Marginalizing Josefina: Work, Gender, and Protest in Bohemia 1820—1844

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Section III: Gender and Labor

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Abstract

The study concentrates on the pre-1848 labor protests in Bohemia and analyzes them with respect to questions of gender. It reviews the current historiography on the topic, focusing mainly on the English example. Here some of the recent key debates within the field of labor history have been held, arguing that working-class action in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was shaped by a gender composite working-class culture that was inherently both masculine and feminine. Taking these debates as a yardstick, the paper explores how the codes and institutions of skilled labor masculinity shaped working-class collective action in pre-1848 Bohemia. Bohemia was, the study argues, one of the most industrialized regions next to England and France during the first half of the nineteenth century and also produced a significant amount of collective labor protests.

The paper analyzes these protests in terms of their gender structure and compares this structure with the gender composition of the respective labor force. It comes to the conclusion that while the qualified labor force of the Bohemian textile industry, which generated the overall majority of all unrests, was gender-mixed, its protests were predominantly carried out by a crowd consisting only of men. The explanation for this discrepancy is found in the Bohemian working-class culture, which was shaped by male-friendly societies and brotherhoods. These brotherhoods constituted the institutional arena for the emergence of working-class masculinity, which went on to dominate the entire working-class culture and hence shaped the majority of collective protests as well.

I.

All over the world, the history of the working class has been significantly reshaped in the last couple of decades. In rethinking the classic Thompsonian narrative, our picture of the working-class formation and agency in various local contexts, was altered primarily by research on gender. Not only the English, but also the German, French or American working classes were gradually recast as predominantly masculine projects, where female actors were situated in the sphere of privacy and subsistence and thus positioned only as virtuous wives and mothers supporting the male cause from within the private realm.[1] Culminating in the masterly book-length account of Anna Clark, the history of the early working class has been rewritten as a narrative that stresses its masculine nature.[2]

This central narrative has been, however, put into question once again within the last couple of years. Most recently a fresh study by Paul A. Custer pointed out the mixed nature of labor protests in Lancashire between 1780 and

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1820.[3] Based on extensive evidence, Custer's "*Refiguring Jemima*" has persuasively shown that the major working-class protests in Lancashire were quite heterogeneous in terms of gender, with women taking a genuine part in them, participating in the constitution of the demonstrating crowd and generally forming an integral part of working-class culture. Thus, Custer claims, the protesting subject was constituted more on the basis of very composite, sometimes even inverted, gender identities.

However stimulating and pioneering these debates may be, they remain largely limited to "English" working-class formation with little reference to other comparative cases. Given the ever more complex picture drawn, a lack of comparative research into some other parts of Europe is becoming increasingly apparent as well as disturbing precisely at a time when the call for historiography to go "European" or even "global" has not seemed to exempt labor history.[4]

Looking at the condition of labor history in various European historiographies, one striking peculiarity appears: however lively the debates on labor history in general, and on working-class culture in particular, may be, they have found almost no echo East of the former Iron Curtain. Although historical scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe has been marked by various "turns," originating from the theoretical debates in the French, German or English speaking world, the very topic of labor and collective protest is virtually nonexistent there. Reviewing the relevant scholarship, one can get the impression that nobody was actually working in the region in the nineteenth century.[5]

Probably the most vivid example is that of historical writings on nineteenth century Bohemia, which was one of the fastest industrializing regions of Continental Europe with a significant number of collective working-class protests emerging as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. Bohemia subsequently became a prominent part of what Geoff Eley accurately describes as "the social democratic core of Europe," with a high level of industrialization, active labor unions and organized collective protests.[6]

Nevertheless, as Pavel Kolář and Michal Kopeček have stressed in their recent overview of local historiography, not a single study has been published on the history of nineteenth century labor and collective protest in any of the major Czech historical journals.[7] Consequently, the analysis of industrial labor formation and collective protest east of German borders has not found its way into virtually any of the French, German or English studies, limiting contemporary European research into labor and protest history only to the western part of the Continent.

