Women and Property in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

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Abstract/Résumé

This thesis examines women's access to property ownership in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, tracing women's property rights from the pre-communist period to the present transition to a market economy. Focusing on housing and investment property, it finds that women have a high degree of equality in household property ownership. This equality is due in part to gender equality under socialism as well as to traditions of equal inheritance. The thesis then considers women's property ownership in the context of the current "anti-feminist" movement that encourages Czech and Slovak women to focus their energy on the domestic sphere. It suggests that the withdrawal of women from the workplace and politics may have serious consequences for gender equality.

Cette these est une étude de l'accès à la propriété des femmes dans la Republique Tchèque at en Slovaquie remontant d'avant le communisme jusqu'à nos jours, période d'economie commercial. Elle se concentre sur l'investissements immobilier et les investissements en général tels que dans des projets, dans des compagnies, ou dans des valeurs boursières. L'égalité des femmes par rapport au hommes surtout dans le domaines des biens immobiliers est mise en évidence. L'égalité vient de communisme et aussi d'une tradition concernant l'héritage qui prône l'équitabilité entre les deux sexes. Cette étude considère l'accès à la propriété dans la contexte contemporain comme "anti-féministe." En effet, la situation actuelle encourage les femmes Tchèques et Slovaques à converger leur énèrgie dans les tâches ménagères et à se retirer du monde du travail et du monde politique, ce qui avrait des conséquences graves pour l'égalité des femmes.

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Introduction

> When you ask an American how he's doing, he always says, "Great!" even if it isn't true. When you ask a Czech, he says, "Oh, not so well" even if he's doing great, to keep others from wondering "Why are things so good for him, and not for me?"
>
> - Peter, in Prague, August 1994

In the last five years, Eastern Europe has undergone tremendous changes in economic structures and political systems, changes that dramatically affect people's daily lives. In the transition from state socialism to a plural democracy and a free market economy, wholesale transfers of property and assets from the state sector to private ownership are restructuring social and economic relationships. Women's control over property, both productive resources and household property, is essential to their ability to successfully negotiate the economic turmoil in the region. This thesis will examine the impact that these changes have had on women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the strategies which women are using in response to the transformation of the region. In particular, it will focus on women's property rights: how women gain ownership of and control over different forms of property? To what degree do they maintain control over resources, both as individuals and as members of households?

In the shift to market economies, much of the property that had been expropriated by the state during the decades of communist rule has now been returned to its former owners or their heirs. Other state property is also being shifted to the private sector through a variety of mechanisms: direct sale, auction, and the creation of a stock market system. Explicit goals of the privatization process were to compensate for injustices of the old system and to distribute state-enterprise assets as equitably as possible.

In the reform process, however, little attention has been given to issues of women's equality; while there is unlikely to be a movement to reverse the formal equality achieved under socialism, neither is there likely to be any affirmative action or particular attention to women's issues. At the same time, there is a conservative movement back to more patriarchal values and traditional roles for women, and women's political involvement is decreasing. In this context, then, starting from a position in which both male and female citizens had few individual property rights, women may be disadvantaged in the transition to a market economy. Women may be facing a

diminution of their actual control over resources which could have serious consequences.

Before 1989, Czechoslovakia was characterized as "the most orthodox centrally planned economy" in Eastern Europe (Bruno 1994: 23), with almost one hundred percent of the economy in the hands of the state. Under such conditions, neither women nor men had substantial access to private property. Marxist theories of property assumed that the destruction of private property would create the conditions for gender equality. Socialism did promote women's full legal equality, with full employment for women, substantial maternal and child care benefits, political representation, and protective legislation. Some of these "protective" measures can be construed as problematic, as they emphasized women's family responsibilities without encouraging "equality" in the domestic sphere. However, several authors have characterized women's equality in the Soviet bloc as the right to equally bad treatment (Corrin 1992: 72; Havelkova 1993). In post-communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, there has been a tremendous backlash against the demands made of women during the communist era. The rhetoric of "women's emancipation" has been rejected, with the rest of the socialist legacy, as part of communist propaganda.

This paper will examine women's property rights in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It will consider the means through which women acquire property, tracing women's property ownership from the pre-communist period to the present transition to a market economy, with a focus on housing and investment in privatization. A significant shortage of housing, especially in urban areas, highlights the importance of this type of property as a social and economic resource. Housing has been privatized rapidly, primarily through the restoration of units to their pre-1948 owners or heirs, and also by direct sale, at low prices, to tenants.

Participation in the emerging stock market through a voucher privatization program could also act as a significant resource. Before the two nations separated, almost 1,500 large firms were privatized through an ambitious, if controversial, voucher plan. Over 8.5 million people, most of those eligible, participated in this plan, under which people purchased vouchers with which to bid for shares in companies. Since the Czech-Slovak partition, Slovakia has abandoned the voucher program, preferring to privatize remaining firms through other mechanisms. This paper will investigate women's participation in the voucher program and whether the shares purchased are

viewed as important assets by individuals who participated.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia are particularly interesting for studying these issues, as they have recently chosen different paths of economic development after over forty-five years of a shared communist government: the Czechs are moving as rapidly as possible towards a market economy, while Slovakia is attempting a more conservative approach towards reform. As privatization proceeds at different rates, what access do women have to resources? While neither nation has completed the process of economic transformation, at the time of this writing, there is some evidence that conservative approaches to reform may favor investors with a great deal of capital -- largely foreign investors and former Communist Party elite, with women losing out on both counts. However, trends thus far suggest that household property and "small properties", such as family businesses, are accessible to a wide range of individuals, including women, in both nations.

This thesis is based on a review of available literature and on interviews conducted in the summer of 1994 in the Czech Republic and Slovakia to consider how women have fared since the 1989 revolution. While the interview sample was small and opportunistic, in the absence of other studies of women's property ownership, it provides a basis for an exploratory study. Chapter one looks at issues of women's property on a theoretical, global level. Chapter two gives a brief background of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Chapter three reviews the history of women's property ownership in the region, examines women's access to resources under socialism in eastern Europe, and presents data from the fieldwork study in the context of the transition to a market economy. Finally, chapter four considers attitudes towards women and feminism, tracing the discourse on women's rights from socialist policies and attitudes to the present anti-feminist movement.

Chapter One: Women's Property

"What daughters took away the wife... brought in."
- Robert Kerner, 1969

When considering women's economic role, their ability to own, access, and control productive resources is an important factor. Not only does access to resources allow women to survive independently, but it may improve their status within the household and their position in society. In every society, women's rights over resources are governed by a complex interaction of traditions, legal systems, modes of production, and kin and household relations. Macro-economic changes affect both relations of production and family relations. These changes inevitably affect men and women differently.

In this chapter, I will consider women's access to productive property, and review important theoretical work that has dealt with this issue. Though much of this literature is based on the experiences of women in the Third World, the issue of women's access to property is equally salient in any capitalist society, or in a society which is in transition to capitalism. Under socialism, access to "property" may more aptly be referred to as access to resources, and will be considered in greater detail in chapter three.

Smallholder Economies

Until the beginning of this century, the economy of Eastern Europe was largely based on small-scale, household-based agriculture. In some regions, including Slovakia, this was true until after World War II. While small-scale agriculture currently plays only a small role in the economy of either the Czech Republic or Slovakia, the types of property relations established in rural villages forms much of the basis for "traditions" of property transmission today.

Contrary to beliefs about the inefficiency of small-scale agriculture, recent work suggests that peasant agriculture is often economically productive and environmentally sustainable. In *Smallholders, Householders*, Robert Netting (1993) details strategies of small-scale agriculturalists in many parts of the world, and contends that they "achieve

high production, combine subsistence and market benefits, transform energy efficiently, and encourage practices of stewardship and conservation of resources" (ibid.: 320). Netting defines smallholder farming in terms of intensive land-use practices: permanent fields which are made to produce high yields through practices which maintain and restore fertility (ibid.: 3). Strategies for maintaining productivity are complex, and rely on an intimate knowledge of the land and local environment. Intensive agriculture requires high inputs of labor, appropriate to areas of high population density and low labor costs (ibid.: 129).

Smallholder agriculture is inextricably linked with the smallholder family. The household is the unit of production, consumption, and reproduction. Members of the family manage the farm, perform most if not all of the labor, and consume at least part of what they produce. While not all members of the family may work on the farm, and outside labor may be hired, the family is the backbone of smallholder production. One of the goals of this family enterprise is to ensure the continuation of the family; "farming is a villager's way to create more villagers" (Maclachlan 1983: 11). Despite differences in the way the family itself is organized in different societies -- extended or nuclear, patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral -- smallholder agriculture depends on family relations for its continued success.

Nearly all rural villages are internally diverse in terms of wealth; there are those who are landless, and larger landowners who work their own land with the help of hired labor. However, there is often considerable mobility in wealth, as the position of individuals and households in the developmental cycle changes, which prevents rigid classes from emerging (Netting 1993: 322). The myth of the self-sufficient, isolated village is dispelled by the extent of individual connections outside the village, which may often be a source of prestige and material gains (Attwood 1992: 32-33). Migration for work, participation in military service, commerce, and exogamy extend the ties of peasant farmers well beyond the village (Attwood 1992; Halpern and Halpern 1972).

While there is clearly differentiation between rural households, it is also important to consider differences within the household. The age and gender of household members generally determine, at least to some degree, the division of labor and the allocation of resources. While the family's ultimate goal may be the success of the household and of its members, relations and bargaining positions within the

household are seldom equal, and individuals within one household may have diverse goals. Women's bargaining position, in this sense, may be influenced by their role in productive labor, by the extent of the resources which they have brought to the household, and by the value placed on bearing and raising children, among other factors.

Female Farming

Ester Boserup's (1970) study of women and economic development discusses the relationship between women's role in production and their social status. She finds that where women predominate in agricultural production, they tend to have a higher degree of personal freedom. Boserup defines "female farming" as agricultural systems in which women do most of the farm work. These systems are characterized by extensive, rather than intensive, land use practices, including shifting cultivation. Boserup finds that plow agriculture tends to be associated with male farming. She argues that pre-historic shifts in the sexual division of labor occurred as population density increased and new techniques were developed, and male farming patterns began to predominate in certain regions (ibid.: 18). Plow agriculture involves a shift to increased male labor to perform the heavy tasks of clearing the land and plowing, and away from female labor as the need for weeding decreases (ibid.: 32-33). As agricultural practices intensify even more, as for example in wet-rice agriculture, women's labor increases again, to levels similar to men's, as more total labor is required. Boserup's model suggests that female farming is characteristic of sub-Saharan Africa while male plow farming predominates through most of Eurasia as well as in northern Africa and Ethiopia.

Boserup finds that women's autonomy increases where their participation in agricultural production is high. Because women are self-supporting where they are responsible for production, they are not dependent on their husbands and are able to assert their independence, in terms of freedom of movement, the ability to make choices regarding their own sexuality, and the power to make independent economic decisions (ibid.: 50). Women in these systems are an economic asset to the household. Boserup indicates that bridewealth payments are associated with female farming, while dowry tends to be associated with male farming (ibid.: 48), a theme pursued in greater depth by Jack Goody (see below). Also, plow agriculture is associated with private ownership

of land and increasing social hierarchy. In these hierarchical systems, she argues, women are often secluded or confined to the domestic sphere, in favor of hired male labor (ibid.: 27).

Inheritance, Dowry, and Ownership

Women's status is also influenced by their ownership of and control over resources. Boserup's model of female farming associates women's participation in agriculture with shifting cultivation. With extensive land use, ownership of land is not a critical issue; land tends to be held under collective tenure, with members of corporate groups able to gain access to enough land to meet their needs. Tools such as digging sticks and hoes are inexpensive and easily obtained. With plow farming, however, land is a much more valuable resource, as a great deal more labor is required to clear the land, and private ownership is the norm (Netting 1993: 172). Under systems of private ownership, women's control over land, as well as other productive resources, improves their ability to support themselves and their children, increases their bargaining power within the family, and gives them status and autonomy within the household and in the larger society.

Bina Agarwal (1989) argues that it is necessary to consider women's property separately from household property. She cites several studies of rural India that have found a correlation between women's direct access to productive resources and income and their children's nutritional status (Agarwal 1989: 73). These studies find that women tend to spend a higher proportion of their income than men on subsistence needs, even though their income is likely to be lower. Agarwal also discusses the effect of women's property on social gender relations, "especially women's ability to challenge male oppression in society and in the home" (ibid.: 74).

How, then, are women able to gain property? Jack Goody (1990, 1983, 1973) has studied the roles of inheritance, bridewealth, and dowry as mechanisms through which women's ownership of property is mediated. In agricultural societies, where members of the household provide most of the labor, marriage is closely related to production, as well as reproduction. Building on Boserup's distinctions between male and female farming systems, Goody examines the implications of bridewealth and dowry systems as they are related to social structures, marriage patterns, kinship, and

stratification (Goody 1973: 46). He suggests, however, that whether bridewealth or dowry payments predominate in a culture is "related less directly to women's contribution to agriculture and more to the problem of 'status placement' in societies with varying degrees of socio-economic stratification" (ibid.: 46). The material conditions of agriculture may also need to be considered when examining marriage payments, as a factor which affects both women's agricultural labor and socio-economic stratification (Maclachlan 1993). The economic stratification that accompanies systems of intensive agriculture, then, affects patterns of marriage and how family property is transmitted between generations. While smallholder communities may not have rigid class stratification, as Netting (1993) asserts, marriage can be an important mechanism for families to gain status and wealth within a context of overall mobility.

The rights over property that are transferred at marriage between a woman, her husband, her kin, and his kin can be complex. Goody outlines several factors that need to be considered when studying marriage transactions: the amount of property transferred, whether this amount is treated as fixed or negotiable, the content of the payments, who is involved in giving and receiving, and how the property is used. Timing of payments is also important: when property is transferred and if it is returnable if the marriage fails or if one spouse dies (Goody 1973: 3). In this vein, he makes a distinction between bridewealth, which involves a payment by the groom to his wife's kin for their own use, and indirect dowry, which involves property given by the groom to the bride herself, either at the time of marriage or at his death (Goody 1983: 206-207). Such an indirect dowry may be utilized by the couple, but is intended for support of the wife in the event of her husband's death, separately from other property which may be entailed to other heirs.

Bridewealth payments predominate in female farming systems, primarily in Africa. While customs differ about the size, negotiability, and returnability of marriage payments, bridewealth traditionally has tended to equalize wealth between different members of a community (Goody 1973: 13). Payment received for a daughter in the form of moveable property is often used to finance her brother's marriage. Inheritance in these societies is usually less important than in male farming systems, as land is often controlled by corporate kin groups, and rights to use particular plots generally revert to the lineage rather than being inherited by spouse or children upon the user's death.

More intensive agriculture tends to be associated with greater competition for family status and wealth, as noted above. The maintenance of status is associated with material wealth, and particularly with land. In this sort of economically stratified system, daughters, as well as sons, have to be endowed in order to preserve or maintain the status of the family (Goody 1990: 469). "Diverging devolution," which refers to the transfer of property at marriage or death, or other occasions, to children of both sexes, is common in most of Europe and Asia. But depending on a region's system of production and the particular form that diverging devolution takes, the consequences for women and for relations within the farm family can vary a great deal.

In patrilocal societies, the endowment of an out-marrying daughter with property requires the family to reorganize its holdings. If land is part of her dowry, the family loses part of its means of production immediately. But even other forms of dowry, if the dowry represents a sizable endowment, may cause the family to reorganize their production as they try to raise funds (ibid.: 20). Family property is dispersed with each generation, particularly if land is divided between all children or between several sons. Where marriage is patrilocal, women may be less likely to receive land as part of their dowry, in part to avoid fractioning family holdings, and in part because if she is living far from her family, she and her husband would be unable to farm it effectively. Where village or local endogamy is common, one marriage strategy followed by families may be to marry their children into families with adjacent parcels, in order to consolidate holdings. However, dowry maintains the family's status, as daughters are married to men of equal or greater wealth and social standing. "Dowry transactions place a premium on the matching contributions of the spouses. What women and men bring, either in concrete dowry or in inheritance chances, varies, although among conjugal pairs these tend to match" (Goody 1973: 18).

In order to determine whether women's access to property through devolution gives them autonomy or authority within the household in any culture, several factors need to be considered. In many cultures, including parts of India and much of Europe, dowry arrangements are most complex and important to the upper classes (Goody 1973: 19). The reasons for this are fairly clear: the rich have more property to divide, while for poor families, the "portion" for each child may be non-existent; and concern for maintaining status is much more likely to be a factor for wealthy families. Lower

classes or castes may not have a dowry system even where it is common among the upper classes, but may instead have some form of bridewealth payment, as is the case in parts of India.

The customary size of the dowry may have a significant impact on the value attached to females as daughters. In northern India, high dowry payments represent a substantial, ongoing expense to a girl's parents. Under these circumstances, daughters may be regarded as burdensome (Jeffrey et al. 1988). Parents' fear of the high expense of marrying off their daughters may even contribute to female infanticide or neglect, especially if a family already has one or more girls (Miller 1981). Large dowries in Europe may also mean that a woman's natal kin are more involved later on in her marriage, that they may intervene on her behalf (Goody 1983: 258) in order to protect the investment they have made in their daughter and her children, as well as out of personal concern. In the case of large dowries, the woman and her kin may have some leverage, because if the marriage fails, the separation of property is implicit, and the implied threat of losing valuable property may increase pressure on her husband in the event of a conflict (ibid.: 258).

Goody's analysis does not give much attention to the question of control over property given to a woman as dowry or inheritance. Frequently, when the issue of women's ability to control their property is mentioned, it seems to be in terms of women as widows. In this case, the culture may or may not support a woman's right to manage her own land, often land that formerly belonged to her husband. Widows frequently have more rights than unmarried women to control land holdings, especially if they have sons who will eventually inherit (Agarwal 1989: 77). However, widows who do control land may face great difficulties in managing it themselves. Women trying to farm their own land may lack the technical and managerial skills required in intensive production (Dandekar 1986: 112). In an environment where land is scarce and sales infrequent, men may be particularly non-supportive of women farmers, anticipating a chance to buy them out and increase their own holding (ibid.). Cultural restrictions also impede women farmers. In Maharashtra, for example, they are culturally prohibited from using bullocks to plow, and so must hire plowmen teams, they are unable to stay in the fields at night to guard the crops or monitor irrigation, and they are cut off from information and knowledge transmitted through the male "grapevine" (ibid.: 158). While these

restrictions may have some justification, such as concerns about the safety of a lone woman at night, they also act to limit women's ability to function independently.

It is possible that, as with their role in productive labor, women's ownership of productive resources may improve their position within the family. If part of the household income is attributed to the wife's property, for example, she may be in a better position to control that income. While a woman may be less likely to inherit land in most farming communities, her endowment with moveable property may enable her to have some income or autonomy. Wealth in the form of jewelry or other valuables may be available to her in times of need or to pass on to her own daughter. Control over her own property may be as important to a woman's autonomy as control over her own labor.

It is important to recognize that women's de jure ownership of property does not always equate with de facto control. In many cases, goods transferred as part of a women's dowry do not go to her, but go directly to her husband and his kin (Jeffrey et al. 1988: 26-27). In other cases, property which nominally belongs to the woman is controlled by her husband, and may only revert to her control at his death. The philosophy behind dowry payments varies in different regions, classes, and families. In some cases, dowry may be seen as a gift to a young married couple, to start them off in their new life. In other cases, it is believed to be a direct endowment of a daughter, property to protect her and her children from want, an attempt by her natal family to provide for her support and to ensure her survival if the marriage fails. In cases where women are minimally involved in production, it may be a compensation to the groom's family for taking on another non-working member. The question of how much individual control a woman has over her dowry is directly linked to the ideals behind the transaction, which serve to specify the relationships between the families and individuals involved and determine the de facto ownership of the property.

