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## International Women's Day and its role in the consolidation of the female socialist worker's movement in Moravia before 1914<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

During the last years before WWI the gender strategy of Moravian socialists started to follow the concept of new socialist woman. This effort was realized in several specific measures, first of all the introduction of International Women's Day, the re-establishment of women's party conferences and establishment of women's political organizations. The new holiday helped revive the fading working-women's socialist movement in Moravia during the years before WWI. It became an effective tool which helped both competing socialist parties – autonomists and centralists – to keep pace with growing competition of women's interest associations of Catholics and The People's Progressive Party. Thanks to the revival of women's suffrage demands the Social Democracy could partly present itself as a protesting party again. The introduction of International Women's Day led to the consolidation of disrupted women's campaigning centres and partly also to spreading to new regions. However, the new holiday did not solve all the problems. Just as in previous years, especially women from the countryside remained resistant to socialist activities, due both to the lasting gender prejudices within their own party and the different political orientation of potential sympathisers.

**Key words:** Moravia, women, Social Democracy, gender equality, 1911–1914.

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## Introduction

This paper focuses on the analysis of how the gender practice of the Czech Social Democrats changed in Moravia and the introduction of its most manifest aspect – International Women’s Day – before WWI. In general, the Social Democrats presented themselves as a pro-emancipation political group which promoted the political and civil rights of both men and women and practising gender correct internal policy. However, a number of publications proved that the position of women within the socialistic structures was goal-directed. The numbers and positions of women in the structures were both deliberately regulated, especially after 1910 when the leaders of the Social Democrats throughout Europe commenced the structural changes leading to higher numbers of women in operational committees. Among other gender sensitive measures, the women’s national conferences were introduced.

For the purpose of this paper, I formed a hypothesis that the introduction of International Women’s Day was also a strategic measure to strengthen the female organisation of the party. My aim is to prove that the new holiday became a functional propaganda tool in Moravia, used to mobilize women. As the research of the German female socialistic movement in Moravia has not yet been undertaken, I will concentrate on the local Czech Social Democratic Party. The paper is methodically based on the gender and content analysis, and the period party printed material has been used as a primary source of data.

### 1. The mobilization concepts used by the Social Democrats in Moravia before 1914

The Austrian Social Democratic Party together with other socialistic parties in Cisleithania changed its gender strategy several times before 1914. There were basically two concepts of femininity in practice which complemented each other and which were used during different decades on different occasions.

The first one saw women as suffering creatures. As late as the 1880s, this approach led to the publicizing of cases of sexual abuse and bullying of female workers in factories. Only a small percentage of these old texts provided any positive patterns. This approach presented women as exploited victims of the system, as weak human beings belonging to a household and a family who find the working world “unnatural” (Rovnost 1886, nr 13, pp. 99–103). These were the reasons why the Social

Democrats demanded the limitation of female labour (Musilová 2007: 19). This concept predominated in Czech lands between the 1860s and late 1880s but it played its role also during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example during the period between the election campaigns. Specific characterizations related to the female body were also adopted by socialistic iconography, which in compliance with the above mentioned concept used women to symbolize all suffering creatures but at the same time to symbolize “better world”, universal right, goodness and humanity (Hobsbawm 1978: 124–127). Portraying women in inferior positions therefore acceded to the traditional bourgeois concept of separate spheres.



**Fig. 1. A dream of future work (Ženský list 1908, nr 18, p. 5)**

Rys. 1. Sen o pracy w przyszłości (Ženský list 1908, nr 18, p. 5)

The second, younger concept of “new socialist woman” showed women as heroines, enlightened fighters for civil and political rights for women and the working class, fellow fighters of men, unionists and strike activists (Nečasová 2018: 71). The new approach provided an alternative to the stereotypical view of femininity at the time. This more radical concept appeared in connection with the specific gender campaigning of the Social Democrats at the turn of 1890s, when it was used during the formation of female workers’ clubs and during promotional campaigns. Women’s socialist clubs were presented as

providing “*enlightenment, education, reason and will for women*”. Only by joining these clubs could women emerge from the “darkness” and shed the “old gown of blindness” (Rovnost 1889, nr 2, p. 14). This concept of the new working class women was much more popular before WWI in connection with the change in the gender strategy of socialists.



**Fig. 2. The heading of Ženský list from 1892**

Rys. 2. Winieta czasopisma Ženský list z 1892 r.



**Fig. 3. The heading of Ženský list from 1908**

Rys. 3. Winieta czasopisma Ženský list z 1908 r.

The new woman was portrayed as the most common option – the revolutionary fighter. Although she did not have such physical strength as the worker-socialist man, usually depicted with exaggerated muscles, she compensated it with her enthusiasm (Fasora 2015: 62, 67; Nečasová 2018: 108). The organized working class women defined themselves as “proletarians” which covered all “abused” women working for economic and social equality and political rights. This new socialist woman offered much desired characteristics such as

fighting spirit, determination and diligence which helped her to overcome all obstacles and the period gender stereotypes not only of men but also the bourgeois women (Ženský list 1894, nr 20, pp. 153–154). Unlike the exploited woman, the new working class woman became a part of “workers army”. The socialist discourse highlighted this by using the military terminology: *“You will accept our mutual fate, we will be connected into one unbreakable array of working people, and we will demand the end of the current production system. Together we must destroy every case of injustice, today, even you must fight for our rights, today, even you must strive together with us to stop our children from moaning with hunger.”* (Rovnost 1888, nr 12, pp. 90–91).