Such a major omission is likely to be interpreted in light of the political and social development of the region since 1989. The very discipline of labor history, depicting the working-class movement in teleological fashion as an inevitable "forward march of history," has been seen (not without reason) as one of the major pillars in the legitimization of communist dictatorships and was therefore abandoned after the fall of the Iron Curtain.[8]

Though this omission may be politically understandable, there is no reason to leave one of the most restless European regions of the nineteenth century out of the current research into gender, labor and protest history. As one of the most industrialized areas of nineteenth century Europe, the Bohemian case can bring substantial evidence to bear for the examination of Paul Custer's argument about gender composite working-class identities in a wider European context

and can thus deepen our understanding of how collective labor identities were shaped in major regions of European industrialization.

Taking the above mentioned contemporary debates about gender, work and protest as a historiographical yardstick, the following analysis seeks to explore how the codes and institutions of skilled labor masculinity shaped working-class collective action. I will first outline some key factors of early bohemian industrialization, which generated a significant amount of collective labor protests throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. The next section will turn to the protests themselves, in particular the most massive wave of collective labor unrests that shook Bohemia in 1844. In the fourth part the article will analyze the gender structure of the protests, which was marked by a sharp separation along the lines of sex. The essay will then conclude with an examination of the role the newly emerging masculine labor identities as well as their institutional anchoring played in the early Bohemian working-class culture.

II.

Looking at Continental Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century, there are virtually no regions that could be compared to Lancashire and other centers of the English textile industry in terms of density of industrialization and the absolute quantity of the labor force. However, if there were some areas that resembled, at least to a degree, those of the English textile industry boom, Bohemia was amongst the most notable ones.[9] As one of the many English travelers who found their way into Bohemia in the first half of the nineteenth century noted, "... Bohemia can feel flattered that it can be for the Continent a little England."[10]

The structure of early Bohemian industrialization was in many respects parallel to the English case; in fact, it was set in motion in direct connection with it. Many English engineers, machine-makers and other technical advisors played a major role in bringing various technical innovations and know-how to the center of Europe. Thus, virtually no important industrial enterprise in Bohemia started without English influence.[11]

As the textile industry was the main factor in early Bohemian industrialization, several regions developed within Bohemia, the social structure of which was heavily dominated by textile workers, long before 1850. As early as 1798 more than half a million people were employed in the emerging textile industry, representing about 17 percent of the whole population and more than 80 percent of those employed in all industrial enterprises put together.[12]

As in England and elsewhere, the industrialization of Bohemia was a regional phenomenon, centered mainly in the north in the towns of Liberec (Reichenberg) and Mladá Boleslav (Jungbunzlau) and in and around Prague, making these three areas the very core of the whole Austrian industry in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the 1840's the Austrian cotton industry had already managed to achieve a leading position on the Continent, with higher production capacities than all of the lands of the German Zollverein put together and the third largest labor force in Europe, surpassed only by England and France. About 60 percent of all Austrian textile workers had jobs in one of the Bohemian textile regions.[13]

Calico printing played a major role within the entire Austrian textile branch. With a steady innovational drive throughout the 1820s and 1830s, it was able to secure a dominant position in all Central and East European markets and was even able to export to the West.[14] The increasing technical expertise of the printing industry required a significant number of highly skilled laborers. In 1835 there were about 22,000 skilled workers in Northern Bohemia and Prague and its suburbs.

It was this milieu of skilled labor in the printing industry that formed the center of all labor protests in the first half of the nineteenth century. These protests, culminating in a massive wave of labor unrests during summer of 1844, represented the most visible manifestation of the emerging working-class culture in Bohemia and hence constitute an ideal example for the extension of the ongoing historiographical discussions of work, protest and gender during the early stages of European industrialization.

III.

The summer months of 1844 in Bohemia were characterized by extremely poor weather. Daily temperatures in June and July rarely exceeded twenty degrees Centigrade and it rained for almost the entire summer.[15] A similarly grim mood reigned in the calico factories in Prague and its suburbs. Responding to the announced reduction of piece wages per item of printed fabric, workers employed in Prague's Porges calico factory refused to turn up to work on Monday June 17, 1844. Instead they sent a delegation to the factory owner and demanded that their existing wages be maintained and new printing machines, the "perrotines," not be put into operation.[16]