The European Context

As the work of Boserup (1970) and Goody (1973) indicates, Europe has been characterized by plow agriculture and systems of private land tenure, as well as by the transfer of property to daughters in the form of dowry. The principle of diverging

devolution has been modified, however, by local customs and traditions, by changes in economic systems and dominant modes of production, and by shifts in legal codes. Historically, women's right to full legal control over property was linked to their rights as citizens and their legal ability to make contracts and act on their own behalf. Since the sixteenth century, European courts have generally upheld a woman's right to control her dowry, particularly after her husband's death, as well as the right of daughters to have some share of family property, and entitlement of a widow to be supported by her husband's estate, although the degree to which women fully enjoyed these rights varied across time and space (Weisner 1993). Ethnographic studies in contemporary European villages show that variation in patterns of inheritance and dowry persists, although throughout modern Europe, a woman's right to own property is accepted. The literature on women's property in Europe is richer from Western and Southern Europe than for Eastern Europe and particularly for Slavic regions.

In Southern France, for example, Rayna Reiter (1975) finds that women most often inherit the family house and a small piece of agricultural land, while men tend to inherit a larger amount of land. While this pattern is not recognized by villagers, who believe that all family property should be divided equally between siblings, it has persisted in the area since the end of the feudal period. Reiter finds that women who have inherited land claim not to know anything about it, even its size, yielding its control and management to their husbands (1975: 266). While women rarely manage productive resources, in this case, they maintain power and equality in the household due to strong matrilocal kin ties.

In the Hungarian village of Tazlar, C. Hann (1980) finds that dowry is not an important aspect of property relations. Instead, young married couples receive material goods and cash from both their families, as well as wedding guests who are expected to "contribute heavily" to the new household (1980: 142). Before the introduction of socialism, landholdings were split equally between all siblings only at the death of their parents (ibid.: 154). Under socialism, the inheritance of land has become less important economically, as wage labor has increased, but landholdings are still a significant indicator of status.

In Sydel Silverman's 1975 study of an Italian village, by contrast, she finds that women maintain an active interest in the management of property that was part of their

dowry. While land that came into a household as part of a dowry is managed by the husband along with land he brought into the marriage, his wife retains a significant degree of control. The importance of a dowry, Silverman notes, depends on the social class of the two families; in landless families, a dowry consists only of a few personal effects and household items, and is less important in evaluating a potential marriage partner than her skills and perceived fertility (1975: 319). As in many smallholder societies, the "ideal" match is between individuals who can bring approximately equal assets to the marriage. This idea of equity is also reflected in a Polish village where Carole Nagengast (1991) finds that most marriages occur within a relatively small economic range -- that is, people rarely "marry up." In this case, land was often part of a dowry, along with tools, livestock, and other household goods, and both partners were expected to contribute approximately equal amounts to the new household.

In some parts of Europe, including much of Spain (Harding 1975) and Serbia (Halpern and Halpern 1972), land is rarely inherited by a daughter or given to her as part of a dowry. In the Spanish case, inheritance is impartible, and a young wife usually moves in with her husband and his parents (Harding 1975: 293). In Serbia, a wife joins her husband's *zadruga*, a joint family household. Her dowry may include household goods and cash, but land and the family house are inherited only by males (Halpern and Halpern 1972). In the family cycle of the *zadruga*, when the joint household fissions, everything is divided exactly equally between brothers; one of the Halperns' informants told them that when he and his brother split, "each plot of land was divided in half... The pigs, chicken, and sheep were divided. All the utensils and storage barrels, all the containers, were divided. Everything was done by halves, the forks, the spoons, everything..." The only items not split between the two new households were items which had been included in each wife's dowry (1972: 41), suggesting that women maintained a sense of title to and control of dowry property.

Michael Herzfeld's (1987) analysis of dowry and inheritance in rural Greece points out that while we have tended to roughly equate "dowry" and "inheritance" (as evident in Goody's "devolution"), they may carry different local meanings. In the village he examines, family property, including land and cash, is divided equally between all offspring. Property given to a daughter as part of her dowry was owned jointly by her husband, with the potential threat that he could lose or squander it. Land, therefore,

is almost always given to a daughter separately from her "dowry," as is a house when she marries, which is not part of her dowry, but is "her own". This is intended to insure that she will have some means of independent support, property that remains in her name (Herzfeld 1987: 146-148).

The Impact of Development on Women's Property

In agricultural societies, women's ability to own land, as well as other income-generating property, represents a key resource in their ability to survive, care for their family, and prosper as individuals, as well as having important implications for economic development at a regional or national level. In an agricultural economy, land is clearly one of the most important productive resources. Research on gender issues in industrialized settings, on the other hand, has tended to focus primarily on employment, entrepreneurship, or social issues. Does access to property, in the form of household property, land, and housing, remain an important consideration in non-agricultural economies? In theory, a woman's independent ownership of resources should still provide her with bargaining power within the household, act as a source of investment capital, and improve her ability to maintain her standard of living in the absence of a spouse.

Some theorists predict that land commercialization will erode women's customary rights to land and other productive resources (Mazumdar and Sharma 1990: 188). In parts of Africa, privatization of land has had a negative impact on women's access to resources. As usufruct rights have been replaced by private ownership as the predominant form of land tenure, women have tended to lose direct access to agricultural land (Boserup 1970:58). Rights that had been held by families have been replaced by individual titles, leaving all family members who do not hold title at risk of losing access should the owner decide to sell the holding. As of 1991, women in Kenya and Ethiopia were not legally permitted to own land, and in Zambia and Tanzania, divorced women were prohibited from land ownership (Lele 1991: 60). In other areas, women are not legally precluded from ownership, but have been less successful than men in pursuing land claims. Among the Maasai, for example, when land formerly held in common by kin groups was privatized by the government, ninety-nine percent of the registered owners were men, due to traditions of land rights being held by patrilineages (Talle

1988: 43). While some of this land may be used for household production, and may in fact be farmed by women, their position is precarious as long as they must depend on their husband for access to productive property. Women in these areas are often excluded from access to agricultural inputs and education. Access to credit may depend on farm size and cash crop output, which tends to automatically exclude most women farmers (Goheen 1991: 249). Policies tend to promote large, industrial farms, usually owned and managed by elite males and dedicated to producing cash crops for export (Gladwin 1991).

In Europe, where there is a long tradition of private land rights, women's property ownership is somewhat different, and economic changes have had different impacts. Industrialization in the last century has affected most rural areas, creating a new class of "peasant-workers." Halpern and Halpern's (1972) analysis of Serbian peasants suggests that where women had little independent access to productive resources, their increased levels of education and involvement in wage labor now gives them more options, and their earning power increases their involvement in family economic decisions. In other regions, where women have legal and traditional rights to equal inheritance, household property may also have become less important than the potential ability to earn an income. Dowries have been made illegal in some countries, have fallen out of use in others, or represent only a symbolic transfer of property for most families. Instead, parental investment in children of both sexes is made in education, which increases earning potential in the market economy.

In parts of Eastern Europe, large scale privatization of property may not be as detrimental to women's property ownership as it has been in other parts of the world. Privatization may represent more of a "return" to traditional property systems which included women, than a shift in tenure such as it represents in much of Africa. In the transition to a capitalist economy, traditions and ideas about property ownership will greatly influence how resources are (re)distributed. It is crucial to examine the nature of these changes in order to determine under what conditions women's control of resources may be diminished or enhanced, and how capitalism may affect patterns of resource access in Eastern Europe.

Chapter Two: Historical Background

> We are what history has made us. We live in the very centre of Central Europe, in a place that since the beginning of time has been the main European crossroads of every possible interest, invasion, and influence of a political, military, ethnic, religious, or cultural nature... -- all of these overlapped here to form our national and cultural consciousness, our traditions, our social models, and our behaviour, which have been passed down from generation to generation. In short, our history has formed our experience of our world.
>
> - Vaclav Havel, *Summer Meditations*.

The Czech and Slovak cultures share much in common, stemming from similar Slavic ancestry, language, and customs (Turnock 1988). Differences in geographic location and local history have combined to produce distinct cultural variation between the two ethnic groups, however, which affects how they face their separate futures. Although they have shared a single legal and administrative system for most of this century, Czechs and Slovaks hold distinct images of their "national character" and local values. The discussion of what these differences are, as well as the similarities between the regions, will be explored more fully in this chapter and those following in order to understand the influences on the position of women and their access to resources in each country.

Geographical Setting

The region of Europe now known as the Czech Republic and Slovakia sits in the heart of Europe, a landlocked region with an ethnically diverse population, fertile agricultural land, and a variety of natural resources. Its land area is about 12.5 million hectares; of this, about one-third is forested (Human Development Report 1993: 208) and half is agricultural land (World Bank 1991: 3). Mountainous regions in Slovakia, including the Tatras range and the Carpathians, are less productive than the lowlands. Some mineral resources, including highly polluting brown coal, are available, but the region has been heavily dependent on imports from the former U.S.S.R. to meet many of its energy and industrial resource needs (World Bank 1991).

With a population of over 15 million in 1988 (ibid.: 121), the former Czechoslovakia fared somewhat better under socialism than most of its Eastern European

neighbors (ibid.: xii). Educational levels and health indicators are generally high (Human Development Report 1993). The population is ethnically diverse, with large German, Hungarian, Polish, and Ukrainian minorities, especially in border areas.

Historical Setting

Before World War I, the area that came to be known as Czechoslovakia belonged to the great Austro-Hungarian Empire. Under the Hapsburgs, the Czech Lands, which include Bohemia and Moravia, were administered separately from Slovakia, which was a part of Hungary, with different political and judiciary organizations (Kerner 1969: 53). Throughout the lands under Hapsburg rule, feudal systems of agriculture concentrated wealth and land holdings in the hands of the nobility, while the peasantry was subject to a variety of constraints on their person and property. In Eastern Europe, enserfment took place gradually during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the nobility consolidated and codified its economic and social control (ibid.: 274). Feudal structures were somewhat weak in Bohemia, however, until after the Thirty Years' War ended in 1620 (Cerman 1994: 153), when most of the ethnic Czech nobles were forced out of the country. Their manors were confiscated by Ferdinand II and distributed to various German nobles and the Jesuit order. In Slovakia, in the Hungarian part of the Empire, agriculture was also concentrated on very large estates, in this case controlled by Austrian and Hungarian nobles (Farago 1990).

On the estate, only the lord was a citizen of the state; the serfs were his subjects, with no rights off of the manor. The lord embodied the law on the estate, and corporal punishment for offenses was common (Svoboda 1992: 14), as was the use of the military to put down larger scale serf revolts. After the early sixteenth century, serfs were not allowed to migrate at will, but needed the permission of the lord to relocate, travel for seasonal employment, or sell their holding (Kerner 1969: 274). In the 1770s, Joseph II introduced a series of reforms to the feudal system (Svoboda 1992). The state was given the right to intervene in lords' treatment of serfs, corporal punishment for noncriminal offenses was banned, and the right to suppress insurrections was reserved to the crown. The legal rights of the serfs were expanded to allow them to testify in court against offending manor owners. Labor obligations were decreased, and taxes and rent due from the serfs were greatly decreased. Serfdom was abolished in 1781 in the Czech lands,

which gave former serfs the right to move freely, arrange their own marriages, and take up a trade or pursue an education (Kerner 1969; 43-48). In Slovakia, part of Hungary, serfdom was not abolished until 1848, when peasants were finally given title to the land they had formerly worked in usufruct (Komlos 1990). Serfdom came to an end as a result of complex, interrelated factors: the increasing need for a non-agricultural wage labor force, the desire of the monarchy to weaken the power of the nobility, and the codification of and consolidation of the legal system.

The Czech Lands had a long tradition as a center of trade and craft production, with close ties to Germany and Austria. When serfdom was abolished, many of the German nobles left the country. In the absence of a titled elite, a middle-class merchant culture developed (Selucky 1991:156). During the same period, the power of the monastic orders was greatly reduced; when the Jesuit order was disbanded by papal decree, the extensive lands and wealth they controlled in the Czech Lands was given to the poor (Komlos and Benda 1990: 131). While agriculture intensified, a growing landless population supported itself in urban industries (Turnock 1988:274). Industrialization was encouraged by the Crown in order to reduce rural poverty and diminish begging (Komlos 1989). By 1918, the Czech Lands were one of the most industrially advanced areas of Europe, containing two-thirds of the total industry of the Hapsburg Empire (World Bank 1991: 1).

Slovakia's situation remained rather different, with large land holdings continuing to be controlled by other orders of the Catholic church and the Magyar nobility. Even after serfdom was formally abolished, feudal relations of production persisted into the early twentieth century, as peasants continued to rent land from local lords to supplement their own small land holdings in exchange for rent in kind and labor on the owner's holdings (Pavel 1924). Conditions for agriculture were less favorable than in the Czech lands, and market-oriented family farms did not play a significant economic role (Selucky 1991: 157). Industry was not highly developed, with only fifteen percent of the population employed in non-agricultural fields in 1890 (Farago 1990: 151). Rural people had little opportunity to develop technical or entrepreneurial skills, and Slovak language education was not available (Selucky 1991: 157).

The fragmentation of the Hapsburg Empire at the end of the first World War paved the way for the declaration of the first Czechoslovak Republic in Prague on

October 28, 1918. The unification of the two regions seems to have been something of a marriage of convenience for both sides. For the Slovaks, a strongly nationalist sentiment was tempered by the reality of the difficulties of surviving as a small independent state, and a union with the Czechs seemed far preferable to remaining a part of Hungary (Bosak 1991: 66). The Czechs viewed the Slovaks as quite close ethnically, indeed as sharing a "Czechoslovak" identity. An alliance provided an important advantage over the Germans, who in 1921 were 23.4 percent of the population of the Czech Lands (Mogosci 1991: 105). Thus the Germans, dominant under the old empire, were forced into the position of a politically disadvantaged minority (Smelser 1991).

The first Czechoslovak Republic "measured by the standards of its time... was a decent, non-violent, progressive state" (Kotvun 1991: 37). Czechs and Slovaks both had access to native language education, under a democratic system of government with freedom of the press, substantial land reform, and a "civilized political environment" (ibid.: 37). Women gained the right to vote in 1918. The central conflictual issue during the inter-war period was Czech-Slovak relations (Wolchik 1991: 7). When the Czechoslovak Republic was established, Slovaks had accepted a high degree of centralization with the expectation that as their territory modernized, they would gain a higher degree of self-government. This autonomy failed to materialize. While many Czechs advocated a common "Czechoslovak" identity, many Slovaks saw themselves as a distinct nation, with a different language and distinct traditions. Following unification, thousands of Czechs entered Slovakia to work as civil servants in schools and local administrations, positions which had been occupied by Magyars and which there were not enough educated Slovaks to fill. This was a cause of later resentment, as newly educated Slovaks went unemployed while Czechs continued to fill administrative positions (Bosak 1991: 73).

The first Czechoslovak Republic was dismantled as World War II approached. The Munich agreement of England and France in 1938 effectively abandoned Czechoslovakia to the predation of Germany, and the Sudentenland (part of northern Bohemia) was ceded to Germany. In 1939, the Slovak People's Party established an autonomous government and Slovakia became an independent republic. Ruthenia (in eastern Slovakia) was taken over by Hungary shortly after.

In March 1939, the Czech Lands were occupied by the Germans under threat of

a full-scale invasion. The German occupation was "directed at extinguishing all vestiges of Czech culture and political values" (Wolchik 1991: 16) and at channelling the considerable industrial resources to war production. The Jewish community was virtually eliminated by the Nazis. A population of over 357,000 Jews in 1930 was almost completely destroyed during World War II; by 1966, the Jewish population numbered less than 20,000 (Krecji 1972: 6). There was little open opposition by Czechs to the occupation (Wolchik 1991: 16), and few were lost during the war.

The independent state of Slovakia which existed from 1939 to 1945 is the subject of some controversy. It has been described by some authors as a "satellite state" (Bosak 1991: 76) of Nazi Germany. Slovak nationalists who were in control of the government during this period "emulated Nazi Germany in its politics as well as organization," persecuting Czechs, Gypsies, and Jews (Wolchik 1991: 16). At the same time, there was significant opposition to the Slovak regime, culminating in the Slovak National Uprising in 1944. The unsuccessful Uprising, which enjoyed wide support, aimed at overthrowing the government and establishing unity once more with the Czechs. Supporters of the Uprising, including Slovak communists, were later able to point to their opposition to the Nazis to gain political legitimacy.

After World War Two, Czechoslovakia was again united as part of the partitioning of Europe, and borders were redrawn to reflect, for the most part, pre-war boundaries. Over two million Germans living in the north were expelled from the country, and their lands and possessions sequestered. The Communist Party (CPC), which had been gaining political strength, was able to claim control over the vacated land, and used this to help consolidate its power; the new occupants of vacated German farms got a house, land, and a Party membership card (Renner 1989: 6). In February of 1948, the CPC officially took control of the government, after the assassination of the prime minister. By August, twenty-one percent of the population were Party members (ibid.: 20).

As part of the first Five-Year Plan (1949-1953), industry was nationalized and redirected to focus on heavy industry. This left Czechoslovakia highly dependent on the Soviet Union, both for mineral imports and a market for exports. Collectivization of agricultural land was begun in 1949, and by 1960, some ninety percent of agricultural land was incorporated into state or collective farms (Wolchik 1991: 230). By 1985,

only five percent of agricultural land was privately owned (World Bank 1991: 12).

The 1950s and early 1960s saw a period of socialist orthodoxy and strong central control. In 1968, however, came the famous Prague Spring, a reform movement led by government officials and the intelligentsia. "Socialism with a human face" was intended to guarantee more civil liberties, to combine a socialist economy with a democratic political system. It included measures to ensure freedom of press and of assembly, economic reforms promoting local control and initiative, encouraged alternative political parties, and gave increased autonomy to trade unions (Renner 1989: 56-59). The reform movement was short-lived. In August, troops from the Soviet Union and the nations of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia, in the largest European military action since World War II (ibid.: 71). The top Czech officials were taken to Moscow and held until they agreed to sign a "normalization" protocol.

Normalization measures created in Czechoslovakia "the most orthodox centrally planned economy" (Bruno 1994: 23) from 1968 until 1989. Measures implemented during the Prague Spring were reversed, and central control reinstituted. By the beginning of 1970, all reformists were removed from high offices, and purges of reform sympathizers thinned out the lower ranks (Renner 1989: 97). "Socialism with a human face" was replaced by "real socialism," which emphasized the Soviet model and narrowed ideological correctness (ibid.: 113). Opposition to the regime was limited, although Charter 77, an underground document calling for human and civil rights, was supported by many intellectuals.

Revolution and Transition

Support for a transition to a market economy arose and spread quickly in 1989. The opposition of intellectuals and prominent dissidents to the Communist regime was taken up by large segments of the public. A large student demonstration on November 17, 1989 provoked public outcry when it ended with the police beating several students. Students declared an indefinite strike the next day, and were immediately joined by actors and musicians. This artists' strike provoked a general strike several days later, a seemingly incongruous series of events that Ladislav Holy (1993) explains by pointing to the importance of the arts in the Czech self-image. While dissident playwright Vaclav Havel was relatively unknown in his own country before the demonstrations began, as

most of his work had been censored under the socialist regime, he was quickly embraced by the media and the masses as the cultured leader who would bring the nation out from under the thumb of uncultured Communist buffoons (Holy 1993: 209-210). The protesters' demands shifted from a call for more freedom and civil rights under socialism to a demand for the creation of a democratic state.