Portrayals of both these feminine concepts can be found on the cover pages of Moravian socialistic magazines. The cover page of Ženský list (The Women's Paper) featured a static figure of a mother taking care of several nude children in 1892. The woman was sitting on a globe, holding a palm branch and wearing a richly decorated cloak. Her hand was stroking one of the children while holding a shield with the words “For the Truth and Right”. The cover page of the same magazine in 1908 featured the new socialist woman. Her clothes were simple and did not draw attention from the gesture of the woman who was holding a torch and a hammer and her arms show appropriately strong muscles. Behind the woman fumed smoke and her flying hair implied that she bravely faced all external circumstances. The whole picture gave a very dynamic impression.

Both these concepts are also reflected in badges from the collection of the Moravian Museum. A fearless fighter with a sword can be found on a badge supporting universal suffrage from 1897 where the woman-goddess in an ancient robe represents justice while the simply dressed man with a hammer symbolizes the working class. The fact that both male and female figures are used together evokes working for their mutual goal. The new working class woman is depicted on a badge celebrating the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1913 as an upright flag bearer wearing a simple dress and looking out for the sunny (socialist) future. A different badge, celebrating the same “Labour Day” in 1913, shows the blending of both concepts. It depicts a dejected female figure wearing middle-class clothes and holding a child in her arms. She is accompanied by a careworn man carrying a heavy burden and gazing down. There are smoking factories in the background.



**Fig. 4. Badge „Allg. Gleich. u. Dir. Wahl. Recht, 8-Stunden Tag. Allgem. Wahlen. 1. Mai 1897”**  
*(Universal, equal and straight suffrage. For eight hour working day. Universal elections. 1<sup>st</sup> May 1897)*  
 (Moravian Museum, History department, inv. no. Ao9386)

Rys. 4. Odznaka „Allg. Gleich. u. Dir. Wahl. Recht, 8-Stunden Tag. Allgem. Wahlen. 1. Mai 1897”  
*(Powszechne, równe prawo wyborcze. Dla 8-godzinnego dnia pracy. Wybory powszechne. 1 maja 1897)*  
 (Muzeum Morawskie, Dział Historii, inv. nr. Ao9386)



**Fig. 5. Badge „1. Máj 1913”**  
*1<sup>st</sup> May 1913* (Ibidem, inv. no. Ao9041)

Rys. 5. Odznaka „1. Máj 1913”  
*1 maja 1913* (Ibidem, inv. nr. Ao9041)



**Fig. 6. Badge „Dělníkům ochranu. 1. Máj 1913“ (Protection to workers. 1<sup>st</sup> May 1913) (Ibidem, inv. no. Ao9040)**

Rys. 6. Odznaka „Dělníkům ochranu. 1. Máj 1913“ (Ochrana pracovníků. 1. mája 1913 r.) (Ibidem, inv. nr. Ao9040)

## 2. Women in the Czech Social Democratic Party in Moravia before 1914 – a brief context

Although earlier history books created a notion of female pioneers of the socialist movement (Hauch 2009: 83), this concept showed considerable flaws also in Moravia. Soon after the congress of socialistic parties of Cisleithania in Hainfeld (Lower Austria) at the turn of 1889, the first women's clubs were founded in important centres of the workers' socialist movement connected to areas involved in the textile industry (Brno, Prostějov). However, a greater expansion of women's activities came shortly before the WWI. The gender specific campaign had been promoted since the turn of 1890s which later moved to the pages of the magazine called *Ženský list* (Women's Paper), published in Brno as an official magazine of the Czech Social Democratic Party from 1892. At the same time, first socialist meetings for women were organized not only the two above mentioned centres but also in areas connected to industrial production and shoemaking (Třebíč) or coal mining and engineering (Ostrava, Rosice, Oslavany) (Krutílková 2019b: 51–65; Krutílková 2020a: 162–163). Activities of women in other regions (Hodonín,

Přerov) boomed shortly before 1910 (Krutílková 2019a: 224). The success of female socialist activities was also based on the fact that several important active socialist women were wives or relatives of local party activists. Men-socialists supported them by discussions about the basic socialist theses, promoted gender requirements in “male” workers’ clubs and entrusted women with organizing roles during political campaigns. Reliable and ideologically educated women, most often wives of socialist leaders, were allowed to publish papers in party magazines and speak at public meetings.

Despite the partial success of women’s organizations, the everyday practice of the Moravian social democrats showed gender stereotypes and symptoms of the glass ceiling. The female social clubs, compared to other professional and educational clubs, realized the service activities, mostly in the form of entertainment. They had no entitlement to make decisions and they were not seen as a part of the movement’s core (Krutílková 2020b). Different positions of men and women in the socialist structures led to a crisis within the female workers’ clubs in Brno and Prostějov in 1894–1895, similar to a crisis in Austria. The situation was temporarily calmed by the creation of a campaigning centre called Union of Women and Girls in 1896. One year later, the women’s executive committee was founded in Brno and a land conference for women was organized (Malíř 1996: 182). Nevertheless this platform started to suffer the same problems as the first female workers clubs at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century which led to the disintegration of the campaigning centre in Brno.

