
Two Logics, One Life

[The revolution] seemed so strange to me. . . . All of a sudden there was a “Hrrr,” and that was it!

—DÁŠA, Czech factory worker

IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO understand the meaning of the free market in the present for Czech female managers and factory workers without some understanding of the past that the Velvet Revolution disrupted. For Dáša, the Velvet Revolution was figuratively like a loud roar, suddenly and unexpectedly disrupting the hush around state socialism. Indeed, while political dissidents existed in socialist Czechoslovakia, no organized opposition existed, as had been the case in some other Communist Party–ruled states. And, while the Communist Party in several of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) had loosened up its political and economic reins in the 1970s and 1980s, the Czechoslovak Communist Party had maintained its tight hold. In retrospect, 1989 represented a major turning point not only for Czechs but for the whole of the CEE area. In 1989, the hush was broken in Czechoslovakia. This interruption, while shocking to Czechs, was not, however, unique. The sounds of revolution reverberated across the region.

In February 1989, Poland’s communist leadership had entered into talks with the opposition, known as Solidarity. By April, the Polish Roundtable Agreement ushered in major changes in the country’s political power structure. The agreement opened the door to democracy in Poland with a noncommunist government sworn into office the following September. A month later, Hungary’s parliament followed suit,

adopting a package of democratic reforms (e.g., free elections, trade union pluralism). On November 9, the Berlin Wall fell in East Germany, and twenty-four hours later, the Bulgarian Politburo forced Todor Zhivkov out as the country's leader, and citizens filled Sofia's streets, demanding further reforms. In Czechoslovakia, what began on November 17, 1989, as a student demonstration commemorating the death of Jan Opletal, a student killed in a 1939 anti-Nazi demonstration, escalated into popular protest for regime reform.

At the outset of the Velvet Revolution, many Czechs failed fully to appreciate its historical magnitude. Most, like Dáša, initially reacted with bewilderment at what they construed as "so strange." Julie, then age twenty-nine, thought that it was a communist "trick" that would be used to justify tighter controls and price increases. Others were reminded of the 1968 Prague Spring,¹ when Czechoslovakia's efforts toward a more humanized socialism led to a Soviet invasion that quashed the country's reform movement. Remembering the "great euphoria" and subsequent "enormous disappointment" of 1968, some Czechs, like then thirty-six-year-old Růžena, reacted with fear, anticipating a similar outcome. Twenty-six-year-old Irena and others who were bolder and more hopeful, rushed out into the streets to join in. Sofia, then in her mid-twenties, recalled the "enormous joy" at "what you didn't believe [could happen] . . . suddenly happening."

For Czech female managers and factory workers as well for Czechs more generally, the Velvet Revolution provoked a range of emotions, including bewilderment, disbelief, fear, and hope. The moment would ultimately prove not only to be filled with strong, conflicting emotions but also to be a defining moment that radically altered their lives' logic. The socialist state's revolutionary ideas about gender and class had heavily influenced the script of their lives prior to 1989, yielding a common plot. In this chapter, I outline the ideological and practical facets of this socialist script. I pay special attention to the importance of manufacturing in the Czechoslovak socialist state's quest to industrialize its economy and to proletarianize its citizenry, particularly women. The

1. This was a period of economic, political, and cultural reform between January and August 1968. Economic reforms "involved a partial move towards the market with a greater role for profits as an indicator for success, a convertible currency and much larger wage differentials" (White 2001:32). Political restructuring entailed a democratizing of Communist Party activities. At the same time, the relaxation of "ideological barriers" rejuvenated cultural life (Pokorný 1994:34).

ongoing importance of manufacturing and its postsocialist restructuring—a microcosm of the country’s macroeconomic reform course—are used to justify my focus on its female labor force. I conclude with a discussion of my own methodological laboring in gathering and retelling stories, public and personal, told in the wake of the roar that brought socialism crashing down and capitalism rushing in.