These demands were, however, rejected by the factory owner and during the night of June 17-18, six members of the workers' delegation that was negotiating with Porges were arrested.[17] The following day the news of their arrest reached other calico factories in Prague and its suburbs. Their workers gathered in the Porges plant and destroyed several new machines. Subsequently destruction of machinery started to spread to other factories in the Prague agglomeration. During the morning of Wednesday June 19, an even larger number of printing workers gathered in front of the Porges factory where a collective meeting was to be held in order to agree upon a further course of action. The factory, however, was already occupied by soldiers and therefore workers headed to a nearby meadow where they agreed to submit a protest petition to the Provincial Governor, the Archduke Stefan (Stefan Franz Viktor von Österreich) who, they hoped, would resolve the matter. But on its way to the Archduke's residence the crowd of more than a thousand people was blocked by the army and the Archduke himself made the immediate resumption of work a condition of any intervention.[18]

In the days that followed the printing workers met on the meadows outside the city once more to discuss a plan of action. Since their meeting was again accompanied by the army, they headed to the Court Building at Dobytčí trh (Livestock Market), where their arrested colleagues were being held. Here they once again encountered a military guard and hence set out for a part of Prague called Perštýn, to the lodging house of their fellow workers from out-of-Prague.

Even after a week-long strike that paralyzed all of Prague's calico factories, the workers were still not willing to return to work and therefore the Provincial Governor's Office in Prague, after consulting with the commander of the military garrison General Windischgrätz and the mayor of Prague Josef Müller, decided on a violent course of action. On Monday, June 24, the gathering of protesters near the workers' lodging house was encircled and more than five hundred strikers were arrested. Nearly everybody was interrogated—strike participants, factory owners, shift managers as well as physicians who provided the injured with occasional aid.[19]

During the following days more arrests took place, based on information obtained by the interrogators, and during July the first sentences were imposed: both corporal punishments and imprisonments. The next day, Tuesday, June 25, production in the Prague calico factories was slowly resumed and at the beginning of August the perrotines were put into operation.[20] The unrest, however, was not limited to Prague and its suburbs and by the end of June and beginning of July it spread to all regions with textile production, in particular to industrialized Northern Bohemia.[21]

Although the printing workers did not accomplish their main goal, namely an official ban on the introduction of new machines, the strike did achieve certain successes. Once the unrest was quelled, wages in many Bohemian calico factories were raised. Moreover, the Provincial Governor's Office in Prague issued general guidelines for the creation of internal factory rules that were supposed to serve as a basis for the future arrangements of relations between the workers and their employers, thereby defining some minimal labor rights.[22]

Even though the printing workers' protest of 1844 represented a culmination of social unrest manifested in various forms throughout the first half of the nineteenth century,[23] its scope had no parallel in the previous history of the Habsburg monarchy.[24] In Prague alone, more protesters appeared on the streets in the summer of 1844 than during the later 1848 riots, while the number of soldiers engaged in suppressing the unrests was almost the same in both 1844 and 1848.[25] As far as the whole of the Bohemian lands are concerned, a considerable part of the total 100,000 permanently deployed soldiers was on the alert or on the move.[26] Police officials and the Provincial Governor's office received a special financial bonus as soon as the disturbance was suppressed.[27] Unrest in the Bohemian lands caused not only vigorous activity in the upper echelons of the Austrian state administration and police but also had knock-on effects at the diplomatic level across the whole of Central Europe. In many places a military stand-to was announced, the Austrian-Saxon and Austrian-Prussian borders were officially closed and the highest levels of the Austrian administration worked together intensively to track down escaped participants.[28] In general, the labor protests of 1844 elicited the most significant police and military activity in Central Europe since the end of the Napoleonic wars.

IV.