Despite women being excluded from membership from political clubs in Cisleithania, at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were accepted as members of less influential educational clubs and trade unions under influence of the party. However, the agenda of these groups was focused on the global problems of workers, not specifically on “female world” problems. This approach reflected the fact that concessions to gender requirements contravened the dominant concept of the unity of the worker’s movement and the visions of the victorious socialist future. This situation was discussed at the fourth congress of the Czech Social Democratic Party in České Budějovice in 1900, which created the campaigning committee for women and defined an obligation to found independent women’s groups when there are enough applicants. The fifth congress of the party in 1902 went even further and decided that women had to be represented in all levels of the party executive (Soukup 1900: 16; *Protokol...* 1902: 10). However, there were also members who believed that organizing meetings together lead to the disintegration of individual organizations (Rovnost 1902, nr 138, p. 1).



The revitalization of socialist women activities was not brought about by these measures but in connection with the fight for general suffrage. Between 1905 and 1906, there was a number of meetings in Moravia with a political subtext with female participants or there were women's events organized (Rovnost 1905, nr 156, p. 4; Rovnost 1906, nr 33, p. 2; Rovnost 1906, nr 166, p. 3). When universal suffrage for men only was introduced in 1907, the basic incongruence between the theory and the practice in the social democratic party became evident. Women's suffrage was obviously not among their most important demands (Rebhan 2014: 224; Wolgemuthová 1965: 413; Hauch 2009: 95). Women still were not allowed to become members of the political clubs and also the Czech Social Democratic Party failed in their political education. This fact was reflected in the stagnation of women's socialist activities in Moravia (Rovnost 1903, nr 46, p. 2–3; Rovnost 1904, nr 6, p. 1).

Social Democracy did not manage to enforce any significant gender-focused reform after 1907, only minor achievements such as regulation of women's night work in industrial factories, a ban on white phosphorus used for matches were gained (Galandauer 1986: 81; Musilová 2007: 20; Duch času 1910, nr 46, s. 3). The party was losing its political radicalism at the time, became rooted into the political system and only with difficulty could find new principal topics to mobilize its members. Despite the fact that Social Democracy defined itself as a protest political party, after 1907 it had to deal with a new generation of young socialists criticizing the party leaders for accepting the parliamentary method of fight. Moreover, Moravia was known as a "clerical conservative" bastion with whole conservative regions (Fasora 2012: 3–4; Fasora 2014: 118; Fasora 2018: 186, 196–197). The level of strike intensity grew weaker in 1908–1909 and economic topics became more significant (Kolejka 1954: 60). At that time, women did not show much sympathy towards socialist events (Rovnost 1907, nr 216, p. 2).

### 3. New gender politics of socialists

Moravian socialists showed a certain delay in their attitude to women before 1910, mainly compared to their biggest political competitors, the Catholics, but also the progressivists, both of whom started to introduce their own women's interest groups under the influence of strengthening feminist discourse (Malíř 1996: 227, 239–240). To make up the leeway and improve its image of a party fighting for women's suffrage, the Social Democrats supported the re-introduction of the women's land

conferences. The Moravian conference was organized by German socialists in Brno in October 1909 (Hauch 2009: 32), but not by Czechs. The discussion about the women's position among Czech socialists was temporarily eclipsed by the party dissension in 1910–1911 when there was a theoretical and later even real division of the party to the so called autonomists, who proclaimed their loyalty to the Czech Social Democratic Party in Prague, and the less numerous centralists (the Czech Social Democratic Party in Austria), loyal to Vienna (Štern 2016: 63–67).

This created new demands for mass mobilization, together with the need to explain exactly what it meant to become a female member of the Social Democracy. The country magazine of the centralists in Brno, *Proletář* (the Proletarian), therefore defined in 1910 who is entitled to call herself a socialist. According to them, they were women who understood the basic ideological concept of the party and managed to interpret its main demands. *“And if a girl knows at least that and shows significant effort to improve her knowledge by reading newspapers, she is entitled to the word “socialist” and she will be an honoured and useful unit in the socialist International.”* (*Proletář* 1910, nr 31, p. 5). Women were expected to actively participate in the party activities, in practice mainly concerning measures which brought financial sources such as membership fees or collections. Mostly, they subscribed to the party magazines, helped finance the strike funds or buildings of worker's centres, or participated in election campaigns.

The most obvious demonstration of the new gender policy was the introduction of the new holiday for women, the so-called (International) Women's Day (IWD), which originated in the Austrian, German and American environments. Its introduction and consolidation in Central and Western European countries was authorized at the female socialists' conference in Copenhagen in August 1910. The prime aim of IWD was the debate about the women's suffrage (Bader-Zaar 2011: 38–39; Ruthchild Rochelle 2012: 1–3; Wurms 1980: 8), which was significantly influenced by the debate about §30 of the Federal law from 1867 in Austria-Hungary. This law banned women from membership of political clubs. It was repealed in March 1911 by the House of Deputies of the Imperial Council (*Abgeordnetenhaus des Reichsrat*) but the repeal was not approved by the House of Lords (*Herrenhaus*) before the outbreak of the WWI (Duch času 1911, nr 21, pp. 2–3).