Equality Enforced

All of the seventy-four Czech female managers and factory workers whose postsocialist lives take center stage in this book were born between 1944 and 1965.² With the Communist Party’s assumption of power in 1948, their childhoods took place against a socialist backdrop. Before assuming the work-family juggling act, nearly all of these women watched their mothers and in many instances their grandmothers couple domestic duties with full-time jobs. Indeed, between 1948 and 1988, female labor force participation as a percentage of Czechoslovakia’s total active population increased from 37.8 percent to 47.3 percent (Kroupová 1991).³ The proportion of working-age women employed in Czechoslovakia rose from 53.1 percent in 1950 to 62.1 percent in 1985 (Fong and Paull 1993).⁴ By the mid-1980s, Czechoslovakia had among the highest rates of female labor activity in the world. Why? In part, the Czechoslovak state mobilized female labor to meet one of socialism’s preconditions, an industrialized economy. Faced with the depletion of the male workforce as a result of World War II and low labor productivity, the socialist state turned to women to meet its labor needs. This was not the only factor pulling women into the labor force, however. A

2. The only exception is Štepanka2, who was born in the early 1980s. She is included only because she attended (and participated in, although in quite limited fashion) a focus group at her factory along with her mother, Štepanka, and several of her coworkers.

3. The accuracy of statistical data collected during the socialist era must be viewed with some caution. It was at times distorted, with certain findings either exaggerated or downplayed. This manipulation served various sometimes competing interests—that is, not only the state’s interest in self-preservation but also those of individuals. For a fascinating discussion of information management in “Bolshevik-type party states,” see Szokolczai and Horváth 1991.

4. “Working age” includes those between sixteen and sixty-four.

far more complex process was at play involving the socialist state's ideological commitment to social justice in which women's emancipation was critically implicated. This commitment was most explicit in the 1948 Czechoslovak Constitution in which Chapter 1, Article 1, stated "Men and women have the same position in family and in society and the same access to education and to all positions, offices and ranks."

In all of the socialist states, Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) constituted official doctrine regarding the origins and remedies of women's subordination. Many of Engels's ideas about women's status originated with Karl Marx. After Marx's death, Engels put these ideas on paper (Scott 1974:32). While other ideologues such as August Bebel, Vladimir Lenin, and Josef Stalin also weighed in on the "woman question," none had as great an influence on the socialist states as did Engels. The core argument of *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State* linked women's subordination to three causes founded in industrial capitalism: women's limited or complete lack of property ownership, their material dependence on men, and the confinement of their labor to the home. Having established the reasons for women's oppression, Engels set out the means necessary to emancipate women:

The emancipation of women will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large social scale and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of time. And only now does that become possible through modern large-scale industry which does not merely permit the employment of female labor over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends toward ending private labor by changing more and more into a public industry. ([1884] 1972:221)

Put more simply, the elimination of private ownership, the incorporation of women into wage labor, and the socialization of domestic work constituted the three criteria for women's emancipation.

In Czechoslovakia, as well as across the CEE region, Engels's first criterion—the abolition of private property—was accomplished as socialist states lay claim to most privately owned property. Doing so entailed nationalizing industry, collectivizing agriculture, and instituting "directive economic management" (Porket 1981:243). This effort represented a step not only toward gender equality but also toward

Marx's vision of a classless society. However, common ownership and political rule—that is, by the people—were deemed the real bases for classlessness. As Paul Kubicek notes, “The party-state, despite its pretensions to the contrary, was not ‘by, for, and of’ the workers” (2004:22). The Czechoslovak Communist Party, like others across the CEE region, became a self-serving new class that enjoyed many privileges denied to ordinary citizens, such as traveling abroad and access to foreign goods (Djilas 1957). Socialist states generally condemned the accumulation of personal wealth, which was seen as accentuating class difference; instead, they placed much of their ideological and practical emphases on the building up of societal wealth. Toward this end, the Czechoslovak Communist Party prioritized heavy industry. Manufacturing, especially heavy manufacturing, achieved particular primacy in Czechoslovakia as a consequence of its “assigned” role as a “manufacturing economy” in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (more commonly known as COMECON or CMEA) among Eastern Bloc states (United Nations Industrial Development Organization 1992:xxi). Consequently, Czechoslovak manufacturing took on massive proportions in terms of both labor inputs and material outputs. This drive to expand industrially compelled the state to look for alternative and available laborers—women.

The integration of women into production—conveniently, Engels's second criterion for women's emancipation—was accomplished using three main strategies. The first strategy involved eliminating the family wage, making two incomes necessary for family survival. Recalling this dynamic in socialist Czechoslovakia, Emilie commented, “Women worked because we had to work, because a man's wages weren't enough.” This did not, however, mean comparable compensation. Women typically earned on average nearly one-third less than their male counterparts, even when they held the same job. But the socialist state's egalitarian class philosophy generally meant little wage discrepancy between employed citizens overall. The prevailing wage differentiation favored manual over nonmanual laborers. These “premiums for brawn rather than brain” largely reflected the Czechoslovak Communist Party's proworker pretensions (Scott 1974:121).