Previous historiography has perceived the working-class protests in Vormärz Bohemia as carried out by an indeterminate crowd, the gender structure of which was of no importance to historians. However, if we pay attention to the development of the gender composition of the textile industry, which generated

the most vehement collective protests, and to its correlation with the gender composition of the respective protest actions, we can observe an obvious contrast.[29]

Existing research persuasively shows that textile production throughout Europe was characterized by a labor force composed of both sexes. In this, the Bohemian lands were no exception.[30] Professions solely occupied by men were insignificant, and before 1848, the textile factories in Bohemia employed gender-composite labor, from which the main actors of the working-class protests were recruited. In many factories, various skilled positions, as for example cloth cutting, were almost exclusively female.[31]

For instance, in the spring of 1844 the Przibram calico factory in the Prague suburb of Smíchov employed 658 people, of whom approximately eighty were officially registered women. Yet we may suspect that the gender hegemonic language of the official statistics hid other women in categories such as "auxiliary" or "other staff."[32]

The gender mix characteristic of textile labor, however, did not correspond to the structure of its protests. The participation of women in various local agitations in *Vormärz* Bohemia was exceptional, as is clearly illustrated by the most vigorous wave of workers' collective action in the summer of 1844. The initial impulse for the strike and subsequent unrest was the introduction of new machines and related lay-offs or wage reductions that affected not only the male but also the female labor force. Alongside the introduction of new printing machines that especially endangered men, new cutting machines were also introduced, similarly jeopardizing the employment and wage levels of female cloth-cutters.[33]

The protesting crowd itself, however, was exclusively male. Although female workers were as affected by the new machines as their male colleagues, they did not participate in collective protests. All gatherings, marches, meetings, formulations and articulations of joint positions and demands during the week of June 17–24, 1844 were carried out by a protesting crowd composed exclusively of men, which also fundamentally influenced the course of the protest itself.

This protest was the surprisingly organized action of a coherent collective subject. Sporadic violent excesses were limited to the destruction of a few printing machines, while protesting workers consistently tried to avoid any other attacks on the property of others or direct physical confrontation that would go beyond a certain symbolic form.[34] During the whole week of June 17–24, 1844, when the protests culminated, the number of protesting printing workers never fell below one thousand. However, no major violent conflicts with the army occurred and no casualties were recorded.[35]

As an example of the absolute exclusion of women we may use what was probably the climax of the summer unrests—the mass arrest of protesters near the workers' lodging house at Perštýn in Prague on Monday June 24, 1844. Once the striking workers gathered there in the morning after a week of unrests, the mobilized soldiers began to arrest all of the people present and interned them in the Court Building at Dobytčí trh (Livestock Market). Among the 525 seized persons there was not a single woman.[36] Women turned up at the scene only later, as one of the eyewitnesses reported:

> Once they led all the men away, the women gathered and went from house to house, taking rebels with them. Each of them put stones in their aprons and after they had smashed the factory windows, the crowd reached Dobytčí trh and started to throw stones at the soldiers.[37]

The attack on soldiers guarding the Court Building did not represent a merely harmless episode. The situation was tense and the threat of severe consequences for any of the participating women was more than real. The army resolutely responded to their attack and several female protesters, led by the most radical leader of the crowd, Josefina Müllerová, were arrested, while the rest were dispersed at bayonet-point.[38]

As we can see, women clearly did not lack the resolution to join the protests, which could furthermore grow into various forms of radicalism. If necessary, women protestors were able to take action in their own right, with the potential to subsume other actors who had not initially taken part. This was an expression of radicalism shared by the protesting female crowd which was well aware of the possible sanctions and yet still did not hesitate to instigate a direct confrontation with armed soldiers. It was simultaneously the very opposite of the pattern of the weeklong male workers' protests that had consciously and anxiously avoided all clashes with the symbols of state authority.[39]

The fact that women became the subject of protests related to textile workers was so exceptional that it became one of the central points in structuring the narratives of workers' riots in Bohemia. As an example we may use the diary of a teacher in Paseky nad Jizerou in the Krkonoše Mountains on the Prussian-Austrian border, located more than one hundred kilometers from Prague. In reference to the Prague disturbances, he noted the following: "... a week ago women and children in Prague stood up and demanded those printers, the fathers of families, back."[40]

The uniqueness of such female participation in working-class protests became firmly rooted in the public discourse that originated from the workers' riots and resonated even during the unrests four years later, as manifested by an excerpt from a song circulating throughout the Bohemian lands during the revolutionary years of 1848–1849:

> And when women saw
> The men were arrested,
> They wailed,
> Took their children,
> Picked up stones ...[41]

The absolute exceptionality of the female attack on soldiers guarding the Court Building at Dobytčí trh in Prague thus illustrates the general pattern of all working-class collective action in the Bohemian lands during the first half of the nineteenth century: women stood outside of the main protesting subject that was almost exclusively made up of skilled male workers. Regardless of the mixed character of labor in factories affected by the strike and unrests, and even despite the introduction of technical innovations that directly endangered the value of labor of both men and women, the protesters of the summer of 1844 were exclusively men.