The "Velvet Revolution" was concluded fairly quickly. The general strike on November 27 involved about half of the population (ibid.: 205). Two days later, the Federal Assembly abolished the constitutional clause that gave a leading role to the Communist Party, whose chairman resigned. A week later, after further demonstrations, a new cabinet with a majority of non-Communist members was sworn in. On December 29, 1989, only a little more than a month after the initial demonstrations, Vaclav Havel was sworn in by the Assembly as president. Elections in June 1990 involved twenty-three political parties, and resulted in a coalition government of the Civic Forum (led by Havel) and the Christian Democrats (ibid.: 206).

The new government promptly initiated economic reforms to create a market economy. This reform process consists of two parts: economic stabilization and restructuring, which includes price liberalization, deficit cutbacks, changes in monetary policy, and opening the economy to international markets; and, privatization (Blanchard, Froot, and Sachs 1994). Some changes in the economic transition will be (or have been) easy and quick, while others demand long-term institutional changes (World Bank 1991: 45). Both nations have benefited from broad popular support for reforms, despite painful increases in unemployment and declining standards of living. However, as in the rest of Eastern Europe, there is social and political pressure to maintain the generous social security and social welfare programs established under socialism, and to establish protection for individuals affected by changes brought by capitalism, including unemployment (Bruno 1994: 40).

Macro-economic policies adopted by the new government emphasized a rapid transition, in the belief that this approach would minimize the negative affects of transformation. Because microeconomic changes -- changes in local policy and daily practice -- could not keep pace, Czechoslovakia was plunged into a depression (Hunya 1994: 46). The subsequent unemployment and decline in living standards was greater than anticipated by the government, especially in Slovakia (Lukas 1994: 193). Real

earnings throughout the country decreased 12.5% in 1990 and a further 24% in 1991 (ibid.). At the end of 1991, the unemployment rate was 4.1% in the Czech Republic and 11.8% in Slovakia (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 107). These disparities played a significant role in the subsequent decision to separate. The negative consequences of economic reforms discouraged many Slovak supporters of the new regime (Skalnik 1993: 223).

The Slovak separatist movement was gaining support, although the most popular solution was to increase the power of the Republic within a federated Czechoslovak state. In July 1992, the recent election victors, Movement for an Independent Slovakia, declared Slovakia sovereign. The Czechoslovak Federal Parliament, by a narrow margin, agreed to separation. No referendum was held, despite urging by opposition parties (Lukas 1994: 194), and many Slovaks were surprised, and even dismayed, that negotiations about increased independence within the federation resulted in independence without a popular vote. On January 1, 1993, the two nations officially split. The partition reflected different views on economic policy as well as the ongoing Slovak nationalist movement. The Czech Republic has pursued a more rapid transformation program, with a restrictive monetary policy and complete privatization, while Slovakia maintains a more expansive policy and slower privatization methods (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 117). Meanwhile, the separation itself has created additional economic and political issues. The closely linked economies of the two republics have had to be separated, with the division of specific assets distributed according to territory or divided according to population (Lukas 1994: 204). New policies, laws, and institutions regarding currency, customs, trade, and foreign policy have had to be reformulated quickly by both nations.

Chapter Three: Women and Property in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

"REALITY MARKET"
- sign over real estate office in Banska Bystrica, August 1994

Jack Goody (1983) suggests that throughout Europe, both men and women have had access to property, including land as well as other productive goods, through the mechanism of "diverging devolution." In Goody's (1983) study of dowry and inheritance, he compares a range of societies across Europe and traces the development of these institutions from the early medieval period until the beginning of the industrial age. He points to the Catholic church as a significant agent of transformation of inheritance patterns and family organization in Europe; the Church, he argues, through marriage restrictions and its own property acquisition, altered strategies of inheritance. Catholic prohibitions on marriage to even distant cousins made it more difficult for families to keep property within the kin group, and initially, at least, caused families to resort to the principle of primogeniture to keep property intact. This, combined with increased social and economic stratification (Goody 1976), meant that marriage was primarily an economic arrangement, and dowry became an important form of property for women.

While Goody's comparative study indicates large-scale trends throughout Europe, the specific experiences of the Czech Republic and Slovakia differ somewhat. Throughout the region, under the feudal system, there were three types of land on the feudal manor: *dominical*, owned and managed by the lord, *rustikal*, held in perpetual rent by the serfs, and *commons*, mainly woods and pastures governed by complicated rights of access (Komlos and Benda 1990). On *rustikal* land, the serf was considered to be a hereditary tenant, who, essentially, could not be removed by the lord. Serfs had obligations to the lord that were seen as being invested in the land itself: a labor obligation (*robot*), usually amounting to at least three days per week, and a rent to the lord, usually in kind, which ranged from ten percent of production in some areas (ibid.) to nearly eighty percent in others (Kerner 1969: 44). Peasants could not divide their land between heirs. Instead, there could only be a single heir, who was customarily expected to give siblings of both sexes their share of the inheritance in cash or cattle (Horska 1994: 101). The rights of siblings to inherit equally were customary, but the

legal code that prevailed until the 1780s did not give equal inheritance rights to women of either upper or lower classes (Kerner 1969: 183). The lord also had the right to arrange marriages; this was one mechanism used to regulate labor between estates (ibid.: 274). It is not clear from available sources whether the lord actively arranged marriages himself or merely gave formal permission; this probably varied according to circumstances and personality. In either case, the ability of individuals and families to make arrangements that suited their own needs was quite curtailed.

Robert Kerner (1969) describes sweeping changes to Hapsburg civil law introduced in 1781 which affected marriage and inheritance. Serfdom was abolished in the western part of the empire (thus, in the Czech Lands, but only sixty years later in Slovakia), many of the privileges of the nobility were curtailed, and serfs were allowed to divide their holdings. Marriage was changed from a strictly religious institution into a civil contract, and former serfs were allowed to marry at will. The right of sons and daughters to claim an equal share of inheritance was proclaimed, and was promptly contested by many nobles in the courts. The courts upheld the principle of equal inheritance.

According to Goody, dowry has decreased in economic significance since the end of the nineteenth century, as it was gradually replaced by parental investment in a young woman's upbringing and education (Goody 1983: 210). In the Czech Republic, this coincides with the decreasing importance of land in the shift to a more industrialized economy. Goody's study ends at the beginning of the industrial age in Europe; since that time, tremendous changes in property ownership have occurred in Eastern Europe -- industrialization and the growth of capitalism, the introduction of socialism with nearly all productive resources controlled by the state, and a recent transformation to advanced capitalism. In this chapter, I will consider women's access to property in the Czech Republic and Slovakia through all of these macroeconomic changes, beginning with traditional patterns that existed before the first World War. I will then examine access to property under socialism, and conclude with data on women's access to property in the transition to a market economy. Where specific ethnographic data on the Czechs or Slovaks is scarce, I draw upon information from neighboring societies to illustrate patterns that may be common regionally.

Traditional Patterns of Property Ownership and Household Relations

In their 1974 ethnography of a Czech village, Zdenek Salzmann and Vladimir Scheufler describe patterns of household and village organization since the end of the first World War in southern Bohemia, a prosperous farming region. In this area, most of the farms were small, family enterprises in a "self-sufficient village" (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 15). The population in Komarov, the village they study, was ethnically homogenous and largely Roman Catholic (ibid.: 42). There were no large estates in the village, but some farms hired help while others depended on supplementary income from wage labor. Patterns of land use before about 1850 were based on a three-field system, cooperatively managed, that allowed cattle to graze on fallow fields. Agriculture intensified in the latter half of the nineteenth century as more fields were brought under continuous cultivation. The value of livestock as a commodity increased, and farms became more oriented towards producing for a market as well as for their own subsistence (ibid.: 38).

Village organization in Slovakia before the beginning of the twentieth century was somewhat different. Many Slovak villages are located in mountainous regions less suited for agriculture. In these highland communities, there was little economic differentiation among villagers, but large estates owned by Magyar nobles or by the Catholic church played a significant role in the local economy (Skalnik 1979: 256). Agricultural technology was not as well developed as in the Czech lands.

In most farm families, labor was loosely divided along gender lines. Men were responsible for most of the farm work, while women tended the livestock, cared for children, and worked in the house. The income that was received from the sale of dairy products, poultry, and eggs was usually kept by the wife (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 46). Children often herded animals, and assisted their parents with light work. While men generally would not perform women's tasks, women could do male jobs if there was a need (ibid.: 71). Poor families who did not own draft animals would often exchange labor for plowing (ibid.: 40). Some family members would frequently be employed in supplemental wage work: in industry in the Czech lands, on estates in Slovakia. Young women would often migrate to towns to work as domestic servants (Cerman 1994: 159).

Traditionally, marriages were arranged. In many cases, marriage choice was "deeply influenced" by family ties and property arrangements (Skalnik 1979: 256).

Dowry that was brought into the marriage was considered joint property (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 71). It could consist of any combination of land, animals, tools, and household goods. Clearly, the content and economic value of the dowry depended on the socioeconomic position of the household, the number of children, and so on. In less wealthy families, the skills possessed by a prospective partner were important considerations. Generally, throughout Eastern Europe as well as in other smallholder societies, it was considered desirable to marry your child to another who would bring approximately equal assets to the marriage (Nagengast 1991: 92). A man's anticipated inheritance was balanced against his wife's dowry, which represented her share of family wealth, given at marriage rather than at her parents' death. A marriage into a family with adjoining property was often highly desirable as it allowed families to consolidate land holdings. While divorce is characterized as extremely uncommon, it was not unheard of, and if a couple did divorce, a "substantial part" of the dowry property would revert to the wife, who would return to her parents' (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 71).

In the Czech Lands, it was considered very important for a newly married couple to be economically independent in a separate household from their parents (Horska 1994). Retired parents would usually move into a smaller house and maintain a separate income when they turned the farm over to their heir (Cerman 1994: 166-167). Young people would postpone marriage until they felt economically independent, demonstrated by a relatively high age at first marriage (Fialova 1994: 109). In Slovakia, it was much more common for married siblings to share a household with each other or with their parents, and over twenty percent of households had such joint living arrangements (Horska 1994: 102).

In Bohemia, as described by Salzmann and Scheufler (1974), dowry and property arrangements began to be formalized in formal, written marriage contracts in the 1860s. Arranged by a go-between or "marriage broker," whom Salzmann and Scheufler find was usually a respected, middle-aged man who received payment for his services (1974: 88), these contracts specified the contributions of both bride and groom to the new household, what younger siblings would receive in lieu of their share of the farmstead, and so on, as well as specifying who had claims to what property if the marriage failed or if one partner died before they had children. These contracts were legal documents, signed by relevant local officials as well as the individuals involved, which included the

bride, groom, all of their parents, and often siblings. Marriage contracts of this type were popularized in the nineteenth century throughout Northern Europe as a way to ensure that title to property was specified; without a written agreement ensuring a woman's legal control of her dowry, the property transferred to her became part of her husband's estate (Weisner 1993: 31).

Women were generally as at least as involved as their husbands in village community life. Women were responsible for "representation [of the household] in community, social, cultural, and religious activities... particularly in legal proceedings such as inheritance matters and the like" (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 40). The social standing and prosperity of the household were seen to be largely dependent upon her, in part on how well the household was managed (ibid.: 70). Because women's abilities and character were seen as so important, there was "less tolerance" for perceived negative qualities that a woman possessed as compared to acceptance for her husband's faults (ibid.: 70-71).

In theory, each child in a family was entitled to an equal share of the family property. Due to concerns about fragmentation and laws dating from the end of the feudal era regulating minimum farm size, the oldest son would usually be given the farm when his parents retired at about age sixty, or the oldest daughter if there were no son. "Retired" parents would continue to live with their heir, perhaps keeping a small piece of land for their own use, and helping with farm and household labor in peak periods (ibid.: 40). In any case, retired parents were entitled to be cared for by their children, with primary responsibility for aged parents resting on the heir to the farm. Younger siblings would receive a smaller share of the family's wealth; ideally, younger sons were educated and given a lump sum of cash when they married, while daughters were married out with a dowry (ibid.: 74). In households with large enough land holdings, younger siblings' shares would often include some land.

Traditional expectations, then, were that women were as entitled as their brothers to a share of the parental estate. Dowries were not seen as a financial burden, as they have been in parts of India for example, but as relatively equal shares of family wealth provided to daughters. Usually, dowry property was considered joint property for the duration of the marriage, and managed as such, but widows had specific rights to their dowry property. Women could own land and household property, were responsible for

household management, and often had access to and control over some independent income. In some areas, these arrangements were even formalized in written agreements.

1900-1945: Changing Economies

Urbanization in the Czech Republic increased dramatically in the first decade of the twentieth century (Wheaton 1986: 35). Migrants were mainly impoverished artisans and landless peasants searching for jobs in industry. Light industry, much of which was owned by Germans, was concentrated in ethnically mixed border regions of northern Bohemia. During this period, agriculture was the second largest sector of the economy, after industry (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 15). This shift to an industrial economy brought significant changes to household organization, particularly for families with small landholdings.

Prior to 1918, over ten percent of the republic's land area (or, almost 1.5 million hectares) was controlled by just 150 estates (ibid.: 9). In 1907, 47.1 percent of all land holdings were two hectares or less (Wheaton 1986: 128). The years before World War I saw a decline in the average size of these smallest holdings; with little new land available, households were often forced to split their holdings. Over sixty percent of these micro-farms were leased from larger land holders, either for a combination of rent-in-kind plus a male labor obligation, which was still most common, or for a cash payment (ibid.: 130). Some of these lease arrangements had been in place for many generations; the leases, rather than ownership of the land, were what was passed down through inheritance. In areas where relative overpopulation and fragmentation were particularly severe, outmigration was common; in Peter Skalnik's (1979) study of a rural Slovakian village, for example, he found almost 50 percent of the total population had emigrated between 1880 and 1940.

Households with such small land-holdings were highly reliant on wage work, usually by men, in order to meet the family's needs. In the Czech lands in 1902, of families with 2 hectares or less, 46.1 percent had male members working in industry and 11.3 percent men working in cottage industries (Wheaton 1986: 129). That left a woman as the most important agricultural worker on more than half of these family-owned micro-farms, producing subsistence crops for her family. Sometimes fruits, vegetables, and dairy products would be produced for sale in nearby urban centers. This

dependence on wage work decreased in larger farms; of families with between five to ten hectares, two-thirds owned their own land and only 7.4 percent had male members of the family employed elsewhere for wages (ibid.: 131). Farms larger than 10 hectares were most often managed as commercial rather than family farms, employing wage labor and producing primarily for a market (ibid.). A small number of large estates, owned by nobles and the Catholic church, controlled a great deal of land in both republics.

The First Czechoslovak Republic initiated a series of land reform acts that redistributed significant amounts of agricultural land. A 1919 act expropriated land from large estates, most of which belonged to German and Hungarian nobles, giving it to small and landless peasants. Estate size was limited to two hundred fifty hectares, including forest (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 9). The expropriated land was to be redistributed in plots of no more than fifty hectares, with restrictions on sale, lease, or mortgage. However, by 1938, only a little over 44 percent of the land covered under the 1919 act had actually gone to new owners, due to bureaucratic delays, and thirty percent of those who had applied for land had not received it. Many large estates remained unaffected. A new land reform measure was formulated, but never implemented because of the war (ibid.: 9-11).

Access to Resources Under Socialism

Immediately after the end of World War II, a series of land reform acts sponsored by the Czechoslovak Communist Party redistributed almost a quarter of Czechoslovakia's agricultural land (Krejci 1972: 13). Joseph Hajda (1979) describes three stages of agricultural development, which was an arena for political conflict. First, between 1945-1948, land reform measures were enacted that reduced farm size, broke up large estates and Church holdings, and redistributed land to small private farmers. In 1947, farm size was limited to fifty hectares, in accordance with the principle that land should be owned only by the person who tilled it. In the second stage, from 1949 to 1959, agriculture was collectivized following the Soviet model. The stated objectives were to consolidate agricultural enterprises on a voluntary basis, to mechanize farming, and to rationalize production; this was to be accomplished gradually, until all land was under the control of state enterprises and agriculture was based on wage labor (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 11-12). By 1960, ninety percent of agricultural land was incorporated into state

enterprises (Wolchik 1991: 230).[1]

Agricultural enterprises were split between state farms, in which the state bought out all of the farmers and both owned and managed the farm, and agricultural cooperatives, in which the farmers retained title but management decisions were made by the coop. For both types of enterprise, management decisions were generally placed in the hands of bureaucrats with little agricultural experience but good Party ties. Even when coop managers were elected, as Salzmann and Scheufler (1974) describe in Komarov, former rich peasants -- i.e., successful farmers -- were defined as "class enemies" and excluded from management decisions. The relative successes of agriculture during this period were the result of state subsidies and the heavy application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides (Wolchik 1991: 232).

Cooperative members were entitled to a private plot of one-half hectare per family for their own use. Usually this was located behind the house, and included a large garden and often an orchard (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 58). However, the use of this land was still regulated: some crops, including vegetables and grapes, were allowed to be planted only on 1/10th of a hectare each, and the number of animals was restricted. Presumably, these restrictions were intended to limit production to what was needed for a family's own use, to curtail black-market sales.

A series of agricultural reforms beginning in the late 1960s mark the third stage of agricultural development (Hajda 1979: 130). These aimed at strengthening collectives and further mechanizing production. These reforms increased output, but did not significantly alter agricultural organization. The collectivization of agriculture caused tremendous changes in the way most rural people lived, and encouraged urbanization and industrial employment. The effects on the standard of living in the countryside appear to have varied; while Hajda (1979: 132) described a general decline in rural living standards, Skalnik (1979: 258) found a significant improvement in living standards in the villages he studied in rural Slovakia. This was likely due to much lower standards of living in some areas, particularly in Slovakia, in the pre-Communist period, and the impact of state investment in agriculture and the increase of regular wages. Particularly in marginal areas, the risks associated with smallholder agriculture were eliminated, and even in prosperous areas, villagers expressed an appreciation for the lowered risk associated with collective farming (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 62). Measures of

relative prosperity in rural areas changed as well. No longer measured by landholdings, wealth was invested in the family house and ownership of scarce consumer goods (ibid.: 35).

While wage labor had been important for peasants in many areas before the shift to socialism, it became even more important after collectivization. A decline in agricultural wages (Hajda 1979: 134) as well as the increased opportunities in industrial employment, particularly in Slovakia, helped push the labor force into industry. The pre-war pattern of male wage labor and female farming persisted on the remaining private holdings throughout the country: 68.5 percent of the remaining private farmers in 1968 were women (Krejci 1972: 20). By 1981, only 12.6 percent of the Czechoslovak population was employed full-time in agriculture and related industries (World Bank 1991: table 1.6). In his study of rural Slovak villages, Peter Skalnik (1979) found that most working people commuted to industrial and office work.

The first phase of nationalization of industry occurred in October of 1945, when the government took over all enterprises which had been German during the occupation (World Bank 1991: 2), including about seventy percent of all industry (Krejci 1972: 13). The second phase of nationalization was part of the first Five-Year Plan (1948-1853) and included all businesses with more than fifty employees or fifty hectares of land (ibid.: 16). Remaining businesses were gradually confiscated for alleged legal offenses of their owners (ibid.: 17), until by 1958 there were only 6,553 small businesses in the whole country (Renner 1989: 31).

Under socialism, families remained an important source of resources. Inheritance of family land or productive property, per se, might have decreased in importance, but the transfer of goods and cash at marriage were essential to young couples, as described by Christopher Hann in Hungary (Hann 1980: 142). In Komarov, Salzmann and Scheufler found that while the transfer of property was less visible than in the past, large gifts to a bride from her parents were common (1974: 96). The nature of an investment in education had changed as well. In the past, education may have represented a significant financial investment, in school fees and the loss of the student's potential income. Under socialism, the financial burden of education was lessened, but parents may have had to pay an ideological price. A common strategy for silencing political dissidents was to deny their children access to higher education (Wheaton and Kavan

1992: 8).