The second tactic entailed linking social benefits and protections to employment. As Marie recollected, Czechoslovak socialism provided various nonmonetary “social advantages” to employment, including a monthly voucher for a haircut, summer camp subsidies for her child,

and a free liter of milk every day. Employment could also offer more substantial benefits, such as housing, which was frequently distributed through enterprises. This particular incentive should not be underestimated, given the housing crunch that typified socialist Czechoslovakia. According to a 1963 survey by the Czechoslovak State Population Commission, the housing shortage would force 60 percent of the 1,866 young urban couples who had applied for marriage licenses to reside with one set of parents immediately after marriage, while another 20 percent would have to continue to live apart for as long as several years (Scott 1974:107). Criminalizing unemployment constituted the final stratagem. Magda explained that abdication of one's "responsibility" to work was deemed "parasitism," a crime for which "one was locked up."

For the socialist state, drawing women into the labor force necessitated enhancing women's educational prospects. As a whole, Czechoslovaks were a remarkably literate people. During the mid-1950 and early 1960s, illiteracy hovered around 23.5 percent in Yugoslavia and 11.4 percent in Romania but amounted to only 1 percent of the Czechoslovak population (cited in Wolchik 1978:22). Differences between male and female literacy rates were negligible in socialist Czechoslovakia, but substantial disparities prevailed between men's and women's choice of fields. Female students tended to end up in nontechnical fields such as education and the humanities; males inclined toward technical areas such as agriculture and engineering. This gendered separation in educational paths eventually translated into gendered segregation in the labor market.

The Czechoslovak state generated far more mixed accomplishments with respect to Engels's third condition, the socialization of domestic work. The state developed and improved services (e.g., public laundries, public day care) to facilitate women's labor force participation. For example, the number of day nursery spaces increased nearly sixfold between 1948 and 1953 and then tripled again by 1979.⁵ However, while promoting the "New Socialist Woman," the Czechoslovak state simultaneously and somewhat schizophrenically promoted motherhood through an array of social policies designed to allow and encourage women to fulfill their "natural" role as mothers. As previously mentioned, women were eligible for twenty-eight weeks of maternity leave, during which they received 90 percent of their net wages. At no point

5. Day nurseries cared for children between six months and three years of age.

did the Czechoslovak socialist state ever call for a more equitable division of domestic labor. The “private labor” of which Engels wrote only partially became “public industry”; the rest remained primarily women’s responsibility. In the mid-1960s, estimates showed that Czechoslovak women spent an average of approximately 40.7 hours per week on household chores, while men spent only about 15.1 hours per week on such tasks (United Nations 1991). While the Czechoslovak socialist state made women’s participation in production mandatory, it ultimately failed to fully meet Engels’s third condition. The demands placed on women for reproductive labor,⁶ far in excess of their male counterparts, very likely rendered them less competitive and, for some, perhaps less wanting in the productive arena and thus may account for some of the gendered stratification as well as segregation in the labor market. One interesting example of these gender-skewed outcomes emerged in pediatrics. Although the field was 79 percent female in 1989, women occupied only 22 percent of the leadership posts in this branch of the medical field (Šiklová 1994). As Hilda Scott noted, CEE employers saw women as unreliable employees who “if they were not out on maternity leave or home with a sick child, were off somewhere standing in a queue” for basic foodstuffs (1978:192).

Yet another factor shaping the trajectory of women’s lives under socialism in Czechoslovakia was their association with the Communist Party. Parents’ party membership influenced children’s educational possibilities. Eliška wanted to go to “hotel school,” but because neither of her parents was a party member, she was refused admission to the school despite her good grades. Lucie described a similar scenario. Despite being at the top of her class at age fourteen, she got no further than a secondary school specializing in training students to work in the dairy industry because her parents were not members of the Communist Party. While having a parent in the party was advantageous, it did not necessarily open wide education’s doors for a child. As Líza recalled, her father joined the party for the sake of his children’s education, but “it didn’t have any influence on me because I didn’t have such good grades in school.”