The Prague case, however, was no exception. In all locations where workers' unrest broke out during 1844, men represented the overwhelming majority of active protesters. There was not a single woman among the workers who were arrested in June 1844 and brought to court for their participation in the Liberec region unrests.[42] Similarly, in the area around Mladá Boleslav, all working-class collective actions were predominantly male events.[43]

Since both the Liberec and Mladá Boleslav regions formed, together with Prague and its suburbs, the core of workers' collective action, we may conclude that the absence of women from working-class collective protests in *Vormärz* Bohemia was nearly absolute.

Clearly, what we encounter here are completely different representations of masculinity and femininity. The overwhelming majority of protests were carried out by a collective subject composed of male workers and operating in a consensual mode, structured by peaceful negotiations with authorities, collective meetings and the seeking of compromise and common ground. Collective protests of women were highly exceptional and if they occurred, they represented the very opposite, that is to say, direct and radical action. In this context, two main questions arise: Why was the women's protest at Dobytčí trh on June 24, 1844 so unique, and where should we seek the roots of the sharp differences in the protest practices of male and female subjects?

V.

In order to answer these questions we need to focus on the complex changes affecting the coding of masculinity and femininity in Bohemia during the first half of the nineteenth century. In this early stage of industrialization, there still was no sharp division of labor along sex lines in most of the industrial branches. However, even though there were both men and women wage laborers, skilled wage labor advanced to a central position in the cultural definition of working-class masculinity, relegating femininity to the sphere of the household.[44]

The definition of masculinity in developing Bohemian working-class culture was increasingly linked to skilled labor and to the wages that resulted from it. Although gainful, productive work on the part of both family members and in many cases of children as well, was a necessity in the working-class milieu, printing workers made use of every opportunity to connect it discursively to their masculinity.

Once lay-offs and wage reductions threatened, male workers regularly legitimized their demands for maintaining the existing conditions by referring to their families, cast as fully dependent in a manner very similar to the one captured by Anna Clark in Britain. As an example, we may use an 1819 Prague printing workers' complaint, describing the consequences of announced lay-offs:

> A journeyman must leave Prague and seek a job in another factory in the countryside, and how can a journeyman do this if he has to provide fully for his wife and children, and these are so many, almost a majority?[45]

Solidarity in the struggle for the protection of the value of skilled male labor further strengthened the newly emerging working-class masculinity in a

similar manner to the male-dominated arrangement of a household.[46] Male laborers increasingly defined themselves through specific perceptions of society, situating themselves in the position of skilled workers who performed demanding and valuable physical work. From this position they derived various competences, such as the right and ability to defend this work in a collective action or to decide on the fate of other family members. The emerging distinction between the workplace and the household also allowed this set of masculine codes to become enriched by the perception of households as centers of unpaid, reproductive work performed, as a rule, by other family members.[47]

Skilled gainful labor slowly became a fundamental component of the workers' masculinity that—in the eyes of male workers—had to be not only protected but also reproduced. The memoirs of František Hais, who grew up in Prague as printing apprentice during 1820s, may serve as a suitable example. Hais recalls a moment in 1819 when it was time to make a decision about his future career. While he and his mother dreamed about further studies, his father—a printing worker—was of another opinion:

> 'Well, you wanted František to become a mister student, didn't you? No, no, that will not happen. He'll be a printer like me... On Saturday you will buy burlap, make him an apron, and on Monday he'll go off to factory with me. And this is my will, so hush now, it won't be down to you and your son.'... On Monday morning after breakfast father got dressed, did not even notice my mother, and told me: 'Are you ready, you student?!'[48]

As shown by this example, in printing workers' culture the ability to provide skilled labor played a key role for male self-identification. No discussions were permitted as far as its importance and the related intergenerational transmission were concerned. What is significant in this example is that 11-year-old František was the oldest son and thus all of his father's ideas about the proper manifestation of masculinity, firmly linked to the skilled work of printing, were passed onto him.