Katherine Verdery (1991, 1993) characterizes the economies of Eastern Europe under socialism as "economies of shortage." In a social and economic order characterized by endemic shortages, competition for resources became intense. By hoarding resources, including labor, to meet future production quotas, enterprises contributed to overall economic scarcity by bottlenecking production flows. Verdery argues that the state's overriding goal was to "increase the *capacity* to allocate, which is not the same as increasing the amount to be allocated" (Verdery 1991: 76). The idea was to increase bureaucratic control rather than production of goods and services, centralizing the power to amass and redistribute resources. However, pilfering of state materials and resources was widespread, and higher bureaucratic position became a tool for siphoning off greater private gains. A thriving informal or black-market economy developed, in which an individual's ability to draw on connections in order to gain needed resources became a critical survival skill. [2] In this context, then, the question of women's property becomes a question of women's ability to access scarce resources, both in the formal and informal spheres.

Women could access resources through several spheres including employment, household property, the political process, and the informal economy. Under socialism, women's employment in the formal sector was extremely high; women represented about 46 percent of the labor force in the 1980s, and Czechoslovakia had one of the highest rates of female labor force participation in the world (World Bank 1991: 5). However, these figures hide inequalities in the labor force. Numerous studies of women's employment in Czechoslovakia, as well as in other Eastern European nations and the Soviet Union, have demonstrated that women were concentrated in low paying jobs and in "feminized" sectors of the economy which had relatively lower wage standards, such as medicine and teaching; that they were frequently doing jobs for which they were educationally overqualified; and that they were underrepresented in upper level management and bureaucratic positions (United Nations Regional Seminar 1992, Jancar 1978, Bridger 1987, Scott 1974).

From a legal standpoint, women were equal with men. Women's right to vote had been established in 1918, and women's full legal equality was explicitly stated in the 1948 constitution. The 1950 Family Law declared that after marriage, all property

except personal belongings, inheritances, and gifts, is joint property, that either spouse could initiate divorce, and that in case of divorce, joint property should be equally divided (Scott 1974: 89-91). This provision strengthened women's property rights in many ways, as it formalized their individual ownership of property given to them by their family and gave them rights to their husband's income (generally higher than their own) and property acquired during marriage. The Family Law also declared that within the household, men and women have the same rights and duties and that important family decisions should be settled by mutual agreement, provisions which were surely unenforceable in daily life but carried symbolic importance. Dowry, which had already declined in importance for most families, was abolished by law in 1956 (Fialova 1994: 112). Legislation also protected women's job security in case of pregnancy and mandated child care leave, proscribed certain working conditions and hours which were felt to be detrimental to women's health, and legalized abortion (Jancar 1978: 122-153).[3]

In the political sphere, women were highly represented; their participation in government and the Communist Party was mandated by various quotas. This high level of political representation "ensured that there was a pressure group for implementing women's equality, however narrowly conceived, within the political structures of government" (Einhorn 1991: 17). As in employment, however, women's representation was generally confined to the lower levels of government and Party structures, with few women in the upper echelons of decision making (Jancar 1978: 88-99). The agenda of the Czechoslovak Women's Union included investigating the reasons for women's lack of representation in "top jobs," but it failed to suggest any solutions (Jancar 1978: 149). The Women's Union itself, Barbara Einhorn (1991) suggests, was felt to be irrelevant by the majority of women and was widely discredited as a vehicle for promoting women's interests. It disbanded after controversy surrounding its response to the 1989 demonstrations in which students were injured by police; its members felt that the Women's Union's lack of response betrayed the maternal feelings it was supposed to represent (Holy 1993: 215).

Women's involvement in the informal economy is difficult to document. While few formal studies of the informal economy exist, evidence in the official and foreign press, novels, and informally expressed opinions would seem to indicate that the informal economy was widespread and crucial to daily life throughout Eastern Europe

and the U.S.S.R. (Sampson 1986; Timofeev 1982). The Czechoslovak informal sector was more restricted than in other Eastern European countries, due to policies of "normalization." Small-scale informal ventures, such as marketing fresh produce, which may have been tolerated by Hungarian and Polish officials, for example, were more severely repressed. This did not eliminate the informal sector (and in fact may not even have reduced its size) but did force it further "underground". While there are no absolutely reliable measures of the extent of the informal economy in Czechoslovakia, one 1989 study (cited in Wolchik 1991: 233) estimated that the average citizen spent between one and ten percent of his/her wages in the informal sphere. However, as basic consumer goods and food supplies were generally adequate, the informal sector was probably called upon primarily to provide luxury goods and high quality services, as well as bureaucratic consideration such as being place high on housing lists (Sampson 1986: 64). Women were very likely equally involved in the informal sector as men, since it was the only way to obtain many needed goods and services. Kin ties, friendships, and co-workers were all mobilized as informal resources, as individuals drew on connections and co-opted state resources to improve the quality of their daily life. The informal economy, however, does not provide a "level playing field" as one might suppose -- the elites in the formal sector have more resources to mobilize in the informal sphere as well, and official connections and positions may provide avenues for unofficial gain. That Party officials and leaders had access to more illegal gain was a commonly held belief in informal conversations with both Czechs and Slovaks, as well as an official concern of privatization schemes seeking to benefit the majority.

Privatization and a Market Economy

The shift to a market economy began immediately after the 1989 revolution, as the new Czechoslovak government rapidly adopted market reforms. Despite anticipated hardships, including unemployment and inflation, the reforms enjoyed tremendous public support. Squabbles over *how* the transition to a market economy should proceed did not include a discussion of *whether* reforms were needed. Political leaders followed the idea that radical reform would create less political instability and economic hardship than the more gradual approach suggested by other economists (Hunya 1994: 46). Even in this climate of rapid transition, however, reforms were slowed by the need to draft new laws,

by negotiations between the two republics (even before separation), and by political wrangling over specific points.

Privatization began in the spring of 1990. Gabor Hunya (1994) describes the process of privatization in the former socialist states as quite different from privatization of state-owned or common resources in the context of a market economy: "Unlike in market economies, privatization in former centrally-planned economies is not merely a change of ownership: it creates ownership" (Hunya 1994: 61). Various de facto ownership claims -- by former owners, state and local governments, local bureaucrats, managers, workers -- had to be taken into consideration in the development of policies. Those with de facto control have to be either accommodated or disenfranchised (Blanchard, Froot and Sachs 1994: 12). These de facto claims are balanced against the government's need for economic growth and stability, and the bids of would-be investors or venture capitalists.

Privatization of vast state resources clearly has an impact not only at the macro-economic level, but at the level of people's every-day lives. Interviews conducted during the summer of 1994 provide some insights into the effects of the transition on individuals. A total of sixteen interviews were conducted in Prague, Brno, and Bratislava. (See Table 1.) All of the interviews were conducted in English except for one (#1) which was conducted in French. I was travelling by myself, and relied primarily on informal contacts with people I met who spoke English. Because instruction in English has only been widely available in the last several years, my sample may represent a high proportion of students, young people, career-changers, or entrepreneurs. Whenever possible, I solicited information about the informant's immediate family, which has allowed me to increase my sample size on a few topics, including voucher purchase. In the rest of this chapter and in chapter four, I will draw upon these interviews to illustrate and explain the impact of privatization and the shift to a market economy on individuals in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

One of the first privatization measures was the restoration of property to former owners or their heirs. This was applied to commercial and residential property which had been nationalized after February 1948. The initial law was passed in 1991, and claimants had six months to apply. By mid-1992, 120,000 units (any house, non-agricultural land, or business counted as one unit) were privatized through this measure,

which was one of the most important means of privatizing small and medium properties (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 114). In the agricultural sector, a law was passed in the spring of 1990 allowing "marginal" land or productive land not being used by state farms and cooperatives to be returned to its previous owners or sold to private owners (Wolchik 1991: 252). Decisions as to what lands would be sold were made at the local level.

It is worth noting that these restitution measures, while an important mechanism for privatization, have certain limitations, some intentional and others unintentional. The date of February 1948 as the cutoff for previous ownership claims excluded most large businesses, which had been nationalized earlier. It also excluded claims of the expelled Sudenten Germans, who had been forced to leave before then. Most agricultural land was specifically excluded, and although various plans have been made to privatize agricultural land on a broad scale (Wolchik 1991: 252; Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 160), this has not yet been done. There has been public opposition to large scale privatization of agricultural land, and some reluctance to return to private farming on the part of agriculturalists (Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 160). Moreover, property had to have been nationalized, that is, taken without due compensation, which excluded those who sold property to the state. Some of the excluded landowners, however, may have sold their property under some pressure and without fair compensation. Initially, emigrants were ineligible to reclaim property; in the summer of 1994, that decision was reversed as a result of a legal challenge, which may reopen up to 60,000 cases (Prague Post 1994: 1).

Individuals who wish to reclaim property face other hurdles. Peter Skalnik (1993) finds that in a small Slovak village, only the elderly or heirs to the wealthy were actually in a position to reclaim property (1993: 224). People in both the Czech and Slovak Republics told me that there was a considerable amount of paperwork involved in making a claim, especially as an heir. A claimant had to produce documentation of ownership, proof that the property was in fact taken illegally (that is, without compensation), and evidence that he/she was, in fact, the rightful heir. It is easy to imagine in how many cases, in the intervening fifty years, such documents may have been lost or discarded. Nevertheless, many of my informants, or their families, were able to reclaim property. Of ten cases, five had reclaimed property and five had not.[4] Their experiences may serve to illustrate the impact of privatization, which forced many people to make major decisions very quickly that affected family relations, social

networks, and their economic position. These decisions were made in the context of existing household relations, and while they might significantly improve relative wealth, they could equally foster family conflict.

When the original property owner has died, families faced with the option to reclaim property must decide who, exactly, will be the new owner. For example, Robert's mother, who lives in Prague, reclaimed a house in the country; her brother agreed that because she was older, she was the proper heir. At the same time, her husband, an only child, reclaimed several commercial buildings on the outskirts of Prague. His elderly father, the original owner of the property, lives with them, but decided to let his son claim the buildings, whose value they estimate at $200,000 US., in order to avoid possible inheritance taxes later. Because her husband's property is so valuable, Robert's mother is planning on giving her parent's house to her brother after all, because she feels she has so much and he and his wife have nothing. This illustrates some of the different kinds of criteria that families use to decide these issues. In this case, changed circumstances caused a shift in priorities.

Other families' decisions are not so amiable. Helen, who lives in Bratislava, felt that decisions of who was to be the new owner were often the cause of family conflict, particularly when the property was in a village where none of the children lived any longer. While she was not able to claim any property herself, she described to me how her husband's family nearly came to blows over reclaiming a house with a small farm in the country. Each of the three siblings wanted to take the house for themselves, to live in or to keep as a second home, and each felt more entitled than the others -- one was oldest, another had cared for their elderly mother until she died, and the third did not own a house. They finally resolved the conflict by selling the house, at less than its expected value, and dividing the proceeds evenly. Traditionally the parents decide inheritance based on a number of considerations -- age, need, and personal relationships. Since inheritance is flexible, in the sense that there are no strict guidelines, in the absence of parental authority, issues of entitlement can become contentious. Here, no one was satisfied with the solution and it still remains an issue.

The value of reclaimed property varied a great deal, as might be expected: those whose families were wealthy before the war were entitled to reclaim more property than those whose small farm was taken by the state. Often, reclaimed property is in a

village. Because most of my informants lived in the cities, the perceived value of village land is not very great. They do not wish to move back to the country, and the value of farmland in the real estate market is currently quite low. Irena, whose grandfather had owned a 700 hectare farm before the war, described how her father was only able to reclaim 200 hectares. (She attributed this to limits on what could be reclaimed; however, I have found no mention of any limits in the literature. Most likely, the difference is due to the February 1948 ownership date: most large estates had already been affected by limits on farm size imposed earlier.) The use of the reclaimed land is restricted -- it cannot be developed and only one house can be built on the property. Her father would like to sell it, because her family does not want to move to the village, but is waiting to see if prices improve. Irena feels the restriction on use is a good idea, however. "We are a small country," she said, "And we need to protect our land."

Others who reclaimed village property may keep it as a *dacha*, a country home. "Going to the country," for the summer, or at least for the weekend, seems to be the goal of every Prague resident. Country homes are treasured, and many families spend weekends hard at work on their cottages, improving the buildings or tending a garden. The ability to keep a garden is one of the reasons many Czechs strongly want a place in the country, as it enables them to grow vegetables and produce which are still hard to come by in the cities. Country homes further from the city may be preserved mainly for future use, such as a retirement home. Nicole told me her father reclaimed "some small land" outside of the city where they live. The house is old, and needs some work, but her parents are keeping it for their retirement.

For those who still live in a village, reclaimed land may take on a much greater significance and actual value. Susanna's father reclaimed a lot from the state farm that had belonged to his parents. He works as a contractor, so he built a house on it and sold the house and the adjacent land to a man who now works as a private farmer. While Susanna did not know how much her father made on the transaction, she proudly pointed out the house to me as we walked through the outskirts of the village. It was large and new -- the only nicer-looking house in the village was the one Susanna's family lives in themselves.

Of my informants who were unable to reclaim property, the most common reason was that their family had never lost anything; "We didn't have anything to lose," said

Pavla. For two of my informants, their family had been city-dwellers who just didn't own any land or a business. In other cases, property had been legally sold to the state and could not be reclaimed. Anna's parents lived with her maternal grandparents in a town 60 kilometers from Prague until her grandfather was forced to sell the house because the state was building a factory there. Hana's family, who live in the same village as Susanna, had sold their farm to the state farm, which still controls most of the land near the village. Neither her grandfather, who sold the farm, nor her father have ever worked as full-time farmers. One of my informants was unable to reclaim property for a different reason: his parents had left the country, abandoning everything, in the 1950s. He had returned to Slovakia after the 1989 revolution, but was unable to reclaim any property because of his immigration status, despite his Slovak citizenship. However, the recent court ruling may change his situation, as mentioned above.

There is little statistical information available to indicate whether women have benefited from restitution as much as men. Legally, there is no gender discrimination in reclaiming family property. In my sample, four men, and only one woman, reclaimed property in their own names. Of the adults[5] who did not reclaim property, the sample was almost evenly divided: three men and four women. Of the women who did not reclaim property, two were divorced, and thus did not benefit from their husbands' access to returned property. Statistically, the gender discrepancies in my sample are not significant.[6]

There were other privatization methods employed for small private businesses and property which was not subject to restitution claims. A number of these were sold by private auction. The first auction round was only open to Czechoslovak citizens; the second round was open to, and encouraged, foreign investment (Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 156). A bidder had to have 10,000 crowns (about $370 US) or ten percent of the purchase price, whichever was lower, as a down payment (Wolchik 1991: 250).

The decision to auction these properties was controversial. The required down payment of 10,000 crowns represented about six months' wage at the average salary. Concerns were raised about the power of "dirty money." The possibility that the old elite, as well as former black-market profiteers, would use money they had acquired illegally to bid in these auctions, worried many critics. The state, claiming there was no way to distinguish between licit and illicit capital, dismissed these concerns. Another

line of protest was raised by employees of small businesses, who wanted a preferential option to buy their companies. This too was dismissed at first by the government, but eventually it caved in under continuing pressure and the threat of strikes. A loan program that allowed employees of a business to borrow up to half the purchase price was instituted (Wheaton and Kavan: 157). By the end of 1992, over 30,000 small and medium businesses had been sold to private owners (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 113).

In fact, former managers, bureaucrats, and employees may have had a significant advantage in the privatization of small businesses. Many small businesses, particularly those with little capital equipment and small profit margins, were not highly desirable as investment properties, and may easily have been overlooked except by those who were directly involved with them. Although, again, no wide-scale evidence of the former position of new owners is available, anecdotal evidence supports this idea. I interviewed one businesswoman in Bratislava who owns and manages a small foreign-language school. When I asked her how she privatized the business, she explained that "it was very simple, really." She had been the manager of the school for several years. When privatization began, she requested ownership from her supervisor, and, in the absence of any other "bid," she was given the enterprise, without making any kind of payment. The school has three employees, and rents two rooms in a building owned by the city. The rent is subsidized, at the same rate as when the school was a state enterprise (20,000 sk, or about $660 US per month). Jitka explained that her business enjoys this favorable treatment because of its nature as an educational service. "If I had another kind of business, they would charge me five or ten times more. I couldn't make a shop here."

Although there are no statistical indicators available on the proportion of women who were able to privatize small properties in their own name, either through purchase or through reclamation, evidence suggests that women were not at a significant disadvantage. Decisions about small properties, such as a house or land, are often made within the context of a family; in this sphere, there is a long tradition of gender equality. Decisions about title are most often based on pragmatic considerations, and high value is placed on sharing between siblings. Women also had some access to privatizing small businesses in their capacity as former managers or employees. High rates of female employment under socialism meant that women were equally well-placed to gain ownership of small enterprises when little capital was required and those closest to the

enterprises had the greatest advantage.

Voucher Privatization

In order to privatize large enterprises, Czechoslovakia created and implemented a unique voucher privatization scheme. Under this plan, citizens would receive vouchers, or coupons, which they would use to bid for shares in large enterprises. This coupon plan was based on the premise that there was insufficient capital in private hands to fully privatize (Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 158). Levels of individual savings were low; sixty percent of households had savings of less than 20,000 crowns (about $700 US) (Shafik 1993: 2). It also represented an attempt to parcel out the national wealth in a fair and equitable way, and to ensure the political irreversibility of the transition to a free market (ibid.). The coupons were intended to create a "level playing field" in the nascent free market. When it was first proposed in 1990, every citizen aged eighteen and over was to receive coupons representing 2,000 crowns worth of "investment points"; these points could be used or sold, and additional points could also be bought directly from the government (Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 157). This plan was modified, and the plan that was finally adopted entitled each adult citizen (who also had to be a permanent resident) to buy vouchers worth a total of 1,000 investment points for 1,000 crowns (about one-third of the average monthly wage) (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 114). Vouchers were not allowed to be sold, and additional points could not be purchased. Voucher-holders were allowed to pool their vouchers to buy blocks of shares. To discourage bidders from holding back their points, it was not announced how many rounds there would be; any round could be the last, and unspent points lost (Shafik 1993: 41). (In fact, there were five bidding rounds in the first wave.)

About 5,000 large enterprises were scheduled to be privatized under the voucher plan, in a series of successive "waves." 1,491 enterprises were privatized in the first wave, which occurred in the spring of 1994. Voucher-holders bid their points, and the number of points bid on an enterprise determined the initial value of its shares. One of the advantages of the voucher system was that share values were determined through this bidding, eliminating the need for the government to set values for each enterprise. The number of points required for a share was adjusted in each subsequent round based on the bids of the previous round (ibid.: 14).

As with other privatization plans, the voucher scheme was not without controversy. The initial plan to distribute free vouchers was modified after arguments that state assets would be given away for nothing, although its proponents argued that the many years of labor invested by citizens entitled them to a share of the common wealth. Even after the plan was modified, critics argued that the voucher system did not encourage a spirit of entrepreneurship in the new free-market system. Other critiques were raised by economists. The thin spread of ownership created by mass participation in the voucher scheme would make control over the newly privatized companies difficult. Also, the amount of capital raised through the sale of vouchers was insufficient to meet restructuring needs for enterprises (World Bank 1991: 90), and didn't allow needed foreign investment.

