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The Emancipation of Women, the First World War and the Czechoslovak National Revolution of 1918/1919

PhD. Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the enfranchisement of women during the Czechoslovak national revolution of 1918/1919, a topic that has so far remained little researched. It explores most important contexts and conditions which framed the process. These are the Czech, Austrian and international female suffrage movements, the mutual relations of the Czech women's emancipation movement with political parties, including the progressive incorporation of women's rights and agendas in party programmes, and the profound impacts of the First World War on gender relations both in private and public spheres.

This paper defends the following theses. 1) The women's protest movement, which demanded peace, justice and national self-determination and also called for female suffrage and the equality of women, formed a specific aspect of the social protest movement and the Czechoslovak national revolution of 1918/1919. Through the protest, Czech women's activists and suffragists took a part in the factual enfranchisement of women during the national revolution. 2) The active involvement of Czech female activists in the revolutionary events was enabled by the well-developed pre-war emancipation movement in the western part of the Austrian empire. This emancipation movement was able to influence a significant percentage of Czech politicians and make them declare the support for emancipation of women understood as a national cause. 3) The agents who put through the legal equality of women in the Czechoslovak Revolutionary National Assembly were socialist political parties. A key role was played the Czech (Czechoslovak) socialist party (national socialists and anarcho-communists), joined by the Czech suffragists' leader Františka Plamínková.