Party membership could also help adults gain access to certain resources, such as housing. For example, Dáša, her husband, and their

6. “Reproductive labor” refers to those activities implicated in the upkeep of a household on a daily basis.

child spent three years sharing a two-bedroom apartment with seven other family members. Her husband's firm encouraged him to join the party to get a one-bedroom apartment. Olivie's employer made her advancement to management conditional on her Communist Party enlistment. She refused and consequently remained on the factory floor as a worker. With resource accessibility tied to party affiliation, membership became more about resource acquisition than about ideological allegiance.

In its ideology, the Czechoslovak socialist state was a gendered and class emancipatory project. In practice, only pseudo-emancipation was possible. As Jacqui True rightly observed, "The gender regime that emerged under socialism . . . effectively homogenized women's lives and distinguished them from men's" (2003:30).⁷ At the same time, the Czechoslovak Communist Party's expropriation of virtually all private property and its leveling of incomes worked to quell class differences in the broader populace, but its economic heavy-handedness accentuated class differences between the party and the broader populace. Simultaneously and paradoxically, the socialist state played down and up gender and class differences.

Life under state socialism for Czech women, according to Emilie, ultimately was "not some great favor." For the generation of women on whom this book focuses, life under state socialism was demanding, with few possibilities. All were employed, most full time, as were their spouses. For many, association with the Communist Party played a role in determining their educational paths and subsequently their employers and the nature of their employment. Work contracts were often life-long, and job mobility was by and large quite limited. Because travel outside of the Communist bloc countries was seldom allowed, they were further confined to a life behind the Iron Curtain. Czechs frequently relied on Čedok, the state-owned travel bureau, to organize their travels—a trip to the Black Sea beaches or a ski week in the Tatra Mountains were typical holiday offerings. The majority married young—in their early twenties—and gave birth to their first child shortly after.

As mentioned earlier, most married couples had to wait as long as several years to procure an apartment from the state or their employer.

7. For further elaboration on how the socialist state simultaneously accentuated and downplayed gender differences, see Fodor 2002.

In the interim, they resided in tight quarters with extended family. The allocation of housing often coincided with the birth of a second child. Accommodations were often provided on Prague's outskirts in one of the many housing estates known as *panelák*, "high-rise multi-story blocks of flats constructed of pre-fabricated, pre-stressed concrete panels" (Hanley 1999). These small, nondescript flats became do-it-yourself projects for most Czechs, whose "key impulse" was "to create their own private worlds" (Hanley 1999). Beginning in 1973, the state provided young couples with low-interest "newlywed loans" of up to thirty thousand crowns that enabled people to purchase furnishings for their new abodes.⁸ However, the Czechoslovak socialist state, focused on economic growth via rapid industrialization, did not prioritize consumer goods, so, despite Czechs' efforts to individualize their homes, a largely unavoidable uniformity of household items prevailed. More generally, the socialist state's compression of wage differences coupled with its orientation toward industrial rather than consumer goods meant that Czechs could purchase few items beyond their basic needs. Nonetheless, Czechs tried to satisfy their unmet material wants and to distinguish themselves from one another. In Dáša's perception, the CEE countries were "gray" and the "West" was "colorful." To brighten up their lives, some Czechs bought smuggled goods or used their social networks to procure items of limited availability. Many traveled across intra-CEE borders to obtain better-quality goods, often at substantially lower prices. According to Háta, Lipska in Poland and Dresden in East Germany were popular destinations to which Czechs drove to buy children's clothing and shoes. Some Czechs procured raw materials—sometimes bought, on other occasions stolen, typically from an employer—and produced items themselves. Háta and her husband, for example, used their newlywed loan to purchase a sewing machine (among other household goods), and Háta taught herself to sew so that she could make her own clothes.

At that time, the patterns were available in a German magazine, in a magazine for women. . . . This magazine was available from only one store in Prague. On the day the magazine came out, there was a line all day. It was about three hundred meters long on Jungman-

8. At the time of its introduction, this sum was more than ten times the average monthly wage (Kantorová 2004)

nová Street, four people deep. . . . Sometimes the police intervened [because the customers] would scream about who was there first and who had shoved in front of who.

For each child they bore, Czech couples also received a monthly monetary sum from the state to aid with child-rearing costs. During the final two decades of Czechoslovak state socialism, this “child benefit” totaled one-third of the average monthly wage for a family with three children (Kantorová 2004:63). The birth of each child canceled out part of the newlywed loan—two thousand crowns for the first child and four thousand crowns for each subsequent child (Kantorová 2004). Josephina characterized life under state socialism as “comfortable,” requiring little thought because “everything was given.” In Sabina’s view, having few choices made life “simpler.” With so much specified by the socialist state, many Czechs had predictable lives. In the constraining climate of Communist Party rule, little was left to the imagination; Czechs understood that the logic of their lives depended little on their own agency. Life, as Josephina put it, was about “necessity” (what one was compelled to do) rather than opportunity (what one chose to do or was able to do).