The voucher plan was a contentious issue between the two republics when it was initiated, and they have pursued different policies since the split. The government of the Czech Republic has viewed the voucher plan as a success, and plans to continue with it; Slovakia has abandoned plans for successive "waves," which it sees as slow and inefficient as well as not generating enough capital, and plans to pursue alternative privatization methods, especially direct sale (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 115). In fact, Slovak firms fared less well in the initial wave than did Czech firms, with the average value of a Slovak firm forty percent less (Shafik 1993: 19). Less than five percent of Czech bids went to Slovak firms, while fifteen percent of Slovak bids were for enterprises in the Czech Republic (ibid.).

The proponents of the voucher plan recognized that potential stock holders needed access to information about individual enterprises, to ensure both the fairness of the process and a reasonable value being attributed to each enterprise. To achieve this openness of information, managers of enterprises were required to produce company reports specifying assets, debts, production levels, anticipated profits, restructuring needs, and so on, to allow voucher-holders to make informed choices. Despite this attempt to publicize information, however, it is likely that many people, unless they had some knowledge about a field, would not have been able to understand the information and compare very many firms (Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 157).

One response by the public to the difficulty of making an informed choice was to turn their points over to investment companies which would bid points as a block.

In the first wave, seventy-two percent of voucher-holders relied on investment companies (Hunya 1994: 63). These investment companies, which were not anticipated by the original legislation but which were allowed under the clause that allowed points to be pooled, sprang up as soon as it became evident that the vouchers were popular. For the most part, these companies act much like mutual funds, investing points initially and buying shares later, and acting as institutional owners which remit dividends to investors. The largest investment companies were set up by banks and insurance companies (Shafik 1993: 13). Investment companies, of which there were over four hundred, were poorly regulated; legislation requiring the funds to diversify their holdings in order to protect investors was not passed until April of 1992, several months after the first wave had begun (ibid.: 13). Their success rate was somewhat higher, on average than the individual investors; while many individuals bid for large, well-known companies, large investment funds tended to bid for small ventures over which they could then gain some management control (ibid.: 17).

The voucher privatization plan was tremendously popular. Most of the eligible population (8.56 million adults) bought coupons (Dyba and Svejnar 1994: 114). Although no figures are available that indicate what percentage of voucher-holders were women, the high rate of overall participation indicates that most women did buy vouchers.[7] In my sample of 23 eligible adults, more men than women purchased vouchers, but the difference is not statistically significant. I also found no significant difference between Czechs and Slovaks in whether they purchased vouchers; in my sample, fifty percent of Czechs bought vouchers, as did almost half of Slovaks. In the population as a whole, about seventy five percent of eligible individuals purchased vouchers, a higher rate of participation than was represented in my sample.

I found that participation tended to be consistent within a household; generally, members of a household either all bought vouchers or all did not. Age did moderate this tendency. In two cases, young adults did not participate even though their parents did. In both cases, they were students who did not have the cash themselves and whose parents did not have enough extra cash to purchase vouchers in their name. In one case, that of a middle-aged man living with his parents, the younger household member bought vouchers, and his parents did not. Of nine married couples represented, however, only one split in their voucher purchase. Jitka, a successful Slovak businesswoman, told me

that she "did not believe in them. I don't think they could be worth anything... I don't think most people believe they'll be [worth] anything." Her husband did buy vouchers. Jitka viewed this as a foolish decision on his part, a waste of money, but did not object. "I don't know what he did with them. Maybe someday they'll be for my son, if they have any value."

The most frequent reason given to me for non-participation in voucher privatization was a lack of money. Many of my informants told me they simply did not have the cash to invest. The price of the coupons was equal to about one week's wage at an average salary (Shafik 1993: 12). Many people, like Jitka, did not really believe that the vouchers would be worth very much. For a family with few resources, investing a significant sum of money with only a dubious chance of much profit was not a risk they were prepared to take. Hana's family, for example, preferred to invest their small savings in what they saw as more reliable ways, improving their house and supporting Hana's education. Those who did purchase vouchers recognized this as a long-term investment, one which they could only hope would be profitable in several years. Because the plan is still in progress, the value of privatized enterprises and the vouchers invested in them is still not known to participants.

There was some risk involved in participation. If the vouchers were not invested in a profitable business, if an enterprise that had seemed reliable folded suddenly under pressure from the market, or if they were invested with an investment company which folded, the owner risked losing all or a substantial part of his/her investment. Enterprises known to be insolvent were privatized along with more successful ones, despite the loss to investors, so that financial problems could not be claimed as an excuse for businesses to remain in the state sector (Shafik 1993: 23). Two people in my sample lost their investment in investment company failures. Some investment companies went bankrupt before the end of the first wave, unable to meet their commitments to investors. Because they were not regulated, there was no recourse for investors. For Marta's mother, a divorced woman with little money, this loss represented a substantial financial blow. She had used most of her savings towards her voucher purchase. For Robert, a young university student who was earning a good salary at an electronics company and had few financial obligations, his loss in the first round was "embarrassing," but only a temporary setback. "I invested poorly," he told me, citing examples of colleagues and

friends who expected a large return on their investments. "I should never have given my money to 'that guy'." (The investment company Robert had given his vouchers to was directed by a prominent Prague businessman, who had *not* gone bankrupt himself.) "In the next round, I will research different companies and invest in one I think has potential. At least I learned something."

As Robert pointed out, information was the key to making a sound investment. Those who felt they knew a lot about the company they had invested in were more optimistic about their long-term prospects. Robert's boss Richard, owner of an electronics company, had invested with his wife in a related company which he felt had good prospects. Paul had done some research and invested in a power plant which he thought was bound to yield a good return. Those who invested with little information, on the other hand, tended to treat their vouchers more like lottery tickets.[8] When I asked Mark, a twenty eight year-old office worker, how he decided where to invest his vouchers, he told me, " You just had to guess, and hope to get lucky."

Since most married couples both bought vouchers, who decided how to invest them? In every case where both spouses had bought vouchers, they invested in the same enterprise or investment company. When I asked about the merits of consolidating a household's investment as opposed to diversifying, Richard explained to me that because the value of a company's stock was determined by how many points were bid, by consolidating your points, you might increase the value of your investment. In other cases, couples certainly had less well-thought out investment strategies. Generally, married couples told me they had decided "together" how to invest their vouchers. Only one informant told me the decisions were left entirely up to his spouse; Michael's wife works for an investment company. "She told me to buy coupons [vouchers], so I did. She took them, and I have no idea what she did with them. I let her worry about it."

The voucher plan was successful in its initial goal of widespread participation. At least in the early stages, women's participation was very high. As large scale privatization evolves into a stock market system, it seems likely that women's participation will continue. My research suggests that decisions about investment are made jointly by married couples, as part of a family's overall financial planning. Undoubtedly, many people will opt to sell their shares quickly for short-term gain, while others will remain active participants in the stock market. Women have traditionally

played an important role in Czech and Slovak families' economic life, and the new stock market appears to be no exception.

Case Study: Women's Access to Housing

The significance of housing in the Czechoslovak context (much like in our own society) goes beyond the physical need for shelter; the quality of housing influences and is influenced by social status, family relations, and economic conditions. Quality of housing and the availability (or lack thereof) of modern appliances also has an important bearing on domestic labor, almost exclusively the domain of women in Czechoslovakia. The socialist state regarded housing as a right, and sought to abolish "the 'commodity' status of urban housing" (Szelenyi 1983: 1). With access to housing thus guaranteed to all citizens, personal choices and quality become the key issues for women.

Since the end of World War II, Czechoslovakia has been plagued by a shortage of housing in its urban areas. Rapid urban development in the 1950s increased the housing supply significantly, but fell short of the needs of the urban population, especially as older buildings in urban centers continued to deteriorate. In 1986, Czechoslovakia still required fifteen percent more dwellings to meet its citizens' housing needs (Sillince 1990: 13). Housing was so difficult to obtain that the state recognized inadequate housing as "one of the main reasons for legal abortion" (Krejci 1972: 90). Those who were fortunate enough to possess a good flat were willing to commute long distances to work rather than move (ibid.: 85). In the transition to a market economy, this lack of housing constrains labor mobility and consumes resources needed for productive growth.

Rural areas did not experience a similar shortage of housing. Houses remained private property under socialism; they were alienable, but prices were controlled. In practice, few people would buy a rural house. The custom of young couples building a new house continued, for the most part, through the socialist period (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974). However, building materials were frequently scarce or unavailable, and pilfering from state construction sites was "by no means uncommon" (Short 1990: 108). Rural houses are generally large (in comparison with urban dwellings) and comfortable (Skalnik 1993: 218). Rights to build a new house on an unused parcel of land were controlled by local housing councils, and the land itself was usually quite inexpensive

(Short 1990: 101). Government policy sometimes discouraged building new houses in certain rural areas by refusing to grant building permits and loans, to encourage migration when local industry was inadequate; this was the case in the mid-1970s in the rural Tatra village studied by Peter Skalnik (1993). Skalnik indicates that many people simply built illegally (1993: 218). Investment in improving the house itself and accumulating consumer goods offered rural households the opportunity to display and enjoy their prosperity, while farm buildings, once symbols of status, now state resources, were allowed to deteriorate (Salzmann and Scheufler 1974: 33-35).

In 1988, forty six percent of dwellings were privately owned (a substantial majority of these in rural areas), twenty five percent were state owned, twenty percent were cooperatives, and the remaining nine percent were controlled by enterprises and allocated to employees[9] (World Bank 1991: 77). There had been an increase of state control since 1955, when 53.6 percent of dwellings were privately owned, including many urban apartment buildings (Krejci 1972: 21). The construction of large, high-density "housing estates" in the 1960s and '70s helped to increase the number of units under the direct control of the state.

State control over housing replaced market allocation of housing with administrative allocation. Ivan Szelenyi (1983), a Hungarian sociologist, argues that this merely replaced one unequalizing force with another. Because urban housing was a scarce resource, the system tended to award better housing to "more meritorious citizens" (1983: 9), those with essential jobs and higher incomes. This inequality in housing allocation helped perpetuate other inequalities, including access to good educational systems and the proximity of services. State subsidies of new housing, allotted to those favored citizens at low rents, amounted to a de facto salary supplement for those with high incomes. The offices that administered housing allocation became "deeply entrenched institution[s]" (Sillince 1990: 36). Housing came to play the role of political reward, and allocation was often influenced more by political considerations than by need (ibid.: 50).

In theory, at least, the state's waiting list system tried to be egalitarian. Waiting lists were based on a point system, with priority given to low income families, married couples living apart, those commuting from a different city, those in unsanitary or unsuitable housing, and those evicted from previous housing (Short 1990: 121-122).

Single-parent families were also given waiting list priority (ibid.: 97). Tenants could be evicted for a variety of reasons, including changes in family size, and evictees were given highest priority for new accommodation (ibid.).

Szelenyi found that Eastern European cities were "becoming more alike" (1983: 1) in the size of flats, the proportion of income spent on rent, and even in the appearance of new buildings. Because housing was viewed by the state as neither a consumer commodity nor a productive investment, there was less investment in housing, especially in small-scale housing, than there might have been in a market economy (Szelenyi 1983). Despite continuing shortages, Czechoslovakia's investment in housing fell steadily in real terms (Sillince 1990: 22-23). Grand-scale housing projects, however, provided an opportunity for large construction companies and planning institutions, enhancing the bureaucracy's capacity to allocate (Verdery 1991). When they were first constructed, the housing estates were highly desirable; their flats, while homogenous and monotonous, were less expensive (due to subsidized rents), more modern, and slightly larger than what was generally available elsewhere in urban centers. As they were built, public transportation was often extended to provide convenient service, and shops and other conveniences were built nearby, or even within the estate itself.

A second type of urban housing was cooperatives, usually financed partly by the state and partly by a capital investment by tenants. Coop members paid a membership deposit, about 3,000 crowns (about $107 U.S.) plus a fee of 25,000 to 30.000 crowns ($890 to $1030 U.S.) depending on the size of the apartment and cost of the building; the state provided a subsidy of 11,000 crowns ($892) per flat plus an additional amount based on usable floor space (1,200 crowns/square meter) (Short 1990: 102). Additional subsidies were sometimes available. After the initial deposit, the member continued to be involved financially and was often responsible to provide labor (his/her own or a hired third-party) during construction (ibid.: 118). The rights in the apartment could be transferred at will: sold (at a regulated price), left to heirs, traded, or given away (ibid.: 119). By law, membership in a cooperative had to be open to any adult, and no person could be a member of more than one coop (ibid.).

The final urban housing option was a privately owned single-family house. Under socialism in Czechoslovakia, the construction of new single family houses was almost completely stopped in urban areas, which Szelenyi attributes primarily to the low

ideological value accorded to single family homes, which were associated with individualism and the petite bourgeoisie (1983: 94). Indeed, when the newest, most prestigious housing was to be found in large apartment complexes, family homes, associated with village life, may have been seen as a less desirable alternative. The tendency in Czechoslovakia was for the higher social strata to live in state housing, and the lower strata in private housing (ibid.: 53). Whether or not private dwellings were desirable, there was little financial support available for those wishing to build a house, and new construction of detached houses in towns was highly regulated (Short 1990: 94). In fact, most private houses in urban areas date from before World War II (Krejci 1972: 85). In suburban and rural areas, private houses were far more common, and building loans were available through the state bank or enterprises at low interest rates (Short 1990: 102).

Acquiring urban housing was an exercise in patience, and applicants for state housing spent years on waiting lists. Until 1965, most new housing was distributed by state allotment, so waiting listees had little choice. Even those who bought into coops often had to wait several years for construction to be completed. Private houses could be inherited, but this was clearly not an option for many people, and financing repairs on an old house could be difficult. Besides the new housing estates, most urban centers contained old apartment buildings that had been gradually taken over by the state (because rents were frozen at their 1945 level, many landlords simply went bankrupt (Krejci 1972: 21)). Some large houses, dating from before the war, were subdivided into several flats (ibid.: 86). Older apartments were generally not modernized and were poorly maintained (Szelenyi 1983: 49). Architectural styles of these older buildings varied, but few were over five stories tall and most featured small apartments (Scheufler 1984).

Urban apartments have typically been small. In 1970, the average apartment size was 3.1 rooms, and the average family size was 3.1 people (Jancar 1978: 44). Electricity was virtually universal by the early 1960s, and state regulations required that all dwellings have a bath or shower, a separate indoor toilet, a kitchen with a stove, and hot and cold running water (Short 1990: 88). Almost three-quarters of apartments had a private kitchen (Jancar 1978: 43). Modern conveniences were widespread; by 1975, 83 percent of households nationwide had a washing machine and seventy five percent had

refrigerators (ibid.: 50).

Rents for apartments were set according to a formula based on size and quality. Apartments were assigned to a quality class (I-IV) depending on whether they had "amenities" (such as central heat, separate bath and kitchen, and electricity), and each class was assessed a certain rate per square meter of usable floor space and a lower rate per square meter of ancillary space (Short 1990: 41). These rates were fixed in 1964, and only adjusted for inflation thereafter (Sillince 1990: 38). The amount of rent for the apartment would then be decreased if the tenant had children (five percent for one, thirty percent for three, and fifty percent for four or more), if more than one family shared the apartment, or if the tenant was disabled (Short 1990: 104). Rents were not adjusted to reflect tenants' income, but rents were between two and four percent of average household income (Sillince 1990: 43). Utilities were not included, but represented another two to three percent of the household's income (ibid.).

There are no statistics available as to the number of women who controlled housing in their own name. The state did not discriminate on the basis of gender, and women were equally able to get onto waiting lists, apply for coop ownership, and so on. However, Krejci (1983) points to several studies indicating that those with higher incomes did have preferential access to housing. Because women's incomes were, on average, lower than men's, they would have been less likely to obtain good housing individually. In reality, however, few single people had any access to housing, and if any member's higher income or status entitled them to better housing, their family members benefited equally. Because housing access also depended on family size, single women with children were not at a significant disadvantage. Married couples were entitled to a larger apartment than unmarried couples, an extra six square meters per household (Siklova 1993:76).

In discussions with individuals in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, it quickly becomes apparent that people attempted any strategy they thought would help them obtain housing or get a high slot on a waiting list. Under conditions of scarcity, a pragmatic approach towards obtaining housing evolved. Only one-third of couples had their own apartment when they married (Short 1990: 98). Young couples usually lived with parents (the choice of whose parents to live with was almost entirely based on who had more space) for several years while they waited to be allocated a separate apartment.

Sometimes this didn't happen until after they had had a child, which moved their priority up.

Strategies used to obtain housing often involved a detailed knowledge of the bureaucratic criteria employed in allocation, and a careful manipulation of the resources at hand.

> When Anna and her husband divorced, they agreed that she would keep their apartment in Prague for herself and their young daughter. In order to avoid the state assigning them a smaller apartment, Anna's ex-husband moved in with someone else, but kept his official residence at Anna's apartment. ("It was a little like him paying me alimony," she joked, since he could not, of course, apply for a new apartment for himself.) Anna kept this arrangement for about ten years, until she decided that her elderly mother should come to live with her. They traded in their two four-room apartments for one four-room apartment in a nicer building, which was put in Anna's now-adult daughter's name, and a small one-room apartment, which Anna put in her own name. Because they were trading in their former apartments for less space (total), they did not have to wait at all. The large apartment is shared by Anna and her mother. Her daughter, whose name is on the lease and the doorbell, actually lives in California. The smaller apartment is used by Anna as her art studio, at a much lower rent than she would have had to pay for any commercial space.

In this case, a family took advantage of the extreme unlikelihood that the bureaucratic allocation system would ever figure out who was actually living where. In other cases, migrants to the city lived for several years with extended family members, with roommates who already had housing, or rented a single room informally.

Actual homelessness was virtually unknown before 1989, in part due to the state's draconian removal of potential vagrants to prisons or asylums. In the past few years, homelessness has become a reality for some, although uncommon. The sight of people sleeping on the street is still shocking to urban-dwellers. Robert, who kindly acted as my guide for several days in Prague, pointed out a park where a small squatters' settlement has sprung up. His reaction was ambivalent: on one hand, he expressed dismay that the city or "someone" wasn't doing anything to help those in such an unfortunate situation, and on the other, disgust with the homeless themselves, especially "perfectly capable men" who, he said, really ought to get a job. "With all the changes," he said firmly, "There are all kinds of things they could be doing."

How have "all the changes" affected the housing situation for the majority of those who live in the cities? Has women's position deteriorated, or has the high level of equal access to housing they gained under socialism and even before World War II been maintained under the new market system? In order to examine these questions, I interviewed sixteen individuals (Appendix A) about their housing situation. These interviews revealed some interesting trends, highlighted regional differences, and, in the absence of other studies, may suggest questions for further research.

In the Czech countryside, most families live in private houses, many of which have been continuously inhabited by the same family for many years. Both of my village-dwelling informants lived in private houses owned by their fathers. A significant investment in repairing and modernizing each house had been made in the last few years. Houses in this area of Moravia typically face a small common and share a wall on each side with a neighbor. Only the newest houses in the village are fully detached. Hana's family (interview #07) actually subdivided their house several years ago, sealing off four rooms and selling them to a neighbor. "It was too big to keep clean," Hana's mother complained about the large house her husband had inherited. The money from the sale was used to replaster their side of the house and to buy new furniture and appliances.

In Prague, half of my informants lived in housing that was rented from the city government. Housing that had formerly belonged to the state had been taken over by municipalities after 1989. Three of four households who were living in state apartments had been there for many years, after going through the extensive waiting list process described above. The fourth household (interview # 05) was a male university student who shared an apartment with a roommate. Two of these apartments were rented by a woman (in both cases, a divorced mother), and two by a man. One household (interview #01, Anna, described in detail above) actually rented two apartments, one of which was used as a de facto commercial space. These rented apartments vary in size from two to five rooms.[10] They are in different neighborhoods, and of varying quality.