Another measure of the new policy towards women was a gender specific campaigning at the party meetings and on the pages of party magazines. Even daily socialist press started to create new women's sections. The first one in Moravia was *Ženská hlídka* (*Women's Watch*)

in Slovácko (Hodonín) in 1909 and a section of the same name in Duch času (The Spirit of Time, Ostrava). Most papers, however, introduced these sections later. Women's columns *Hnutí žen* (Women's Movement) in the centralistic paper *Proletář* (Proletarian, Brno) and *Ženské rozhledy* (Women's horizons) in the centralistic *Svornost* (Concord, Ostrava) were introduced in 1911. One year later, *Ženská hlídka* (Women's Watch) appeared in the autonomist press *Hlas lidu* (People's Voice, Prostějov) and *Hlídka žen* (Watch of Women) in *Rovnost* (Equality, Brno). These sections were not regular. Mostly, they were included in spring in connection with the new women's holiday and celebration of 1<sup>st</sup> May, and when there were enough topics. The articles there did not focus solely on the women's suffrage but introduced topics addressed exclusively by specifically women's socialist magazines to both male and female readers of these important party newspapers. These sections discussed questions of harmonizing the needs of their families with the work in factories, or gender stereotypes. There was also space for anti-clerical attitudes and for the demands of the women's movement both home and abroad. There were also stories of women in traditionally "male" professions, for example as master clockmakers (Slovácko 1913, nr. 20, p. 6), not very frequent women's strikes, e. g. in Bulgaria (Slovácko 1913, nr. 25, p. 5) or women participating in anti-war demonstrations (Slovácko 1909, nr 8, non paged).

Also, the management of the Social Democrats introduced specific system measures. After 1910, there were so called women's political organizations created in the socialist centres in Moravia as well as smaller women's sections working as a kind of subsidiary of the women's land campaigning committee. This whole apparatus was responsible for the political education of women (Rovnost 1910, nr 3, p. 7; Rovnost 1910, nr 21, p. 5). At the same time, there was a tendency to marginalize the original and slightly neglected women worker's clubs (Rovnost 1914, nr 20, p. 5). Another task consisted of educating new female members, which became more important after the division between the autonomists and the centralists when already a small group of professional female campaigners was further divided and the most capable face stayed loyal to the centralists. Women therefore participated in party courses where they could learn rhetoric and organizing skills. Further measures included a new trend of female members of county executive committees. For example in Prostějov, there were women in the county executive committee of the socialist party in 1907, in other towns this happened later (Krutílková 2019b: 58). The county executive committees also appealed to their subordinate regional committees and local groups

to include women in 1911–1912. Women participated within these organizations solely as representatives of women or honorary members with no power to make decisions.

The above presented measures, however, are not perceived only in the positive light. For example the historian Joanna Dufrat talks about the “gender segregation” due to the perception of women as “different”, requiring a “specific” approach. In everyday life it led to, for example, separated women’s group carrying their own banners during the 1<sup>st</sup> May processions (Žena 1913, nr 9, p. 4). There were specific structures for women but they were de facto controlled by men, similar to Joanna Dufrat’s conclusions about the Polish socialists movement (Dufrat 2016: 265).

## 4. IWD as an effective mobilization tool?

The following sub-chapter will be focusing on the question whether the implementation of IWD led to the territorial expansion of socialism among women into individual Moravian regions. At first, we will analyse the situation in four autonomous regions. Then, the three main central districts will follow.

### 4.1. Autonomist women’s organization

#### 4.1.1. *Regional organization in Brno*

The first IWD celebrations caught the centre in Brno at the moment when the most experienced organizer had left, which affected the scope of the campaign. This personnel loss also affected the three following celebrations of the new holiday. Although the women’s autonomist organization suffered small losses after the division (Malíř 1996: 188–189), it got its second wind in 1911 and built its background in the suburbs of Brno. Events for women were organized even in places further away in the spring of 1911, mainly northwards (Svitávka) and north-east of Brno (region of Vyškov). The first IWD celebrations provided an impulse for the foundation of a new women section in Adamov, north of Brno (Rovnost 1911, nr 150, p. 6). On the other hand, there was no effect at all in western Moravia. The local socialist centre in Třebíč celebrated the new holiday, however, it led to no permanent results. The reason was probably the weak position of the local centre and strong competition in the form of Catholic female organizations. The way of celebrating IWD did not differ from the other lands of Cisleithania – it was usually a pa-

rade through the city with banners with radical slogans, followed by a lecture and then some entertainment.

