposes were mainly widespread).

So, one of the directions that was advertised in the pages of "Ženský svět" was Slovakia ("whoever goes there once, will remain dedicated to it forever"<sup>87</sup>). Moreover, that choice should consolidate the national identity more than a trip to Munich or Dresden. In fact, according to Czech teacher and writer Karel Kálal, Czechs and Slovaks are "one Czechoslovak people"<sup>88</sup>. The call to Czechs and Slovaks to become closer to each other reflected more the position of Czech politicians, who took Slovaks as smaller brothers and saw the task "to pull up" the level of the Slovak nation. So, as it was noted, after been inviting to Prague "a soft and modest" Slovak girl came to visit her colleague, she would find herself in "a more educated environment" and would get in touch with reading and culture (visiting the National Theater, concerts, lectures) and, thus, she became mentally closer and realized national unity<sup>89</sup>. Just through familiarization with a common culture, but not violence

<sup>85</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.04.1906, 92.

<sup>86</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.06.1901, 130.

<sup>87</sup> K. Kálal, „České ženy a Slovensko“, *Ženský svět*, 20.05.1902, 113.

<sup>88</sup> Ibidem, 114.

<sup>89</sup> Ibidem.

(it was “a method of the Germans and Hungarians”<sup>90</sup>), the Slovaks would be closer to the Czechs and, in the end, they would adopt one literary language. “After all, in this sense, the Slovak language is harmful for Slovaks, because it largely alienated them from Czech literature and determined their education gap”<sup>91</sup>. Moreover, it was believed that “Slovakia without Czech culture will lose its roots”, and everything special that the Slovaks had (“dialect”, “national dress”, etc.) was just “an addition” to Czech culture<sup>92</sup>. In order to familiarize themselves with Czech life, it was also proposed there to engage Slovak girls for work in Czech families, as they actively practiced it “in Pešť, Presburg (now Bratislava) and other Hungarian cities” (1902, p. 166). Thus, despite the fact that the author of the article repeatedly noted equal rights of Czechs and Slovaks, but in reality, the Slovaks were denied that right. More properly, we can speak about the assimilation of Slovaks by Czechs. Those sentiments were widespread among Czech circles, while in Slovakia only a small group of politicians and cultural figures shared those “Czechoslovakian” approaches.

And, finally, advertising of numerous beauty aids – creams, hair balms, toilet sets, etc.<sup>93</sup>, which covered a large part of all advertising content, cultivated an image of an independent, looking after herself attractive woman who could and should spend time on herself.

Thus, the analysis of advertisements made it possible to see how the soft process of the formation of “a new type of woman” with her changed views and interests, shifted center of preferences from family to herself, satisfaction of her own desires was going on, how Czech women lived at the beginning of the 20th century. On the other hand, they reflected a social order, because not only Czech women had been changing, but the whole Czech society as well. Capitalist relations transformed not only the structure of the region’s economy, but also aggravated nevertheless as the stratification of society, poverty, inequality, while new opportunities for person appeared.

<sup>90</sup> Karel Kálal, „České ženy a Slovensko“, *Ženský svět*, 5.06.1902, 131.

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, 132.

<sup>93</sup> Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.03.1901, 60; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 20.07.1903, 180; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.01.1906, 16; Inzertní rubrika, *Ženský svět*, 5.05.1907, 111.

### Final remarks

The pages of "Ženský svět" were full of a variety of problems with which Czech women met at the beginning of the 20th century. There was a process of transformation of psychological and behavioral women's characteristics, which made it possible to get out of the roles of wife, mother, housewife, rigidly prescribed by traditions, and, on the contrary, to join new spheres of life. Czech "a new type of women", primarily townswomen, had entered the path of breaking with traditional patriarchal values and overcoming gender stereotypes.

The professionalization and increasing independence of women were also tied with the necessity to protect and defend their interests using modern tools and methods for that period, therefore, the access to representative institutions was considered as an important way to solve that urgent task.

Increasing women's movement was closely connected with the struggle of the Czech people for self-determination and slow women's entry into active political life, despite the existence of appropriate prohibitions. It was also a component part of the social issue, as it dealt with motherhood, opportunity to work, protection of the rights of working women, access of women to study and improve the quality of women's education. The solution of those issues was connected both with overcoming conservatism and inactivity of great masses of people and with the unwillingness of the authorities to make concessions.

Despite the fact that the pages of the magazine "Ženský svět", like the whole women's movement itself, were full of the struggle for universal suffrage and the right of women to get higher education, equal working conditions and remuneration, etc., nevertheless, the main goal of the work was proclaimed the internal revival and development of woman herself. The women who lived close at hand of their husbands, finally, had to realize that the social system intended them a small position and had been already living its last days. They had to become more active and change, first of all, themselves, in order to be able to fit a new society and become a part of it in the future.

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