All of these households had the opportunity to privatize their apartment, but have so far chosen not to do so. Their decision not to privatize is in the context of Prague's strict rent controls. Rents paid in my sample ranged from just 700 kcs ($25 U.S.) per month for a three room flat just outside of Prague to 1120 kcs ($40 U.S.) for a five room flat on the outskirts or a two room flat right downtown. (Rents usually include

heat, but not electricity, which has increased sharply in price in the past few years.) When such low rents are compared with the high cash outlay required for privatization, my informants assured me that they were much better off to rent. So far, there has been no discussion of deregulating rents, probably a tacit admission of the massive problems a sudden rent increase would cause. Because the government wants to privatize housing, nearly every apartment building owned by the city is considered to be for sale. While tenants have first preference to privatize, they do run the risk that their building or their apartment could be purchased by someone else. One tenant, Paul, feels this scenario is unlikely; the government is more interested in selling apartment buildings than single flats, and an investor simply couldn't recoup the investment through rents.

The housing shortage combined with low official rents have spawned high prices in private rental housing. Foreigners desiring to rent a flat, I was told, can be charged as much as $500 U.S. or more per month. Those who cannot obtain a state-owned apartment can be forced to pay ten or more times the rent-controlled rates, often in hard currency. Some of this is accomplished through the quasi-legal practice of renting an apartment from the state and then subletting it at a higher rate. One of my informants, Josef (interview # 04), was acting as such a landlord. He rented a four-room flat from the city for 700 kcs ($25 U.S.) per month and sublet it for 1,260 kcs ($45 U.S.) to tenants. He initially got this apartment because he was planning to move there himself. He and his wife currently live in a smaller apartment that has been privatized. When they realized they could not immediately recoup their investment in the privatized flat, they decided to rent out the larger flat until they could afford to move. In the meantime, however, concerns have arisen about the quality of the building that their new apartment is in. Josef says he has had a lot of problems, as a landlord, with some of the neighbors whom he scornfully called "gypsies."[11] He told me that he doesn't like being a landlord because "there are too many hassles."

The privatized flat that Josef and his wife live in is owned in her name. He told me that, although they make their decisions together and really consider themselves to own it jointly, it was easier to privatize it in her name because she had originally rented it from the state. It cost them 28,000 kcs ($10,000 U.S.) to privatize the apartment in 1992, which they thought would be a good investment. While he says that he is less sure now that it was a wise decision, he figures that in the long run, housing prices can

only go up.

Others paid much more to privatize their housing. Richard (interview # 02) and his wife paid 820,000 kcs ($30,000 U.S.) for their four-room apartment in 1993. Their apartment was more expensive, he explained, partly because it was in a new building in a nice area. They had less of a choice about privatizing because they lived in a cooperative building which had decided to privatize; if they had not privatized, they would have had to move out. Because the cooperative still owed part of its capitalization cost to the state, the prices were set at a level that enabled repayment. The cooperative is now being managed like a condominium, where apartment owners pay a small monthly fee for upkeep of common areas and building maintenance.

This sample indicates that in the Czech Republic, women's access to housing is fairly equal. Half of my informants lived in housing that was officially controlled either by a woman or jointly by a married couple. When housing was privatized, it was as likely to be in a woman's name or owned jointly as it was to be owned by her husband. I found a similar situation in Slovakia. In Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, rents are not controlled as they are in Prague. Housing is in short supply, but the housing shortage is not acute. The primary problem, according to many people, is a scarcity of affordable housing. Rents are high, and increasing at rates that outpace income. Privatization costs are also high, but privatization is a more desirable option than it is in Prague, given the high expense of renting.

The housing stock of Bratislava is quite different from that of Prague. Because the city suffered damage in World War II, and more radical rebuilding in subsequent years, the old section of the city is quite small. In fact, post-war modernization may have destroyed more of the old housing stock than the war itself; for example, the city's traditional Jewish quarter, nestled between the Danube and the castle, was razed to make room for the landmark *Most SNP*, a dramatic suspension bridge. Much of the city's housing is in large Stalin-esque housing estates around the city and small single-family houses on the outskirts. Medium-sized apartment blocks line many of the downtown streets, and are among the more expensive rental options. Landlords requiring rent to be paid in foreign currency, I was told, are even more common than in Prague. [12]

Of eight informants in Bratislava, only two lived in private housing. Jitka (interview # 12) lives in a brand-new house owned, officially, by her husband. Until

1994, they had been living in the house her husband inherited from his parents. They sold it, and used the 800,000 crowns (about $26,600 U.S.) to build their new six-room house. The other home-owner I spoke to was an American of Slovak descent who immigrated to Slovakia in 1991 (interview # 13). Planning to make his fortune as an entrepreneur, he used money given to him by his parents, who live in New York, to buy a big house that he uses as a small hotel, renting rooms to English-speaking tourists (only one of his business plans). He bought the building for 500,000 crowns (about $16,600 U.S.) from its previous owner, but reckons that he has spent half that much again to modernize the house and make modifications to use it as a guest house. To him, used to New York prices and working with capital supplied by American relatives, this represents quite a small investment with potentially high returns.

For others, the capital needed to privatize is prohibitive. Prices in Bratislava, I was told, have escalated sharply since 1989. Rents paid by informants ranged from 1,000 crowns (about $33 U.S.) to 1,700 crowns (about $56 U.S.) per month. Rents were less related to the size of the apartment than to its location and quality. For example, Nicole (interview #14) shares a two-room apartment with a roommate for 1,700 crowns a month. Their building is owned by the city and is located close to downtown. Pavla's family (interview # 16), on the other hand, lives in Petrzalka, a housing estate on the opposite side of the Danube. They pay 1,400 crowns for a four-room flat.

While housing estates were some of the most desirable rental property available at the time they were first constructed, they have aged quickly and are now among the least desirable housing options. A visit to almost any housing estate will reveal crumbling masonry and untended public spaces. Playground equipment is rusted and broken, elevators seldom work reliably, and walkways are poorly lit. Their designers may have intended each estate to have its own services, from banks to grocery stores, but many of these state-run enterprises are now defunct and have not been replaced by new businesses, leaving estate residents with long trips for shopping. Some small shops have sprung up in vacated storefronts, but often carry a limited range of goods at a much higher price than is available elsewhere. The estates are often huge: Petrzalka is home to over 100,000 people (Short 1990: 96). Mark (interview # 09) seemed a bit embarrassed about living there, and demurred when I offered to meet him at his

apartment, suggesting a cafe instead. His three-room apartment, shared with a roommate, was "not very good," he told me. "It's an old building, so it's cheap. That's why we live there. In several years I will be able to afford a much better flat -- you can come visit me there." When I asked him about privatization, he said he would never want to own the apartment he has now.

Better housing is generally available in cooperative buildings. These are apparently much more loosely regulated in Bratislava than they are in Prague. Owners of cooperative apartments are able to rent them out for income; Michael (interview #15) and his wife rent a coop apartment with this kind of arrangement. He prefers it, he says, because it is better quality than most state-owned apartments. They were not interested in privatizing primarily because they see themselves living in Bratislava only temporarily while Michael finishes his graduate degree. Then they will probably move back to his hometown of Banska Bystrica. Eventually, he told me, he would like to emigrate to the U.S.

Both Helen (interview #10) and Irena (interview #11) also live in cooperative apartments. In both cases, the cooperative had been bought into years ago. Because most cooperatives still owe capitalization costs to the government and often are situated on state-owned land, in order to privatize they charge a large, one-time fee and change to private management or a condominium arrangement. Helen's cooperative is privatizing, but she has not yet been forced to buy her apartment. She hopes it does not come to that, she says, because she and her husband simply don't have enough money. Irena's family has also not yet privatized their apartment, although she thinks that they probably will do so soon. Irena, 22, lives with her parents. She told me she would like to move out into her own apartment, probably with a roommate, but she cannot afford to. She noted that apartments that have been occupied for a long time have had smaller rent increases than apartments which have become vacant recently.

Housing in urban areas continues to be a long-term problem in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia for both the governments and individuals. Lack of investment over many years has left urban areas with insufficient housing which is rapidly decaying. In Prague, housing will probably need to be de-regulated slowly, in order to encourage privatization while keeping housing costs within the reach of the population, while in Bratislava, where costs have escalated sharply, the challenge is to keep affordable,

decent housing available. For individuals, housing's shift from a scarce bureaucratic resource to a market commodity may cause difficulty in the short-term, as rising housing and utility costs will require a larger proportion of most households' incomes. Privatization may not make housing more readily available to working and middle class families, and will require different strategies. Housing is almost always a family decision and resource, and in this, women are not disadvantaged. Traditions of equality in inheritance combine with values and systems of access constructed by the socialist government to create a high degree of equality of access to this key resource.

Notes:

1) By 1985, the percentage of privately owned agricultural land had decreased to only three percent (Wolchik 1991: 230). This decline contrasts sharply with the situation in other East European countries, such as Hungary, where private agriculture played a significant role in production and actually increased after the initial phase of collectivization (Hann 1980). This contrast is most likely primarily due to Czechoslovakia's more orthodox adherence to central control of the economy as a result of normalization; market reforms introduced in Hungary and elsewhere simply never happened. Private agriculture was therefore less viable, and did not benefit from the substantial subsidies enjoyed by state enterprises. Private production for the market of fruits and vegetables, as well as livestock, was not officially encouraged until the late 1980s (World Bank 1991: 12). Further, land that remained private after 1960 was mostly located in marginal agricultural areas, and probably became less valuable as other economic options opened up to its proprietors.

2) Verdery (1991) discusses how this economy of shortage actually served to accentuate ethnic differences and conflict in Romania, as ethnicity became an exclusionary mechanism for allocation, both in the formal and informal spheres.

3) Many of these legislative acts changed several times during the socialist period. However, the principles of the legislation did not change significantly; for example, abortion remained legal after it was introduced in 1958, but was restricted and liberalized several times.

4) Here, I am treating as a "case" an interviewee and his/her immediate family. In several of my interviews, it was not the person I spoke to, but his/her spouse or parents who were the actual owners of the reclaimed property. In cases I have classified as not reclaiming property, no one in the informant's immediate family reclaimed any property.

Of fifteen interviews, five had insufficient information about property reclamation. Two of my informants were reluctant to discuss it, and two (who probably did not reclaim property) dismissed the topic as unimportant without further discussion. One other informant did not seem to understand what I was asking.

5) Here, I am not including several informants who were of college age or younger. In these cases, I have counted their parents, who are in their 40s or 50s, as the potential property reclaimers.

6) A chi-square test resulted in a value of 3.42, which is not significant at the .01 level. Fisher's exact test, recommended for small samples, also resulted in an insignificant value.

7) Of a total eligible population of approximately 11.3 million, 8.56 million people bought vouchers, a participation rate of over seventy five percent. Even assuming that every eligible Czechoslovak male bought vouchers, at least half of the nation's women must also have participated.

8) The lottery, incidentally, seems wildly popular. In every city I visited, people could be seen queuing up at every hour of the day at the small lottery shops and kiosks to buy tickets and check their numbers.

9) The total number of units was 5.344 million (World Bank 1991: 77).

10) Common practice throughout the Czech Republic and Slovakia is that the kitchen is not counted as a room. In order to maintain consistency, I have kept this system. Thus, what I count as a two-room apartment would be classified as a three-and-a-half in Montreal, or a one-bedroom apartment in the U.S. All of the cases in my study had a private kitchen and one bath (multiple bathrooms are apparently very uncommon).

11) I found a great deal of prejudice expressed against gypsies. Stereotype holds that they steal, are dirty, don't work, and present a grave danger.

12) Czech and Slovak citizens, at the time of research, were legally allowed to exchange only small amounts of crowns for foreign currency per year (the maximum amount was approximately equivalent to about $500 U.S.). There was a thriving black market in hard currency at the time of my visit; the most sought-after foreign currency was the German mark.

Chapter Four: Feminism and Anti-Feminism

Women can do everything; men do the rest.
- Russian proverb

Nearly every researcher considering gender issues in post-socialist Eastern Europe has noted the development of what has been termed an "anti-feminist" movement. Women's return to the domestic sphere, to raising children and keeping house, is being promoted by men and women alike as the key to a better society. Some theorists suggest that this is a response to the Communist party's version of feminism, included in the "backlash" against all things communist (for example, Einhorn 1991, Wolchik 1991, Wheaton and Kavan 1992). In this chapter, I will consider attitudes towards women, and the feminist and anti-feminist discourses: how women's position in society has been defined by the state and individuals and the form these ideas have taken in both theory and practice. I will begin with an examination of the development of feminist ideas in Marxism and then consider the practices of the socialist state, the current anti-feminist debate, and the possible consequences for women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Socialist Theories of Gender

Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published in 1884, was based on earlier works by both Marx and anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. In it, Engels outlined an evolutionary framework for the subordination of women. He associated matriarchal households with primitive communism; this system, he suggested, was replaced by patriarchy and the gradual rise of capitalist relations of production. The rise of monogamous marriage gave men rights over women, in which women "sell [their bodies] into slavery once for all" (Engels [1884] 1978: 742), so that men could ensure that their property went into the hands of their legitimate heirs. He asserted that: "the first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male" (ibid.: 739). According to Engels, the intrinsic inequality of this relationship could be remedied only under circumstances in which marriage is a voluntary agreement entered into by equal partners. The emancipation of women required their legal equality,

their involvement in public industry, and the abolition of the nuclear family as an economic unit (ibid.: 743-744). Engels was careful not to argue for the abolition of the institution of marriage, but for a marriage based on genuine romantic love instead of bourgeois considerations of property and the need to maintain family status. He predicted that under socialist relations of production, "private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry" (ibid.: 745-746).

Engels' work was used as the basis for socialist theory on women "virtually unmodified down to the present" (Scott 1974: 36). August Bebel, leader of German Social Democracy in the nineteenth century, continued to write about women's subordination, emphasizing not patriarchy but women's separation from social production as the cause of their oppression (Stites 1978: 233-235). By 1900, Bebel's book was translated into Russian and was "the last word on the women question in Russia" (Stites 1978: 239). Given the predominant sentiment in Germany at the time (Mosse 1985), Bebel's work does appear truly revolutionary. Even within socialist circles, opposition to women's participation in the labor force was strong until the early 1900s (Stites 1978: 238), and most socialists were in favor of women's "traditional" roles as wives and mothers. However, the Second International Congress (1907) resolved that the enfranchisement of women was an explicit goal of socialist parties, as was women's right to work (ibid.: 237). Such socialist theory, formulated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Germany, was the foundation of the 1917 revolution and the ideological basis for the states created in Russia, and later in Eastern Europe.

Bolshevism and Feminism

The 1917 Russian Revolution promoted the image of women as "the tough-willed equal of men" (Stites 1978: 322). Women formed a not-inconsiderable part of the Bolshevik army, although they were frequently relegated to support duties rather than to actual combat. The prominence of military women promoted a "defeminized" style in dress and behavior. Women wore soldier's pants and jackets with boots and overcoats (ibid.: fn. 322) and emulated military values. Politically, women played a prominent role in the first years after 1917. Women who had been leaders in the revolutionary movement held key positions in the new government, including Secretary of the Party and Secretary of the Comintern, as well as positions in departments of public welfare and

health. Women were granted complete political, civil, and legal equality in January of 1918. The definition of women's rights in the Soviet constitution specifically included the right to an equal education and access to training opportunities, equal rights at work including equal pay and consideration for promotion, and equal social, political and cultural roles (Pilkington 1992: 189). Women constituted half the paid labor force in Russia, after having entered the workforce in large numbers during World War I (Stites 1978: 287).

However, by 1925, "there were no more prominent individual women even close to the seats of power" (Pilkington 1992: 323). Many of the women who had held high office either resigned or were dismissed or demoted as the new government was consolidated under Lenin, and those with dissenting political ideas were evicted. Women became better represented at lower and middle ranks, and began to be ghettoized in the fields of health, welfare and education. In these "feminized" fields, the rates of pay were lower than in male-dominated fields requiring similar levels of education and training, and while women held the majority of positions, they were not well represented at the administrative and supervisory levels.

Richard Stites describes most women as being opposed to the revolution, fearing that their family would be destroyed and their children taken away to be raised as socialists (1978: 329-330). Peasant women seem to have been ambivalent about the revolution; while they welcomed political power and legal rights, they rejected collectivism, coerced labor, and what they perceived as the urban elitism of the Bolsheviks (Farnsworth 1992). From the point of view of the government, peasant women were seen as the most backward and conservative sector of the society, because of their low levels of education, attachment to religious institutions, and great resistance to government goals (Bridger 1992). The Party created a women's organization, the *Zhenotdel*, to educate and reassure women throughout the country. The imperative was to raise women's consciousness and to deal with "specifically women-related problems, such as maternity care, in their own special way" (Stites 1978: 332). By 1930, as Party leadership changed its focus under Stalin, the *Zhenotdel* was dissolved and the "woman question" was considered resolved.

The Sexual Revolution

The period immediately following the 1917 revolution was one of great sexual liberalization in the Soviet Union. "Bourgeois morality" was rejected by prominent political theorists, including Lenin and Alexandra Kollontai, the most prominent of the feminist revolutionaries. Urban young people "displayed a fierce hostility to old values," and premarital sex increased dramatically (Stites 1978: 359). "Free love" was touted as modern and revolutionary. Young people, especially, enjoyed a period of freedom from restrictions on sexuality.

Lenin and Kollontai both envisioned the development of collective living arrangements, in which domestic labor would be socialized, freeing women from the burdens of all domestic work. "The separation of the kitchen from marriage is a great reform, no less important than the separation of Church from State..." (Kollontai, quoted in Stites 1978: 355). Full-time housekeeping was to become a specialized occupation like any other, part of the public, rather than the private, domain. Childcare would become a socialized process, although even Kollontai expected that a woman would care for her own child while it was still an infant.

While much of Kollontai's vision may have been utopian, there were substantial changes made in Soviet marriage and family law in this period. Marriage was secularized, and spouses were forbidden to interfere in the other's business, residence, or personal affairs. Divorce was made increasingly easy and needed to be brought before a court only if there was a dispute. Informal unions were given full rights, as were children born to unwed mothers (Stites 1978: 363). This state of affairs did not last for many years, however. Resistance came from both above and below. Many women found themselves abandoned with their children, with the state unable to enforce child support. Prostitution, which according to theory should have disappeared, began to thrive in the cities. Concerns arose about moral decay, the decline of the family, and a lack of discipline. In fact, these concerns echoed those found throughout Europe in this period, sparked by economic crisis (Koonz 1986: 177). By the mid-1930s, Soviet family law was revised, abolishing free abortions and restricting divorce. The change in laws, although moderate enough in itself, represented a dramatic shift in the attitude of the state.

Under Stalin, there was "a vitriolic press campaign against irresponsible

sexuality" (Stites 1978: 384). Women were urged to take back the responsibility of motherhood, for the good of the family and the good of the state. A strong family foundation would support the nation, producing a steady stream of new citizens and providing the domestic services that the state could not, in fact, afford to support (ibid.: 385). Motherhood and large families were glorified in the press and in popular novels (ibid.: 388). In 1936, abortion was abolished except for serious medical reasons. An editorial in *Pravda* praised the measure, concluding that "a woman without children does not know the full joy of life" (quoted in Stites 1978: 387).

World War II, and the tremendous loss of life suffered by the Soviet Union, intensified the pro-natalist efforts of the state. Adults who were unmarried or childless were taxed, while mothers who had many children were rewarded with cash bonuses. Laws intended to protect women, including divorce restrictions, the provision of health care, and the provision of pre-schools and daycare, were intensified. The idealization of motherhood, moral regulation, and the image of women as citizen/mother, prevailed until after Stalin's death in the 1950s.