In 1912, the chairwoman of the socialist club Union of women and girls Anna Vaňková initiated the foundation of a new section for women in the daily press *Rovnost* (Equality). The number of female members in the region, however, did not increase immediately after these measures. There were only 127 women registered in the party compared to 5001 men in March 1912 (*Rovnost* 1912, nr 70, pp. 1–3). Instantly after the IWD celebration in 1912, women from the south-western Moravia (Oslavany) and areas north-east of Brno became more prominent. Even though, Anna Vaňková talked about the problems of the south Moravian women's centre. At the same time, she claimed that the internal rift within the party pushed aside many issues including the campaigning among women (*Ženský list* 1912, nr 31, pp. 2–3). The celebration of IWD in 1912 also cooperated with struggle of liberal progressives against the strong structures of Catholics. For this reason, there was sympathy for well-known candidacy of Božena Viková-Kunětická for the first female deputy in 1912.

The celebrations of IWD were again organized mainly in Brno, but also in the north-east (Pozorice) and in the north of Brno (Brněnec) in 1913–1914. The county conference of the party in March 1914 could only note that the state of the women's organization had not changed (*Rovnost* 1914, nr 73, pp. 1–4). It could be therefore said, that the celebrations of IWD helped the women's socialist organization in Brno to survive the critical period but the campaign among the women from the suburbs of Brno was not very successful. There was a notable progress in areas north and north-east of Brno, whereas the areas of interest in south-western and western Moravia saw the unchanged status quo.

#### *4.1.2. Regional organization in Hodonín*

The second region of Moravian Slovakia with the centre in Hodonín was characterized by dominant craft and agricultural production connected to food processing, strong ties to traditional way of life and finally by considerable predominance of Catholics. The socialist campaign met with opposition of gender prejudice of largely provincial environment and the lack of enthusiasm of female workers in the Hodonín tobacco factory, the biggest employer of women in the region, to join the party (*Slovácko* 1908, nr 45, non paged; Krutílková 2019a: 60–62).

The area of Moravian Slovakia was also the youngest of all socialist regions. It was formed only in 1907 and the campaign was only just be-

ginning there. The numbers of organized socialist women were negligible in 1908, the local regional central registered only 87 women among 876 members of the party. Most of them worked in the tobacco Union and smaller socialist centres (Uherské Hradiště, Břeclav and Kyjov). There was a formal campaign to promote the celebration of IWD in 1911–1912, but events were actually organized only in Hodonín and Uherské Hradiště where the only two women's political organizations before 1914 were soon established (Rovnost 1911, nr, p. 2; Slovácko 1912, nr 13, 15, 16). The new gender policy of Social Democrats showed only slight success in the subordinate district organizations in Moravian Slovakia. The only women's meeting outside Hodonín was organized in connection with IWD celebration in Uherské Hradiště in February 1911. The regional executive committee expected a breakthrough in organizing women from the whole region from this committee, but the district organizations did not follow in its footsteps (Rovnost 1911, nr 47, p. 7). The IWD celebrations had no significant effect on the gender practice in the local regional organization. The issue of organizing women was not even discussed at the regional conventions. Therefore, there were no specific measures assigned to the subordinate district executive committees and the conventions focused on creating the youth structures. The regional executive committee only managed to train one experienced female campaigner within the researched period. Although the local press centre organized a formal campaign to celebrate IWD in 1913–1914, the actual celebrations were prepared only in Hodonín (Slovácko 1911, nr 12, p. 3; Ženský list 1911, nr 13, pp. 1–4; Slovácko 1914, nr 11, p. 3). The new holiday elicited no reaction in Moravian Slovakia.

#### *4.1.3. Regional organization in Prostějov*

The third Moravian regional organization based in Prostějov hosted one of the oldest educational women's workers' clubs joining together women employed in the locally dominant textile production (Krutílková 2019b: 52–56). The activities of the club also suffered a crisis around 1900. The crisis ended with arrival of the Krapka family. The experienced organiser Barbora Krapková, who together with her husband Josef Krapka-Náchodský, a social democratic politician and an editor, lived in Prague, Brno and Vienna, managed to revive the local women worker's movement between 1903–1909. The movement flourished happily under her leadership mainly in Prostějov, Přerov and the region of Bystřice pod Hostýnem. The same effort met with strong opposition from progressionists and Catholics among women in the region of Olomouc. Personal

reasons prevented Barbora Krapková from developing the local women's political organizations between years 1909–1911 but the women's centre in Prostějov held its position (*Ženský list* 1911, nr 46, p. 7; *Ženský list* 1911, nr 48, p. 8).

The disarrayed state of the women's organization in Prostějov caused that the first celebrations of IWD did not happen at all. Although the new holiday was discussed at the local printing centre, a women's meeting was only organized in the district organization in Hranice na Moravě (*Hlas lidu* 1911, nr 25, p. 3). The situation was partly solved in the autumn of 1911 when the regional executive committee decided not to work with Barbora Krapková any longer (*Hlas lidu* 1911, nr 82, p. 3). The leader of the Prostějov women's centre became a much less experienced wife of the local socialist editor, Františka Bechyňová.

After 1912, there was a change and we can state that the new holiday was evidently behind the significant shift in the organization of women in the region. During the time of IWD celebrations, a new Přerov group was created and added to the women's regional organization in Prostějov. The regional executive committee pressed the subordinate district organizations in Holešov, Hranice na Moravě and Lipník nad Bečvou in April 1912 to found new women's organizations (*Hlas lidu* 1912, nr 43, p. 5). In all three places, there were no circumstances to comply. Only 133 women were registered in the third autonomist region at the time (*Hlas lidu* 1912, nr 35, pp. 1–3). In 1913, the regional executive committee finally approved the formations of the Prostějov centre of dressmakers and seamstresses as a part of the Union of Czech Tailors (*Hlas lidu* 1912, nr 113, special supplement; *Ženský list* 1912, nr 31, p. 7).