Socialist states worked hard to cultivate work as the “basic unit” of individuals’ lives (Ashwin 1999). Around this state-structured social reality, individuals configured the other areas of their private lives. For women, family was the remaining realm. Thus, family marked their youthful reveries. Both Elena and Máša recalled that as adolescents, they wanted nothing more than the “comforts of a home”—a “good man” and “children.” As Julie explained, she and the other members of her cohort had little else to ponder.⁹ Imagining a vibrant picture of the future proved difficult with so few colors on the palate. Since a husband and children were among the few gratifications available, few women chose to delay marriage—in Eliška’s words, women were in a “headlong rush to get married, have children.” Waiting, she and others contended,

9. The Prague Spring briefly invigorated the imaginations of those coming of age in the mid-1960s. For example, forty-six-year-old factory worker Růžena reminisced about her teenage dream of being a professional musician but acknowledged, “around ’68 it was a little freer. . . . I thought perhaps I will go somewhere and look around, perhaps even abroad because our school had a friendship with a school in Dijon [in France].” But with the 1968 Soviet invasion, “everything was different, and the borders were closed.”

did not occur to them. In a world in which the socialist state abrogated so much, family was a sacred preserve. Here, Czechs strove to curb the profane state's incursion into their lives. The Czechoslovak socialist state was like a domineering paternal figure, forever trying to compel its "children" to behave; these children resented their overbearing "father's" dictatorial style (Verdery 1994). Indeed, this dynamic fostered an unrelenting antagonism between Czechs and their communist system that largely, albeit inadvertently, supplanted gender and class tensions.

The Primacy of Industrialization and Proletarianization

The generation of women to which these seventy-four Czech female managers and factory workers belong faced an extraordinary circumstance, unlike both the preceding and succeeding generations. In mid-adulthood, the political and economic regime that ordered their lives was overturned, opening up social cleavages that the Czechoslovak socialist state had long tried to quell. This book focuses on women employed in manufacturing because of its tremendous economic importance both before and after 1989. As table 1 shows, the manufacturing industry as an employer, both of women and men, has historically and contemporarily far outstripped all other industries. By the mid-1980s, manufacturing employed an estimated 799,650 women (32.7 percent of all employed women). During the 1990s, economic restructuring resulted in some fluctuation of manufacturing's labor inputs, but not enough to threaten its stature as the country's leading employer. Many enterprises, in the throes of contraction or collapse, laid off laborers; some firms—mainly startups and those undergoing expansion—hired labor. According to an International Labor Organization study on women's employment in the CEE countries, between 1990 and 1993, 46.6 percent of Czechoslovak manufacturing firms decreased their female workforce, while 18.7 percent increased their female workforce (Paukert 1995:62). As table 1 illustrates, the overall result was a reduction of manufacturing's labor pool, with a more pronounced decline for women than for men. Despite these substantial decreases, manufacturing has remained the largest employer of men and women in the Czech lands.

A correct accounting of the sector's material output of the manu-

facturing sector under state socialism proves more difficult to ascertain. Elizabeth Dunn explains that socialist accounting systems were “notoriously unreliable . . . the result of intense social negotiations, interpersonal relationships, and political pressures rather than depersonalized representations of actual transactions” (2004:42).¹⁰ Nevertheless, there

TABLE 1. Employment by Industry in the Czech Lands (in thousands of persons)