Socialism and Feminism in Eastern Europe

Women's liberation in Eastern Europe after Communist takeovers at the end of World War II was framed strictly in terms of legal equality and equal labor force participation, echoing ideological trends in the Soviet Union. After 1949, the emphasis on state policy on women shifted several times, from promoting woman as worker to woman as mother. These shifts had both positive and negative influences on women as a group and as individuals in different situations. While Western feminists, particularly socialist feminists, have pointed to women's legal equality and high rates of labor force participation as indicative of women's superior position in socialist nations vis-a-vis capitalist ones, Eastern European feminists are quick to point out the problems associated with the multiple roles socialist women have been expected to fill.

From the end of the 1950s until the end of communist rule, the ideal "socialist woman" was a good worker and competent professional, a caring mother and wife, and an enthusiastic comrade. A woman was complete only if all these roles were filled. Women were perceived as having a "maternal role," a "worker role," and a "family role," multiple demands which had no male equivalents (Corrin 1992: 68). Women were

under tremendous pressure to justify their choices, whether they chose to work or to stay home with children. The ideal of a socialist family -- democratic and collectivist -- ignored women's burden of unpaid domestic work.

Socialist Employment

Throughout Eastern Europe, women's participation in the paid labor force increased sharply after the war. An acute labor shortage, combined with the need for an expanded unskilled and semi-skilled labor force in industrial production and collective agriculture, made women's employment essential to the state. The socialist governments actively promoted women's role in productive labor. In Poland, for example, many posters sprung up depicting happy women engaged in "non-traditional" occupations (Plakwicz 1992). Women made inroads into traditionally male sectors, including heavy industry, and were represented in management levels in many fields (Scott 1974: 95).

By the mid to late 1950s, however, the state began to put increased emphasis on a dual role. The labor shortage had passed, and women were firmly ensconced in the process of production. Hilda Scott describes this shift in emphasis as "a path of retreat from the naiveté of the 1950s, when women were urged to take up men's tools" (1974: 17). Birth rates throughout Eastern Europe had dropped since the end of the war, and women's "homecoming" was as actively promoted as their employment had been a few years earlier (Plakwicz 1992). Pronatalist measures, including paid maternity leave and family allowances, were introduced, which were primarily intended to increase the birth rate rather than to benefit women (Heitlinger 1993: 96). However, women were encouraged to take only a few years to have children and were expected to return as soon as possible to the paid workforce. Levels of female labor force participation remained high. In 1989, women made up forty six percent of the labor force in Czechoslovakia, one of the highest percentages in the world (World Bank 1991: 5).

Certain sectors of the economy were feminized, including low-paying, service jobs in fields which seemed "feminine." Women in Czechoslovakia were highly represented in medicine and health care, education, banking and clerical work (Salzmann 1990: 400). One third of working Czechoslovak women were employed in light industry in 1989 (Venerova and Okruhlicova 1992: 42). Women were discouraged from entering more "masculine" fields, including heavy industry and jobs involving mechanized

technology. In sectors such as agriculture and construction, men were generally involved in jobs that required the use of machinery and technology, while women were relegated to tasks requiring intensive but unskilled manual labor (Bridger 1987). By 1983, for example, less than one percent of Soviet agricultural machine operators were women (Bridger 1992: 273). Not only were women discouraged from entering "male" occupations, but men were often steered away from "feminine" fields such as hairdressing and cooking (Harsanyi 1993: 44). Part-time work was uncommon, as was piecework or work that could be done from the home. Managers preferred to put women in "non-essential" positions, on the widespread belief that women were more unreliable than men and prone to absenteeism (deSilva 1993, Fong and Paul 1992). Women, in turn, often preferred jobs that would allow them flexibility to meet their family needs. This division of labor was seen as "proper"; it suited the needs of the socialist economy and enabled women to devote more of their energy to caring for their family and maintaining their household (Harsanyi 1993).

Inequalities in spheres of employment translated into lower wages. Wage policies favored skilled physical work, heavy industry, and long tenure; women were disadvantaged on all counts (Paukert 1992). In some cases, the higher pay associated with monotonous, dirty, or hazardous work encouraged women to remain in these professions to compensate for their lack of earning power (Shapiro 1992: 31). Immediately after World War II, Czechoslovakian women's average salary was about 55 percent of men's; this increased to about 66 percent by 1961 and remained fairly steady despite increases in women's qualifications (Krejci 1972: 64). By 1989, women were only slightly better off than in the 1960s, with a wage differential of 71 percent (Paukert 1992: 34).[1] Some arguments have been made that this disparity was not due to discrimination, but to women's lower skills, lesser flexibility, time off for family needs, and absence from the workforce to have children (Shapiro 1992: 26).

Different levels of education fail to account for the dramatic wage difference, since women were as highly educated if not more highly educated than men. In 1968, forty percent of students in higher education were women (Krejci 1972: 60). However, gender differences in educational tracking meant that boys were more likely to pursue a technical secondary school track, while girls were encouraged to take a general education (Einhorn 1993: 119). As a result, young women entered the workforce as

unskilled labor or entered university, while young men, with higher earning potential as skilled labor, were more likely to join the labor force. However, women often needed better qualifications for a job than a male applicant, and were generally less likely to receive on-the-job training (Fong 1993: 13). The consistent underemployment of women was true in feminized sectors as well as other sectors, as men tended to hold upper-level positions. In terms of the "rational" functioning of the socialist economy, the underemployment of women meant a loss of productivity and a low return on the expense of education (ibid.: 115). For individual women, underemployment meant that their jobs were often unrewarding and uninteresting, rather than being liberating outlets for individualism as often supposed by Western feminists.

Equal But Different: Socialist Legislation and Family Benefits

The Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations implemented a variety of policies and benefits intended to ease women's burden as both mother and worker and to protect what were seen as women's particular vulnerabilities in the workplace. The Soviet constitution, which was a model for the Eastern European nations, defined women's rights to include the right to special measures to protect the health and labor of women and the protection of motherhood (Pilkington 1992: 189). Maternity was protected through various measures guaranteeing a women's right to return to her job after pregnancy leave. In 1987, a Czechoslovak women was entitled to 28 weeks of maternity leave at ninety percent of her salary, up to a maximum of 135 crowns per day (this maximum was slightly higher for certain job categories), with no loss of seniority (Salzmann 1990: 401). Women were generally able to take days off to care for sick children. In certain positions, women with small children were allowed to work a reduced work week (deSilva 1993: 309). Pregnant women working in occupations considered dangerous were able to change jobs for the duration of their pregnancy with no loss of pay or seniority (Jancar 1978: 138). Often, parental leaves were available to be taken by either parent; however, they were most often taken by women, who were generally expected to be the primary caretaker. These provisions provided an important security system for women, but they also reinforced patterns of inequality in the workplace.

Women were expected to retire earlier than men. A woman's retirement age

depended not just on how many years she was employed, but also on how many children she had. The "average" age of retirement for women was 55, but a childless woman was not entitled to her full pension until age 57, and a woman with several children could retire as early as 53 (Krejci 1972: 66). Retirement age for men was, as a rule, 60, although men in certain hazardous occupations were entitled to a full pension somewhat earlier (ibid.: 66). The average pension for women is 5.6% lower than that of men, due to lower average salaries and fewer years in the workforce (Einhorn 1993: 138).Earlier retirement may have been a factor in the dearth of women in top positions which would normally be achieved late in one's career. Pensioners were allowed to work part-time after their "retirement"; many pensioners, both men and women, chose to continue working to supplement low pension incomes (Krejci 1972: 77).

Other legislation was aimed at protecting women's reproductive capacity. Women were either barred from jobs which were considered hazardous or, if the risk was less extreme, given pay bonuses for risking their health. Other protective legislation was aimed not at women's bodies, but at their role as mothers; for example, Czechoslovakia's 1965 Labor Law excluded women from night work after ten p.m. (Scott 1974: 19). This law was not universally enforced, and its provisions were gradually worn away by demands from enterprises and from women themselves, who wanted the higher pay associated with much banned work (ibid.: 20-21).

Protective legislation set women apart from men, emphasizing their role as reproducers and mothers. Zillah Eisenstein (1993) argues that although maternity benefits, child care, and other measures protecting women did offer them some assistance, it was problematic because in practice, it constrained women's choices and enforced existing gender inequalities. This legislation both created and reinforced the existing sexual division of labor, by assisting women rather than by reorganizing the economy or domestic labor. Women's reproductive capacity was treated as a national resource, rather than as an essential category in which an individual's rights needed to be safeguarded. In practice, however, Eastern European women may have been better off than their counterparts in the West, who lacked job security and enjoyed less state support for families.

The Other Half of the Double Burden: the Home

Engels identified domestic labor as an obstacle to women's full participation in public production. The options for employment in modern industry leave women with an impossible contradiction:

> when she fulfils her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and cannot earn anything; and when she wishes to take part in public industry and earn her living independently, she is not in a position to fulfil her family duties (Engels [1884] 1978: 744).

With a firm commitment to women's employment, the Eastern European states set out in the 1940s and 50s to reduce women's domestic workload. Nursery schools and daycare slots were increased tremendously in order to enable women to work (Scott 1974: 92-93). Daycare was essential for working mothers, especially because alternative caretakers -- fathers, grandmothers, and other female relatives -- were also fully employed.[2] Restaurants provided alternatives for family dinners, shops extended their hours to accommodate workers, and laundry services were established in some areas (ibid.: 96). In many regions, particularly in rural areas, such services were never established, or services were of unacceptably poor quality or only open at inconvenient hours.

Time studies of women's labor, however, reveal that women still had to devote a great deal of energy to household chores. One 1990 study estimated that Czech women spend 9.5 to 10.5 hours away from home each day, including employment, commuting, and shopping (cited in Einhorn 1991: 20). A Soviet study showed that women spend several more hours each day on childcare and housework: almost two hours each weekday, and seven per day on the weekends (cited in Fong 1993: 17). Men did not spend nearly as much time as their wives in domestic labor; a 1984 Czech study (cited in Salzmann 1990) shows that women spend, on average, 25.5 hours a week on household work, including childcare, while their husbands spend 14.5. A much greater proportion of men's time (16.1%, as compared to 7.7% for women) is "free time," according to this study, comparable to figures in the Soviet study. The option of staying home, of not working, was generally not available. Extended leaves to raise children were discouraged (Harsanyi 1993: 41). Usually, two incomes were needed to maintain

a family's standard of living. But women were disadvantaged in competition with men in the workplace as a result of their heavier workload at home (Scott 1974: 208). Part-time work, which might have allowed more flexibility, was rare.

The government's pro-natalist proach served in part to reinforce traditional divisions of labor within the family. Any analysis of gender inequality by women's organizations or other state or university departments tended to call for improved consumer goods and services to help ease women's burdens, without any critical consideration of the system as a whole or of men's roles (Wolchik 1991). Women's responsibility for family and domestic spheres was never questioned in popular journals or by the state (Lipovskaia 1992). For women, however, the difficulties of carrying out this dual role were tremendous, and was experienced as "dual oppression" (Pilkington 1992: 190). According to Kiczkova and Farkasova, behind the mask of a successful socialist woman lurked an "exhausted, distracted, inauthentic creature" (1993: 89), as women struggled to perform the multiple duties expected of them.

Public Images Under Socialism

According to some Eastern European writers, the concept of women's emancipation under socialism was not linked to individualism, as it was in the West, but to collectivism and "socialist patriarchy" (e.g. Kiczkova and Farkasova 1993). Images of women throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union focused on women as mothers, as workers, and as active citizens. Most women found it difficult, if not impossible, to successfully fill all of those roles (Kiczkova and Farkasova 1993). The socialist family was often idealized in the media and elsewhere as democratic and collectivist, and as a genuinely social unit compared with bourgeois Western families based on economic relations (Corrin 1992: 48). At the same time, the state relied on the traditional family for domestic work, which it was variously unwilling or unable to support. Joanna Goven (1993) argues that the idealization of motherhood legitimized the state's inability to collectivize domestic production.

The family, meanwhile, was becoming a possible locus of resistance to the oppressive nature of the socialist state. Mita Castle-Kanerova describes a process of "internal migration" in Czechoslovakia, a retreat into the domestic sphere, as a form of dissent (1992: 118).[3] Bernard Wheaton and Zdenek Kavan (1992) point to what they

consider a "preoccupation" with country cottages as evidence of a retreat to the private sphere; cottages represented an escape from urban pressures just as the family represented an escape from ideological pressures. The private sphere took on a great deal of subjective value, as a haven for individuality and a site of resistance to the state, and also had a high objective value, as kin and friendship networks formed the basis of the second economy which provided scarce goods, services, and information. Women's central role in the domestic sphere resulted not just in extra labor, but in a great deal of personal satisfaction for many individuals. As Anna told me, "My job, back then, was never so good, but my family always needed me."

The traditional ideal, common throughout Russia and Eastern European cultures, of women as able to cope with difficult demands and tremendous burdens was extended to images of socialist women, both in state propaganda and in popular belief (Titkow 1993; Gray 1989). The peasant woman was idealized as the protector of the family, the indispensable manager of the household, the preserver of values and virtues. This at once was a source of gratification to many women, who prided themselves on their coping abilities, and a burden to those who felt overextended (Titkow 1989). In Czechoslovakia, the principle of self-sacrifice was touted in the media as a woman's responsibility to the "socialist family" (Castle-Kanerova 1992: 102). While small feminist movements began to develop in the 1980s in the Soviet Union, Poland, and Yugoslavia, urging a critical examination of women's roles, no similar movements developed in Czechoslovakia (Wolchik 1991: 203). This may have been due, at least in part, to the stricter policies of "normalization" that persisted in controlling public expression and dissent in Czechoslovakia until the eve of the Velvet Revolution. As well, the greater availability of consumer goods and legal protection of many rights for women, including abortion, may have given Czech and Slovak women a greater sense of well-being than in other parts of Eastern Europe.

Images of female sexuality in the media virtually disappeared, replaced by the image of motherhood and female workers. Political leaders, influenced by traditional patriarchal attitudes, "eliminated sex from the public discourse" (Harsanyi 1993: 46). Pornography was rare, if not unknown (Heitlinger 1993: 103). Prostitution was, according to ideology, a result of exploitation which no longer existed, and "impossible"; prostitutes were therefore defined as ill, "sexually deviant and morally dissolute"

(Pilkington 1992: 226).

Sexuality was strictly channelled into procreation. In a context of low birth rates, which was a cause of consternation to the government of Czechoslovakia as well as those of other nations, government policies consistently encouraged motherhood. In Czechoslovakia, abortion was legalized in 1953; while it remained legal, various restrictions were implemented to control access. Alena Heitlinger (1985) describes how, in the 1980s, women seeking an abortion had to apply to a special commission, comprised of local officials, doctors, representatives from trade unions, the Women's Union, and representatives from the Population Commission. While the commissions turned down only one to twelve percent of requests, they were "criticized often for bureaucratic inflexibility, smug moralism, and hypocrisy" (Heitlinger 1985: 289). Requests for abortions were made by the woman alone, with her partner playing no role in the process. If her request was approved, the commission would set a fee for the abortion, ranging from 200 to 800 crowns depending on its judgment of the social acceptability of her reasons. Other methods of birth control were not widely used, and sex and contraceptive education was minimal. Birth control, including IUDs and pills, became available in the 1960s, subject to periodic shortages, but by 1977, only 19 percent of Czech and 9 percent of Slovak women were using these methods of birth control (ibid.: 287). Despite the heavily bureaucratized control over abortion and lack of birth control, Czech and Slovak women were better off than women in some Eastern European countries, most notoriously Romania, where complete bans on abortion and the unavailability of contraception denied women control over reproduction and "giving birth [was] a patriotic duty" (President Ceausescu. 1986, quoted in Harsanyi 1993: 46).

Anti-Feminism

After the 1989 anti-Communist revolutions, what has been referred to as an "anti-feminist" sentiment began to find expression throughout the former socialist nations. In some ways, this is a tremendous backlash against the demands placed on women during the Communist era. The rhetoric of "women's emancipation" has been rejected by both women and men with the rest of the socialist legacy, as part of Communist propaganda. While formal equality is still enshrined in the constitutions of the Eastern European nations, traditionalist sentiments about women's family role have dominated discourse

on women's issues in the media and in politics. Ironically, the sentiments about women's "traditional" role being centered on house and family ignore the actual involvement women have had, historically, in both paid employment and working in family enterprises for at least the past century.

As the anti-feminist reaction begins to have consequences in the economy and in social relations, it has paradoxically increased the "double burden" faced by women. While economic necessity compels many women to keep working, state supports for working women have been eroding, and opportunities for women in the private sector are diminishing. Women, struggling to raise a family and hold a job, face social disapproval and criticism in both roles. Many Eastern European women are now fighting for freedom *from* the labor force, understandable when one considers the low-paying, low-status jobs that have been the only employment option for the majority. For some, their employment options are limited by the lack of affordable childcare; state-run childcare facilities are being closed, and private childcare can be very expensive (Einhorn 1991: 22). For many women, economic necessity compels them to work, although women's position in the workforce is increasingly precarious. All of the young women with whom I spoke in either the Czech Republic or Slovakia said that they expected to work. Several said they would like to stay home if they could afford to, but did not think this was a realistic possibility. Michael told me, "My wife would love to stay home and have a baby. But now, there is no way -- we need the money." Young men have no option whatsoever -- the idea of a "househusband" is treated as a joke, not as a possibility.

There is a sense that women's emancipation has been achieved and no one has really benefited from it (Havelkova 1993: 65). Public opinion polls analyzed by Sharon Wolchik (1994: 13) suggest that there is a widespread belief that levels of women's employment are too high. In a 1991 poll in Slovakia, one quarter of those surveyed felt women should not be employed outside the home. Younger women (those 18-39) were less likely to support this view, at fifteen percent. Only eight percent of respondents, and twelve percent of women 18-39, felt that women should be employed "as men are," that is, full-time. These numbers dramatically illustrate the "backlash" against women's employment. The sense that some work is more appropriate for women persists: Richard, whose wife works as an elementary school teacher, felt that this is a good

position for her. "This way, she has something to do, but she is home when our [ten year-old] daughter is home. If it wasn't this way, she wouldn't work."

Women's unemployment is rising to rates much higher than those of men throughout Eastern Europe; women represent fifty to seventy percent of the unemployed throughout Eastern Europe, and over fifty percent in the former Czechoslovakia (Einhorn 1993: 129). In part, this is because the sectors in which women had high rates of employment -- such as light industry, government employment, and social services -- have been the first victims of economic reforms (UN Regional Seminar 1992; Paukert 1992). Low levels of investment in light industry under socialism has left a legacy of obsolete, poorly equipped factories unable to compete with Western European firms. In businesses that have survived, wages and working conditions may be unattractive; the Slovak textile industry has been recruiting Ukrainian workers, as local workers find that their unemployment benefits amount to almost as much as proposed salaries (Einhorn 1993: 131). Many people, however, opt to work wherever they can; for example, Helen, who works at a new, foreign-owned department store, considers herself lucky to have gotten the job after the factory where she formerly worked was closed. Her current job, she feels, is a dead-end, and the pay is "so low that I can't even buy anything there," but working, she feels, is preferable to collecting unemployment.

Another factor in women's unemployment is discrimination in hiring. The image of women as less reliable employees due to their family responsibilities persists. In fact, many of these beliefs have some basis in reality, as women's family demands often impinge on workplace requirements. Employers argue that women can't travel, take more time off, and can't work overtime; young or childless women have no advantage, being perceived as "imminent mothers" (Fong and Paul 1992: 46). In Hungary, a survey of help-wanted advertisements showed that over twenty percent of advertisements for non-manual jobs and over sixty five percent for manual jobs explicitly excluded women from applying (Lado and Szelai 1992). A similar survey in Slovakia in February, 1991, found that only twenty nine percent of advertised positions were accepting female applicants, with both local and foreign joint-venture firms openly preferring men (Einhorn 1991: 134).