The women's political organization in Přerov seemed to be very active during 1913 and 1914, when it outshined the Prostějov centre whose activities were less numerous especially during the last year before the war (*Hlas lidu* 1913, nr 25, p. 6; *Hlas lidu* 1914, nr 10, p. 7). Beside these two towns, the celebrations of IWD took also place in Bystrice pod Hostýnem (*Hlas lidu* 1914, nr 29, p. 7), however, no significant increase in women's activities followed. The two most influential socialist centres in central Moravia – Prostějov and Přerov saw the most intense response to IWD and it became another permanent event of the socialist calendar since 1913.

#### *4.1.4. Regional organization in Moravská Ostrava*

The promotional activities of autonomists among women were ineffective for many reasons in the fourth autonomist regional organization in the Ostrava region before 1914. The profile of the local industry, dependent on coal mining and heavy engineering, did nothing to help. Al-

so, the existence of strong competitive structures proved limiting. There was the opposition of centralist women and in some of the suburbs of Ostrava also German socialists, but the strongest competition among women was presented by the Polish Social Democracy.<sup>3</sup> The Polish socialists had a very active women's organization at their disposal which also distributed their own magazine and whose base was located in today's Silesian areas of Ostrava and neighbouring Karviná region (Krutílková 2020a: 165–166).

The Moravian Ostrava women's regional organization respected the balance of power in the region where the autonomist women from the region of Těšín (Teschen) and western part of Silesia (region of Opava) belonged under the two independent Silesian regions of the Czech Social Democracy. The centre in Moravian Ostrava therefore aimed its efforts at towns on Moravian side of the border. Even there, however, there was the competition of the Polish socialists. The Czech women's meetings outside the Ostrava centre were organized only in Vítkovice since 1910 and a women's section was also founded in a small townlet (Nová Ves) in February of the same year (Duch času 1910, nr 13, p. 6; Duch času 1910, nr 22, p. 6). Only three women's political organizations or sections were registered by the local autonomist in May 1910 (Duch času 1910, nr 38, p. 2). The possible solution was expected from their influence in southern (Frýdek-Místek district) or south-western (Nový Jičín district) areas. They were partially successful in organizing women in Nový Jičín district in 1910.

In connection with the forthcoming IWD celebration, a plenary session of women was organized in January 1911 to discuss the possibilities of promoting campaigns among women (Duch času 1911, nr 6, p. 4). However, the IWD was only celebrated by already existing women's organizations in Moravian Ostrava and Nová Ves in 1911 (Duch času 1911, nr 21, p. 4). Nevertheless, the new holiday caused women from Nový Jičín area (Butovice) to join the party. Also, one local organization in Ostrava suburb (Hrabůvka) included the equality topic into the agenda of its meeting (Duch času 1911, nr 28, p. 6). The county conference in January 1912 rather confirmed the futility of attempts to organize women within the autonomous areas of interest; moreover, the local regional leaders had only one capable female campaigner. The leaders therefore appealed to the common party members to bring their wives to their meetings (Duch času 1912, nr 4, p. 1).<sup>4</sup> This led

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<sup>3</sup> Polska Partia Socjalno-Demokratyczna Galicji i Śląska Cieszyńskiego.

<sup>4</sup> For context, the women's structures of the Polish Social Democracy in 1912, when the membership reached its peak, had less than thirty female campaigning centres with 1 200 members (Krutílková 2020a: 172–173).



to only partial results. Beside Ostrava, there is evidence of IWD celebrations and gender-oriented meetings also in Nový Jičín area and Frýdek-Místek area in 1912.

Despite the official gender support from the party leaders, the women's socialist activities suffered recession in the Ostrava region after 1913. Only Moravian Ostrava and Nový Jičín organized IWD celebrations in 1913 and the regional leaders were unable to provide speakers from their subordinate district organizations (*Duch času* 1914, nr 16, p. 5). Female speakers were therefore called from Přerov and Brno to join celebrations in the region of Nový Jičín (Studénka, Hodslavice). The main regional periodical *Duch času* (The Spirit of Time) formally announced the IWD celebration in 1914 but did not include a gender focused section and became significantly masculinized. The county conference in February 1914 could, therefore, proclaim that there were only 152 female members registered in the local agglomeration. The sympathizing women were concentrated in the regions of Ostrava, Nový Jičín and Frýdek-Místek. These were the areas where the IWD holiday was formerly promoted. The region of the Beskydy Mountains (Frenštát region) with very strong catholic structures and Fulnek region remained comparatively resistant (*Duch času* 1914, nr 13, p. 1). It is, therefore, possible to claim that the IWD celebrations directly influenced women's need to get organized.