	1985		1993		1999	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Industry	846.5	1,245.9	628.3	1,036.1	569.4	945.6
<i>Manufacturing Only</i>	799.7 (32.7%)	1,025 (36%)	587.3 (27.8%)	883.7 (33.3%)	535.8 (25.3%)	839 (32%)
Agriculture, Hunting, and Forestry	249.9	374.7	116.4	208.2	71.8	149.4
Fishing	.5	1.8	.4	1.5	.4	1.6
Construction	57.5	346.4	52	394.4	41.7	353.7
Wholesale and Retail Trade	354.8	147.2	358.5	253.4	363.1	349.9
Hotels and Restaurants	60	29.3	63.5	49.2	88.6	71.2
Transport, Storage, and Communication	118.8	229.6	120.7	236.5	114.2	233.1
Financial Intermediation	18.2	5.9	49.7	19.4	57.4	30.1
Real Estate, Renting, and Business Activities	169.5	202.9	132	172.7	182.9	216.4
Public Administration and Defense	50.8	37	84.5	56.9	107.9	76.2
Education	207.7	80.7	240.3	82.4	228.1	77.9
Health and Social Work	210.5	51.5	203	58.1	213.7	54.5
Other Community, Social, and Personal Service Activities	101.7	95.5	67	88.3	75.8	69
Total	2,446.4	2,848.1	2,116.3	2,657.6	2,110.5	2,628.6

Source: Data from Czech Statistical Office 2002b.

Note: The Czech Lands include Bohemia and Moravia.

10. According to Dunn, socialist accounting systems were “designed for the convenience of state planners, not for enterprise managers, investors, or regulators. They produced a different kind of knowledge, which was used for a different kind of corporate discipline. Because soft budget constraints made it unnecessary to control costs or worry about profits, many enterprises used ‘net accounting.’ That is, they reported only the final results of their budgetary cycles—increases or decreases in inventories, finished goods, and work in progress. Data was often reported in national units (e.g., jars of jam) rather than in monetary value, because central planners were more concerned with allocating material resources . . . than in how much profit a company was making” (2004:41–42).

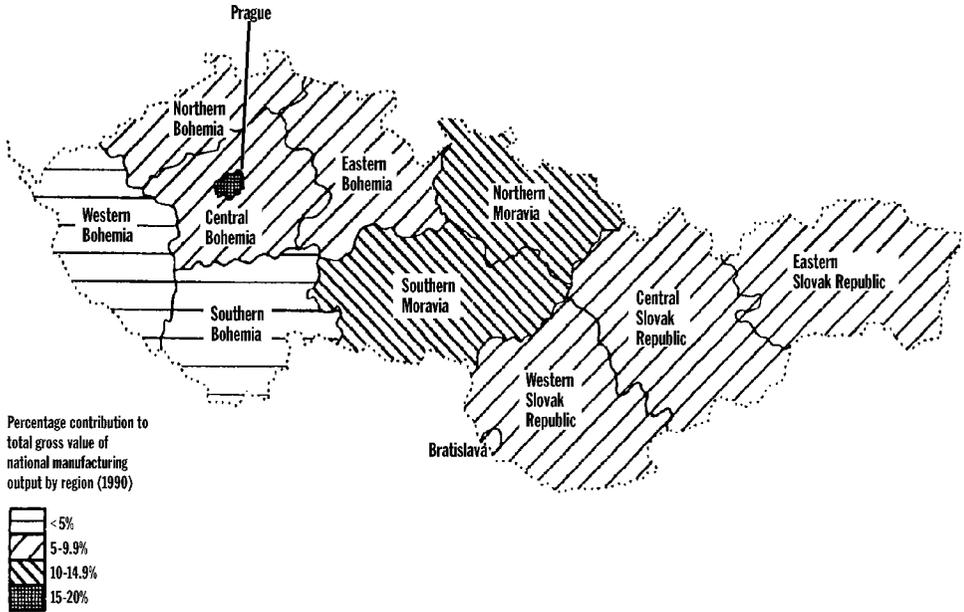
is little question that the manufacturing sector's material output was quite considerable—somewhere around 50 percent of all material outputs (United Nations Industrial Development Organization 1992). Under state socialism, central planning meant the “elimination of competition between firms in an open marketplace” (Dunn 2004:15). State-owned and -run enterprises did not concern themselves with creating a profitable product.

The scarcity of raw materials meant that manufacturers competed with each other not for buyers but for suppliers so that they could meet their “plan” (Dunn 2004; Kornai 1980, 1992; Verdery 1996). Effectively, quantity rather than quality was of central concern. Since 1989, the constraints on production have dramatically shifted. CEE manufacturers must now play a global game with capitalist rules. Winning over buyers now determines survival, and wooing these consumers rests heavily on product quality. Largely as a result of this transposed emphasis, manufacturing's material outputs have shrunk. Nonetheless, manufacturing still makes up the largest share—more than one-third—of the Czech Republic's economic activity.¹¹ Regionally, as figure 1 illustrates, the greatest contribution to manufacturing's outputs has historically come from Prague.