Some of the costs associated with maternity leave and other "women's" benefits have been shifted from the state to businesses, making women more expensive as

employees than their male peers. The likely result of businesses being forced to bear the costs of generous social benefits is either a diminution of benefits or an even higher rate of female unemployment. Valentine Moghadam (1992) argues that "withdrawal of state support for working mothers in the former socialist countries is likely to diminish the identification of women as both workers and reproducers..." (1992: 19) in a cycle of progressive withdrawal of women from the workplace. One partial solution to women's unemployment may come in the form of part-time and piece-work labor, which have not yet become common in the former socialist nations; while these kinds of opportunities may provide some employment and income, they also have drawbacks, usually in the form of low pay and minimal benefits (Moghadam 1992). Entrepreneurial ventures offer an option for some women, but the risks involved in opening a small business may deter others.

Barbara Einhorn argues that the trend of high female unemployment is "accompanied by an explicit rebirth of the ideology of women's primary role as wife and mother, tender of the domestic hearth" (1991: 18). She points out the irony that, as women are returning to the domestic sphere, the family has lost some of its former significance as a site of resistance to and refuge from the state. Informal networks are no longer as crucial to daily survival as they once were, and political discussion, once forced into intimate circles, can now be public once again. Women are being redirected to the home, but the home is not being liberalized or democratized (Eisenstein 1993: 311). In conversations I had, expectations for men to contribute to household labor seemed virtually non-existent. Both young married men and women I spoke to agreed that the wife does -- and should do -- all of the housework and the larger share of childcare. Michael, a twenty eight year old graduate student, told me that his wife, who works full time, takes care of everything at home, while he goes out at night with his friends. He felt this was a typical pattern among his friends.

Politically, the reform process has largely been considered as gender-neutral, and formal legal equality has been maintained. However, in Czechoslovakia, as in most of Eastern Europe, the "woman question" has been considered less important than "general human problems" (Havelkova 1993: 62). Women's participation in the political process, in the absence of socialist quotas for women in government, is decreasing dramatically. While women were active in the "Velvet Revolution," both as prominent dissidents and

as participants in mass demonstrations and strikes, few women emerged in leadership roles in political parties. In the 1990 elections, the proportion of women in the Czechoslovak parliament fell from 29.5 percent to just six percent (United Nations 1992: 8). Levels of female representation have remained low, below twelve percent, after subsequent elections (Wolchik 1994: 6-8). Several studies have found evidence that women express a lack of interest in politics and a lack of confidence in their own political judgment (cited by Wolchik 1994). Barbara Einhorn suggests that women's disinterest in the political process stems from a widespread feeling that politics is "dirty business," best left to men (1993). "It's hard to believe in politics any more," said Irena, 22.

The party that emerged victorious in 1990, the Citizens Forum, had few policies directed specifically at women, focusing on women's role as homemakers and mothers. One proposal suggested instituting a benefit for mothers. This would provide mothers a payment equal to one-half of the average wage of women under age thirty to enable them to stay home to care for children under age three (Wheaton and Kavan 1992: 146). This was seen as an alternative to placing young children in nursery school, so that working women would not be penalized by dual responsibilities of work and family, and so that the "proper upbringing of children" would not suffer from women's employment. For many women, this would have provided a much-needed second source of income while validating their desire to stay home in a traditional role. However, as of this writing, such a benefit has not actually been implemented. State-run daycare centers acquired a bad reputation in the decades under socialism, with high ratios of children to staff, a lack of personal attention, and poorly equipped facilities (deSilva 1993). Since 1989, state daycare centers have been one target of privatization, and many have been closed. Private daycare centers may provide better services, but are inevitably more expensive, and daycare may be priced out of reach of many families.

Few independent women's organizations have emerged. Barbara Einhorn suggests that, of the former socialist countries, Czechoslovakia may have "the strongest resistance to an explicitly feminist grouping" (1991: 29). Of thirty seven registered women's organizations, many are dedicated to "fostering women's domestic roles" (Wolchik 1994: 11). Offshoots of the former Women's Union, for example, offer babysitting, hobby clubs, and home economics lessons for girls (Einhorn 1993: 190).

Others, while explicitly rejecting feminism, may work to bring beneficial changes to women, such as Slovak Planned Parenthood; however, most groups are small and have little influence on public policy (Wolchik 1994: 11). With the emphasis on motherhood, women's greatest political power may come when they organize *as* mothers. One of the most popular of these organizations, called Prague Mothers, is "dedicated to women's right to choose motherhood over work" (Einhorn 1991: 29), and focuses on environmental issues. To date, there is only one university gender studies program in either the Czech Republic or Slovakia; associated with Charles University in Prague, it was until recently based in the researcher's living room (Siklova, personal communication, 1994). The pervasive rejection of a feminist consciousness, due to its association with communist rhetoric, disempowers women in the political sphere and creates an absence of a progressive voice in society.

Sexuality is emerging as a contested domain. Erotic and pornographic images and a surge of overt sexuality have filled the void left by the puritanical communist state. In the Czech Republic, the "Independent Erotic Initiative" registered as an official political party early in 1990 (Heitlinger 1993: 103). In Moscow, the prostitute -- officially non-existent under socialism -- is glamorized and celebrated as an entrepreneurial pioneer and a leader of the youth counterculture (Lissyutkina 1993: 284). Images of female sexuality, repressed under socialist governments, have become an "eroticized spectacle" (Portuges 1992: 286). In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, everywhere I visited magazine and newspaper kiosks had several racks of pornographic publications conspicuously displayed, with much more explicit images than are usually found on public streets in most North American cities. For young women, the fashion model has become a new ideal: three of the young women I spoke to wanted to have a career as fashion models. Two of them only fantasized about the glamorous lifestyle, while actually pursuing education in other fields, but the third was "volunteering" part time as a model, hoping that small local advertisements could lead to a full time career.

Joanna Goven (1993) argues that the strong anti-feminist sentiments which currently prevail in Eastern Europe are more than simply anti-Communist backlash. The discourse of anti-feminism, as expressed in the media, by politicians, and even in commonly held sentiments, blames women for the current social disorder. Women are portrayed as powerful agents who are destroying the family, by not living up to their

idealized role as mother. This echoes the blame that has been placed on women in other periods of social disorder in Europe (e.g. Mosse 1985, Koonz 1986). In fact, while anti-feminist sentiments have been associated with the end of Communist rule, questions about the efficiency of women's labor began to appear in the media in the late 1980s in Czechoslovakia, *before* the Velvet Revolution, with calls for young mothers to stay home (Wolchik 1991: 203).

Consequences of the anti-feminist backlash in Czechoslovakia are difficult to predict. The "freedom to return to traditions once forbidden" (Siklova 1993: 76) may have a great deal of appeal, but traditional roles of "mother" and "homemaker" may be neither possible, given the need for two incomes for most families, nor desired by many women in the long run. Structural unemployment may make it increasingly difficult for women to find a niche in the job market, despite higher levels of education. However, the experience of women under socialism suggest that full employment, without concessions to women's domestic role, cause a great deal of tension and excessive demands. And while full participation in the workforce has been regarded by both socialist and feminist theory as a key component of gender equality, many women find that employment, particularly in low status, uninteresting jobs, is not as rewarding as their highly valued family responsibilities.

State intervention on behalf of women's rights seems unlikely in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. "Protective" legislation, the cost of which is being shifted to employers, however, may only damage women's competitive position in the job market, as the cost of benefits aimed, for the most part, at working mothers, makes women undesirable, expensive employees. Women's problems may stem from being treated unequally, but particularly in the context of a free market economy, the predicaments faced by women who have to manage both professional and domestic responsibilities cannot simply be legislated away. The socialist legacy of separating out "the woman question" as a separate set of issues means that many policy decisions are still made without an explicit consideration of gender issues (Einhorn 1993: 157). With little pro-feminist public pressure and widespread sentiment that women's employment is too high, combined with a reduction in state provision of social services, women's labor has been shifting increasingly into the private sphere.

"Are things better now?" Anna sighed. "For me, I guess they are, but for my

mother, things are hard, and my daughter has left to go live in the U.S. There, she says there are not so many problems..."

Notes:

1) These wage differentials are similar to those found through most of Western Europe as well as the United States and Canada.

2) The quality of daycare was often questionable, as facilities often suffered from overcrowding, poor maintenance, and a lack of individual care (deSilva 1993).

3) Owning a cottage was quite common; in the 1980s, over twenty five percent of Prague residents owned a country home (Sillence 1990:126). These "cottages" range from a fully modernized small house to a glorified garden shed, although housing policies stipulated that a second home could not be of better quality than the owner's primary residence.

Conclusion

In both the Czech and Slovak Republics, women's access to household property is well-established. Grounded in a European tradition of bilateral inheritance and a strong sense of entitlement to a share of family property, women have benefited from property ownership. When traditional property relations were subsumed by the socialist state, women retained legal equality and institutionalized access to resources. In the transition to a market economy, women have been well-placed to claim and reclaim a significant portion of privatized resources, in part due to traditional expectations of equality in household property ownership and in part due to the legacy of socialist equality. Women's position as primary managers of households usually means that they make or share in financial decisions and control of the household income. Practical strategies of privatization employed by families include deeding property to whoever is in the best position to claim it; due in part to legal equality under socialism, it is often a woman. In my sample, it was clear that women's access to housing, a critical family resource, is generally as good as that of men.

The equality which is evident in ownership of household property, however, may not translate directly into an equal role in the market economy. In an industrial or post-industrial economy, household property plays a minor productive role, and while land for a garden or inexpensive housing may be an important asset for an individual, it is unlikely to propel her or him into the capitalist economy with a significant advantage. In order to understand how women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia could stand to gain from property ownership, it cannot be considered as the only factor in gender equality, but must be placed within a context of the level of equality in other spheres, such as employment. Moreover, as Esther Boserup (1990) points out, that which benefits some women might not bring any advantage to, or may even disadvantage, other women. As class stratification becomes more apparent in the former socialist countries, women's experiences with property ownership will become increasingly diverse.

Many women are taking an active role in the emerging capitalist economy, as evidenced by their high levels of participation in the voucher program. Those who bought vouchers are now stock owners; while the exact monetary value is low or uncertain for many, women with skill and interest in the market economy may stand to

gain considerable profit. Interviews with investors, both successful and not, suggest that the key to a good return on the vouchers is knowledge of the system: an understanding of how the market works, ideas about what industries are in a position to compete, and information about specific firms. While "insiders" have some advantage, careful research may also provide an edge; many women may be somewhat disadvantaged, not because they lack the skills or abilities to research and play the market, but because women, on average, have many more constraints on their time than do men.

Women may be disadvantaged in other ways in the capitalist economy -- high female unemployment and a lack of women in top positions in large businesses are symptomatic of systemic inequality. As long as the costs of maternity and other benefits must be borne by employers, rather than the state which mandates them, businesses will continue to be reluctant to employ women. Social spending and benefits continue to be a low priority for both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Benefits aimed at women and working mothers are not likely to be increased, in part because of the prevailing rhetoric of anti-feminism.

The anti-feminist movement, the widespread sentiment that urges women to "return" to caring for their families, is in part a reaction to the "double burden" of most women during the socialist period. The Communist Party's version of feminism, despite the radicalism of early socialist authors, defined "women's emancipation" only in terms of labor force participation. "Actually existing feminism" emphasized women's domestic role and important position as mothers, while failing to recognize or reorganize domestic production in a way that would facilitate women's full time employment. The concept of women's emancipation was linked not to ideas of individual liberty, as in the west, but to collectivism.

The anti-feminist movement is both empowering and disempowering for Eastern European women, and can be understood as an interrelationship of social and political strategies and current economic processes. On one hand, it is a response by what seems to be the majority of women to the perceived burdens of the socialist era. In this regard, it is perhaps inevitable that women, constrained to participate in wage labor at the expense of their personal lives and leisure, would reject unrewarding, poorly paid employment. The luxury of playing one role well, rather than several poorly, has an attraction readily apparent to women in the West, also struggling to balance work and

family. However, while in the West the family was seen by many feminists as one locus of women's oppression, in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the family was experienced by many individuals as one locus of individuality and resistance to state control. The role of women as caretakers of the family and household has continued to be highly valued, both publicly and by individuals. In this sense, anti-feminism is an affirmation of the value of women's role and women's work.

On the other hand, anti-feminism as expressed in public policies and wide-spread female unemployment may threaten women's status as independent economic actors. The lack of attention to women's issues by both the Czech and Slovak states, the absence of any widespread feminist movement or sentiment, and the structural inequality that makes women less desirable employees and steers girls towards feminized fields may, in the long run, make it difficult for women to "choose" to pursue a career outside of the home. Women who have taken several years out of paid employment may find it more difficult than they had expected to rejoin the work force, especially if general unemployment rates continue to rise. As most families need two incomes to maintain their accustomed standard of living, many women will have to stay in the workforce despite the constriction of opportunities available and a growing sense of moral disapproval for not conforming to the ideal images of motherhood. Employment becomes an even less desirable option, if women are forced into poorly paid, uninteresting work with few benefits, in a progressive cycle of devaluing participation in the public sphere.

In a context of rapid change and unpredictable shifts in economy and politics, the anti-feminist movement could be a short-lived phenomenon. Strong legal support of gender equality, a democratic forum for the redress of grievances, and the impact of public opinion on policy, in this case, would give women a strong foundation of support.

What then, are the consequences of a high degree of women's property ownership? As noted above, women's ownership of landed property may not provide a great deal of economic support; unlike situations where subsistence or cash-crop agriculture form a basis for livelihood, the majority of women (as well as men) in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are unlikely to rely on land as a primary means of support. While house ownership may provide a source of capital for some individuals, for most people it does not serve as an entrée into capitalism. However, equality in household

property ownership does form an important backdrop for a woman's equal role in family decision-making, including decisions about family finances, provides security and long-term support, as with country houses, and, as women are encouraged to strengthen their role in the domestic sphere, may act as an important site of economic power within the family.

While differences between the two republics are difficult to pinpoint as of yet, Czech women may emerge in a better position than their Slovak counterparts. Slovakia's decision to replace voucher privatization with other mechanisms may replace a system which encouraged gender equality with one that favors those with access to capital and power, mostly men. Of course, this elitism in privatization does not only discriminate against women, but against the majority of men as well. It seems quite possible that a more highly stratified class system will emerge in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic, where there seems to be, so far, a stronger commitment to "spreading the wealth" amassed under socialist rule.

In conclusion, this paper has only begun to address complex gender issues in the transformation to democratic, capitalist economies in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Rapid change and divergent paths of economic development will open many further questions. The tendency of both states to de-prioritize questions of gender and equality may only increase the urgency of these issues.

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Appendix A

Table 1: Informant ID Information

ID#	Name[1]	City	Sex	Age	Occupation	Mar. status [2]
01	Anna	Prague	F	54	Artist	D
02	Richard	Prague	M	43	businessman	M
03	Paul	Prague	M	32	salesman	S
04	Josef	Prague	M	30	salesman	M
05	Robert	Prague	M	23	assistant	S
06	Marta	Prague	F	23	student	S
07	Hana	Brno	F	19	student	S
08	Susanna	Brno	F	22	student	S
09	Mark	Bratislava	M	28	office worker	S
10	Helen	Bratislava	F	50	shop clerk	M
11	Irena	Bratislava	F	22	student	S
12	Jitka	Bratislava	F	49	businesswoman	M
13	Rina	Bratislava	M	27	businessman	S
14	Nicole	Bratislava	F	21	student	S
15	Michael	Bratislava	M	28	grad student	M
16	Pavla	Bratislava	F	17	student	S

1) Names have been changed in order to preserve informants' privacy.
2) M = married, S = single, D = divorced. (None of the people I interviewed were widowed.)

Table 2: Informants' Voucher Investment

ID #	Sex	Household members who purchased vouchers	Notes
01	F	None	
02	M	Informant and wife	Both invested in business related to informant's electronics firm.
03	M	Informant	Invested in power plant. Expects good return.
04	M	Informant and wife	Decided together how to invest.
05	M	Informant	Invested with investment company. Lost everything in first round. Says he learned from that and will participate in next round. "I hope I get lucky."
06	F	Mother	Invested with an investment company; lost everything when it went bankrupt. Does not plan to invest again.
07	F	None	
08	F	No data	
09	M	Informant	Uncertain of value of investment. "You just had to hope to get lucky."
10	F	No data	
11	F	Mother and father	Informant did not know how they invested.
12	F	Informant did not invest; husband did.	"I don't believe in them... I don't know what he did with them. Maybe someday they'll be for my son, if they have any value."
13	M	None	Ineligible due to immigration status.
14	F	No data	
15	M	Informant and wife	Wife works for investment company, which they invested with. "I let her worry about it."
16	F	None	"My parents don't have much money for things."

Table 3: Informants' Housing

ID#	Sex	Type[1]	# of rooms	Owner	Residents	Price[2]	How acquired
•01	F	A	4	Rented from city	Informant, mother	810 kcs/month	Pooled former apartment of both mother and ex-husband to get a larger apartment to share
•01		A	1	Rented from city	Art studio & tourist rental	600 kcs/month	Rented in own name after divorce
02	M	P	4	Informant and wife	Informant, wife, daughter	840,000 kcs	Had bought into cooperative building in mid-1980s; privatized in 1993
03	M	A	5	Rented from city	Informant, parents	1120 kcs/ month	Parents have rented for many years
•04	M	P	2	Wife	Informant, wife, daughter	28,000 kcs	Privatized apartment that had been rented in wife's name
•04		A	4	Rented from city	Sublet to tenants	700 kcs/ month (Sublets for 1,250 kcs)	Informant has been renting for six months and subletting to tenant for extra income
05	M	A	2	Rented from city	Informant, roomate	1,020 kcs/month	Roomate had been renting
06	F	A	3	Rented from town	Informant, mother	700 kcs	Have had apartment for 15 or more years, after being on waiting list for over a year
07	F	H	4	Father	Informant, parents	Own outright	Informant's father inherited from his father, divided large house and sold half to neighbor
08	F	H	7	Father	Informant, parents, brother	Own outright	Informant's father inherited from his parents and rebuilt
09	M	A	3	Rented from city	Informant, roomate	1,200 sk/month	Have been renting for about 1 year
10	F	C	4	Joint	Informant, husband	1,200 sk/month	Bought into cooperative many years ago
11	F	C	5	Parents	Informant, parents	1,600 sk/month	Bought into cooperative apartment many years ago
12	F	H	6	Husband	Informant, husband, son	800,000 sk	Sold house husband inherited from parents and bought new house
13	M	H	8	Informant	Informant	500,000 sk	Purchased. House is being renovated to use as small "bed-and-breakfast"
14	F	A	2	Rented from city	Informant, roomate	1,700 sk/month	Rented recently with roomate; no wating list
15	M	A	2	Rented from city	Informant, wife	1,200 sk/month	Rented recently
16	F	A	4	Rented from city	Informant, parents, sister	1,400 sk/ month	Have been renting for many years

• indicates that informant (or co-residents) have more than one property.
1) "Type" refers to a rented apartment (A), separate house (H), cooperative apartment (C), or privatized apartment (P).
2) For an apartment, rent per month is given; for a house or privatized apartment, purchase price is given; for a non-privatized cooperative apartment, monthly fee is given. All figures are in either Czech (kcs) or Slovak (sk) crowns. (At time of research, $1.00 U.S.=28 kcs=30 sk.)