Although it seems that the effectivity of introducing IWD was low, the numbers of women organized within the autonomist unions showed an increasing tendency. Whereas the unions registered only 66 women in 1910, their number jumped to 695 only a year later (*Rovnost* 1912, nr 167, p. 2). However, the data from November 1913 show that the number of women in Moravian and Silesian unions still differed from the increase in other groups. Women formed less than 10% of all union members and there were about 1,200 women compared to 13,800 men (*Rovnost* 1914, nr 29, pp. 3–4).

## 4.2. Centralistic women's organizations

### 4.2.1. Brno women's centre

The women's campaigning centre in Brno formed the core of all centralistic efforts in Moravia. Its most active member was Františka Skaunicová, a capable speaker and organizer with years of practice. In 1910, soon after the party dissention, she attempted to minimize the damage and spread the influence of the local women's organization out-

side Brno and its suburbs. The women's group in Brno suburb Husovice was formed during the same year and socialist women also managed to spread their ideas in the area north of Brno (Blansko). The campaign among women was also stimulated by the foundation of a new centralistic magazine called *Žena* (Woman) in Brno in 1911 under the leadership of the above-mentioned organizer.

The first IWD celebrations were organized in 1911 in the modern Brno suburbs (Husovice, Židenice, Královo Pole, Komárov) and in areas north of Brno (Blansko, Adamov) (*Proletář* 1911, nr 22, p. 1). During the months after the celebrations, the women's section was started in Královo Pole where the first success among women was already noted the previous year.

The results of the foundation of the new holiday were obvious very soon. In May 1911, centralists in Moravia and Lower Austria already had 15 women's sections and political organizations with 866 members. Six of these sections were concentrated around the Brno centre or its closes vicinity (*Proletář* 1911, nr 45, pp. 2–3). A few more women's organizations were formed later in 1911 (*Žena* 1912, nr 1, p. 8). Despite the obvious success, the female centralists believed that the gender specific campaign should claim more attention (*Žena* 1911, nr 16, pp. 4–5). Their complaints were heard in 1911 at the party congress where finances were allocated to campaigners who were to be coordinated by the temporary Imperial Women's Committee (*Proletář* 1913, nr 148, p. 1–4).

The IWD was celebrated in all existing women's organizations in Brno and western Moravia (Třebíč) in 1912–1913 (*Proletář* 1912, nr 56, p. 1). In connection with IWD, two new women's organizations were founded in Brno suburbs (Olomoucká, Nové Černovice) in 1913. One new cell was also formed in the countryside, but it was only an exception to the rule (*Žena* 1913, nr 5, pp. 10–11; *Proletář* 1913, nr 24, p. 6). Františka Skaunicová had no doubts about the effectiveness of the new holiday and in March 1913 she believed it was useful for "rousing women". However, she did not believe that celebrating IWD was enough and the only possible alternative and she appealed to intensify the activities of all women's, political and union organizations (*Proletář* 1913, nr 25, pp. 1–3; *Žena* 1913, nr 6, pp. 8–10). This agenda was discussed at the first centralist women's conference organized in Prague on 26 December 1913 where the Imperial Women's Committee was established (*Svornost* 1913, nr 51, p. 4). The IWD was celebrated in all traditional centres in 1914 but also in western Moravia (Třebíč, Jihlava) (*Proletář* 1914, nr 29, p. 1).

The instalment of IWD enabled the centralists in Brno to form bases of the women's organization. They mainly managed to spread their influence to western Moravia. The campaigning in all centralistic centres in Moravia lay exclusively on the shoulders of Františka Skaunicová who could not, however, visit all places. This led centralists in 1913 to doubt whether women were able to independently manage women's political organizations (Proletář 1914, nr 3, pp. 1–5).

#### 4.2.2. Central Moravia

Centralist women in central Moravia battled against less favourable conditions. They had to compete with strong autonomist women's organizations in Přerov and Prostějov. The centralist women's organizations were formed in both towns soon after the IWD celebrations in 1911 (Proletář 1911, nr 25, p. 6; Proletář 1911, nr 40, p. 4). In other regions their campaign collided with Catholic and Progressive women's structures. Both autonomist and centralist women in the Olomouc district did not have any political organization in spring 1912 (Proletář 1912, nr 34, pp. 4–5). The IWD celebrations were therefore organized only in Prostějov and Přerov (Žena 1912, nr 11, pp. 1–6). The women's organization in Olomouc was formed one month before the IWD in 1913 so the celebrations took place not only in Prostějov and Přerov but also in Olomouc (Proletář 1913, nr 22, p. 5). However, in 1914 it was again celebrated only in Prostějov and Přerov. We can therefore conclude that the conditions were not favourable in Olomouc (Proletář 1914, nr 29, p. 1). The central Moravian centralists did not managed to find strong enough position in competition with autonomists and even the IWD celebrations could not change that.