Aside from the sheer volume of workers and goods that the manufacturing sector pulls in and puts out, respectively, this sector constitutes a smaller-scale version of the wider spectrum of economic transformations incurred in the Czech Republic's move toward the market. In manufacturing, what were once all state-owned firms are now of mixed private ownership—many Czech, others foreign, some a combination of the two. Many are downsized pieces of formerly socialist—unwieldy and inefficient—larger enterprises. Furthermore, some aspects of entrepreneurialism and foreign investment that were forbidden under Czechoslovak state socialism are now permitted, resulting in some new manufacturing enterprises—again, many Czech, some foreign. These joint ventures, multinational buyouts, and startups blur the boundaries of (socialist and postsocialist) time and (national and international) space. The tidiness of public ownership is gone, replaced by an untidy array of private ownership arrangements. Nonetheless, all share the same goal of economic viability in the new market economy, and

11. For exact figures, see the Czech Statistical Office 1994, 1999, 2002a, available online at <http://www.czso.cz>.

FIG. 1. Industrial map of Czechoslovakia.



(From United Nations Industrial Development Organization 1992.)

achieving this end now necessitates conforming to a capitalist rather than socialist mode of production.

The Czech economy—and more specifically, manufacturing—has pushed (out) and pulled (in) Czechs, requiring the shedding of excess labor and the introduction of new, decentralized management. In the new market economy, factory workers have exceeded their demand; in contrast, managers are in short supply. At the same time, the state has released much of its regulatory grip on wages, resulting in new valuations of labor. In manufacturing, consequently, wages for factory workers have stagnated or fallen, while managers enjoy high salaries. Without the socialist state to counteract class divisions via wage controls, a new socioeconomic chasm has opened up among Czechs. The gap prevailing between factory workers and managers is but one example of such rifts. Significantly, the seventy-four women in this book are all acutely aware of this socioeconomic schism. As Josephina, now a manager, stated, before 1989, “we were all equal; now we’re no longer all equal.” In Hátá’s recollection, “a wide, distinct middle class existed

which reached across practically the entire spectrum. Only a small margin were a very rich class, people who had access to and the possibility of everything. And then [there was] a very small class of people who really happened to be somewhere at the bottom.” In her perception, this has changed since the revolution: “The middle class is getting smaller and smaller—it’s narrowing—and the spectrum at the margins is expanding.” The result, in her terms, is a “polarized” society. Many people find these differences unsettling. According to Heda, they are “awfully visible.”

Methodological Labor: Gathering and Retelling Stories

For forty years, the Czechoslovak Communist Party variably harnessed and subdued gender and class disparities. In 1989, it released its reins, turning them over to the market. Czechs have exchanged the givens of a coercive and controlling socialist state for *laissez-faire* capitalism. The market is now Czechs’ supposed liberator. In ideological terms, this is a liberation for all—an unbiased freedom. In practical terms, haves and have-nots prevail. For women, this surfacing of socioeconomic difference has washed away the socialist semblance of sameness, producing one of economic transition’s immediate and most visible trade-offs. This book focuses on the market’s meaning for women—twenty-six managers and forty-eight factory workers—scattered across manufacturing’s topography. For these two cohorts and certainly for many others throughout the CEE region, the socialist economic logic of their lives was unexpectedly dislodged and replaced with a new capitalist order. Their roles as workers, citizens, wives/partners, and mothers have taken shape in the confines not of one world but of two—one socialist, the other capitalist.

What does this economic reordering mean to these seventy-four women? In this exploration of the role of market in the everyday work and family lives of Czech female managers and factory workers, my data come from four key sources. First, Czech mass media serve as the basis for gleaning the structure of the market metanarrative. I rely primarily on newspaper articles, speeches by and interviews with political elites, radio and television programs, and books written by political elites pertaining to the country’s economic reform. All of these documents were written or produced between 1990 and 2000. The newspaper articles

were pulled primarily from four of the six major news dailies of popular consumption in Prague during randomly selected months over the 1990s—*Mladá fronta DNES*, *Lidové noviny*, *Právo*, and *Svobodné slovo*.¹² Second (and third), I draw on the personal narratives of Czech female managers and female factory workers, conveyed through focus groups and interviews conducted between September 1999 and October 2000, about the impact of marketization on their day-to-day lives. Fourth, I draw implicitly on nineteen interviews I conducted with an array of individuals—labor union representatives, government ministry officials, academics—who helped me to understand the broader structural landscape of Czech female managers' and factory workers' post-socialist lives.¹³

I interviewed twenty-six Czech female managers and conducted eight focus groups and nineteen interviews with female factory workers.¹⁴ Virtually all were between thirty-five and fifty-five years of age, a generation required to adapt to new economic conditions over the course of their working lives (see the appendix for sample demographics). I recruited most of these individuals by calling companies. In addition, several managers I interviewed referred me to others. Managers were easy to contact directly via phone or e-mail. Gaining access to factory workers proved to be a more complicated undertaking that involved gaining the trust of their gatekeepers (e.g., factory supervisors, labor union representatives). I most easily accomplished this task with a phone call or an e-mail followed up by a fairly brief face-to-face meeting with a gatekeeper. Sometimes the mere sight of me proved sufficient. In one factory, for example, all I needed was a quick handshake with a supervisor in the factory's entryway. In another instance, the human resource manager required a detailed explanation of my project. In one factory, at the close of my first meeting with a manager and without my solicitation, she volunteered contact with the workers.

I conducted most interviews with managers in their offices, more formal-feeling spaces saturated with work. This formality pervaded managers' demeanor at first, but as interviews progressed, so too did

12. *Hospodarské noviny* was not included because it is an economic daily; its readers are primarily entrepreneurs, diplomats, civil servants, and academics. *Blesk* was ruled out because of its tabloid status.

13. A native Czech speaker assisted me during all interviews with "experts."

14. A native Czech speaker transcribed all interviews, which I then coded using ATLAS-ti software.

their affability. My initial encounter with workers took place within the confines of a focus group held at their job site—at their or the factory’s behest. The presence of coworkers provided an ease to their dialogue. These focus groups seemed to encourage an informality that later spilled over into their interviews. I interviewed most workers in their homes, a more informal realm filled with the markers of family.

Amid the interruptions of phones, faxes, coworkers, spouses, and/or children, I questioned these women about their work and family lives since the Velvet Revolution.¹⁵ I posed an array of open-ended queries and probes about their pre-1989 recollections of work and family, memories of the Velvet Revolution, post-1989 expectations, work history, work motivations, desire and ability to change jobs, experiences with firm privatization, employer/state/family supports, state policy, household labor, adolescent hopes and dreams, perceptions of women’s versus men’s advantages and disadvantages, and hopes for and concerns about the future. These seventy-four women created a storied order to their lives, making sense of themselves. For some, their story unfolded in fits and starts. A few related their tale as though in a mad dash, putting my Czech to the test as I struggled to keep up. Others were more paced in their telling. Voicing their storied selves kindled not only their thoughts but their emotions. No single emotion marked a story; instead, there were many. These emotions flitted across their faces and at times inundated their bodies. For most of these women and certainly for me, this sharing of self was inescapably intimate.

We met for one to three hours on multiple occasions. For managers, this meant two individual interviews. Factory workers began their narratives in a focus group made up of their coworkers. From the larger pool of forty-eight focus group participants, I conducted individual interviews with nineteen women. I interviewed a few only once but met with most twice. In interviews, most hospitably offered up a *káva* (coffee) or *voda* (water). Many indulged me with a sweet, most often a *sušenka* (cookie) but on some occasions a slice of a Czech *dort* (cake) featuring poppy seeds or fruit. With focus groups, however, I offered the beverages and an assortment of *chlebičky* (open-faced sandwiches), a popular Czech snack.

I think most of the women found me, a Czech-speaking American,

15. During focus groups, a native Czech speaker assisted me by acting as a moderator.

novel. Very often, their first question was about my language skills. Most assumed that I had some Czech background and were surprised to discover I had none. The women occasionally inquired about my life. Managers, most of whom had university degrees, asked about my studies. I answered all of their questions simply and directly.

The next three chapters present a collection of stories articulated internationally and nationally, publicly and personally. The first is a metastory about the market that I am merely retelling by drawing on various mass media from the 1990s. The remaining two stories are mergers of the individual narratives of female managers and factory workers, respectively—that is, their collective stories, articulated ten years after the collapse of Communist Party rule. The managers told their stories to me; the factory workers began telling their stories together and finished them individually. Over countless hours, these seventy-four Czech managers and factory workers shared with me their storied selves. In my retelling of these three stories, I reveal their construction, context, and connectedness.