#### 4.2.3. Ostrava region

In Ostrava region and the neighbouring Moravian-Silesian borderland there was the second strongest centralist organization in Moravia which cooperated with German and Polish socialists (Malíř 1996: 186). The cooperation of all three nations took the form of big manifestations, one of them also the IWD celebrations. Even the local centralist women's organization, however, faced a crisis in 1910–1911. Although the first IWD celebrations in Moravian Ostrava in 1911 were massive, the results of centralists in the region did not show much difference and all the credit went to the Polish Social Democracy (Svornost 1911, nr 36, special supplement). More successful were women's meetings organized to take part in the food co-operatives organized in February 1912 in sev-

eral of modern Ostrava's suburbs both on the Moravian and Silesian side of the border (Svornost 1912, nr 4, p. 4). The 1912 IWD celebrations only took place thanks to the active women's centralist organization in Moravian Ostrava (Žena 1912, nr 11, pp. 1–6; Svornost 1912, nr 19, p. 2). Also in this region, the absence of experienced speakers proved to be a major stumbling block. The gender topics, therefore, became a part of the educational-rhetoric courses organized by the party that year (Svornost 1912, nr 38, p. 4).

Despite all the effort, the IWD celebrations in 1913–1914 did not result in further territorial gains (Svornost 1913, nr 6, pp. 1–2). The executive committee assigned the mass celebrations of IWD to the local organizations but big festivities were organized only in Moravian Ostrava and in Radvanice in Silesia. Here, the Polish socialist women were also already active (Svornost 1913, nr 7, p. 2; Svornost 1914, nr 8, pp. 3–4; Svornost 1914, nr 11, pp. 2–3). The first serious attempts to spread influence to Frýdek-Místek area can be noted only in July 1914 (Svornost 1914, nr 30, p. 4).

Generally, it could be said that the IWD celebrations definitely led to higher numbers of organized female centralists in Moravia. Before September 1913, the number of women participants grew to 980. The growth of members was enormous mainly during the first year after the holiday was introduced. The changes in numbers of women's organizations during 1912–1914 were only cosmetic. Their final number reached 16 (Žena 1912, nr 17, pp. 6–7; Proletář 1913, nr 148, pp. 1–4). The number of women in the autonomist and centralistic wing of the Social Democracy could not compete with the numbers of women engaged in the Czech Catholic-National Party and the Czech Christian Social Party in Moravia. While there were circa 2,000 socialists, Czech Catholics outnumbered them more than six times.

## 5. Conclusion

The gender strategy of Moravian socialists was changing during the last years before the First World War and started to follow the concept of new socialist woman. This effort was realized in several specific measures, which were the introduction of International Women's Day, re-establishment of women's party conferences and establishment of women's political organizations. In the attempted gender-correct approach, women were delegated to party executives in all levels of the party hierarchy and special sections were created for them in all main

printed tribunes. The installation of these gender sensitive measures was hindered by the progress of the party dissension which greatly influenced the impact and the aim of the International Women's Day celebrations. The new holiday, celebrated in Moravia for the first time in 1911, revived the fading working women's socialist movement and the equality discussions but it also became an effective tool. It helped both Czech competing halves of the socialist party – autonomists and centralists – to keep pace with growing competition of women's interest associations of Catholics and People's Progressive Party but also to compete with each other. Thanks to the revival of women's suffrage demands the Social Democracy could again (but partly) present itself as a protesting party.

The introduction of International Women's Day led to the consolidation of disrupted women's campaigning centres and partly also to spreading to new regions. Foundation of new women's political organizations was enabled by growing number of female members which was typical for both Czech socialist parties. However, the new holiday did not solve all the problems. Just as in previous years, women were resistant to socialist activities both due to the lasting gender prejudices within their own party and the different political orientation of potential sympathisers. Manifestations of the new holiday went unheeded in the countryside, in areas with prevailing agricultural production and in areas with strong women's centres of other political movements.

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### Międzynarodowy Dzień Kobiet i jego rola w konsolidacji ruchu robotniczego kobiet na Morawach przed 1914 r.

#### Abstrakt

W ostatnich latach przed I wojną światową strategia genderowa morawskich socjalistów zaczęła podążać za koncepcją nowej socjalistki. Wysiłki te zostały zrealizowane w ramach kilku konkretnych działań, przede wszystkim wprowadzenia Międzynarodowego Dnia Kobiet, przywrócenia konferencji partii kobiet i ustanowienia kobiecych organizacji politycznych. Nowe święto pomogło ożywić zanikający ruch socjalistyczny pracujących kobiet na Morawach przed I wojną światową. Stało się skutecznym narzędziem, które pomogło konkurencyjnym partiom socjalistycznym – autonomistom, jak i centralistom – dotrzymać kroku rosnącej konkurencji stowarzyszeń interesów kobiet katolików i Partii Postępowo-Ludowej. Dzięki odrodzeniu żądań wyborczych kobiet socjaldemokracja mogłaby ponownie zaprezentować się jako partia protestująca. Wprowadzenie Międzynarodowego Dnia Kobiet doprowadziło do konsolidacji rozproszonych ośrodków kampanii kobiet, a częściowo do rozprzestrzeniania się na nowe regiony. Nowe inicjatywy nie rozwiązały wszystkich problemów. Podobnie jak w poprzednich latach zwłaszcza kobiety ze wsi pozostawały poza obszarem oddziaływania socjalistów ze względu na trwałe uprzedzenia związane z płcią w ich własnej partii, jak i na różne orientacje polityczne potencjalnych sympatyków.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Morawy, kobiety, socjaldemokracja, równość płci, 1911–1914