Returning to the working-class protests in Vormärz Bohemia, the specific working-class masculinity, structured around the ability to provide skilled labor, comes to the forefront as one of the formative factors. An emphasis on collective, peaceful negotiation, an organized demeanor and the consensual seeking of joint interests was one of the common denominators of workers' masculinity that had been instilled in its holders since their first socialization in a working-class collective.

The construction of such masculinity would not have been possible without a certain institutional anchoring, indispensable to any successful construction of gender as a cultural category.[49] Focusing on this specific anchoring, one main factor appears: extensive networks of workers' funds and brotherly societies, which existed in every bohemian region with textile production. These associations became the central institutional arena for connecting skilled labor to the newly emerging cultural codes of working-class masculinity. Looking more closely at the everyday functioning of workers' societies and funds, we can uncover those specific cultural practices that helped to strengthen the new coding of masculinity structured around skilled wage labor.

Nearly all printing workers' societies in *Vormärz* Bohemia operated under similar rules. Formally, they were voluntary organizations designed to cover individual risks related to injury, sickness, death or unemployment. They were gender exclusive, and even though the majority of Bohemian calico factories employed female workers as well, only men appeared as members in all workers' societies. Women's societies were banned by the authorities and would not have been registered on a general principle and the statutes of brotherly societies founded by men usually explicitly precluded women workers from joining.[50]

The funds were made up of all members' contributions collected in the form of a fixed wage deduction. All members also had both active and passive suffrage in elections to the position of fund representative and other positions that were needed to run the fund (book-keeper, controller, and so on).[51]

The societies not only provided a material minimum but, more importantly, served as places where social capital was produced and specific practices of masculine, working-class solidarity were cultivated. These practices were demonstrated in specific performative acts that, to a certain extent, also constituted the working-class community as an internally cohesive subject capable of organized action.

It was no coincidence that the highest contributions paid out from the funds were those covering the costs of workers' funerals. Public funerals were one of the best occasions for the manifestation of solidarity and for the strengthening of the internal cohesion of working-class collectives through a ritualized, performative procedure. In this respect, Bohemia was no exception from other working-class milieus, where precisely public, spectacular funerals often fulfilled the main role in constituting a collective subject.[52]

For instance, in the case of a member's death, the largest Prague workers' fund, operating in the Porges factory, paid out to the surviving relatives a sum that was approximately sixty times higher than a weekly allowance in case of sickness.[53] What was characteristic for the working-class masculine culture was that in the case of the death or sickness of a woman, the fund paid out only half the amount.[54]

Workers' societies operated on the basis of consensual internal mechanisms and their elected representatives had only limited formal powers. Subsidies were paid according to rules adopted by all members, and any other decisions related to the use of the fund's finances were taken on the basis of a universal vote. For example, in autumn 1844 the fund in the Prague Porges factory was able to generate a considerable financial surplus and, following a collective meeting of all members, the decision was taken to deposit the money in one of the existing Bohemian banks (Böhmische Sparkasse) in order to gain even more revenue in the future.[55]

Although membership in funds was formally optional, the members usually exerted pressure on their unorganized colleagues, resulting in the membership of all printing workers.[56] Some funds even had membership of all employees incorporated in their statutes, stipulating that "... anybody, who makes his living in the factory, is obliged to join its fund. If he does not want to contribute, he will have to seek a job elsewhere."[57]

The everyday functioning of these funds thus constituted an environment in which an overwhelming majority of male printing workers socialized in a working collective and learned the codes of its cultural self-representation.

When the protests started to erupt in all of the Bohemian textile regions during the summer of 1844, they were largely influenced by the specific masculinity that stemmed from the working-class culture, institutionally based in the network of workers' funds and brotherly societies.

Almost immediately after the first wave of arrests and the outbreak of armed reprisals, a majority of workers' societies was flexibly transformed into funds supporting strikers or arrested workers and their families. Financial support, however, was provided only to male printing workers and not, for example, to female cutters.[58] Many funds even explicitly stipulated the sex of the strike subsidy beneficiaries, who were to be only "... the wives of imprisoned men."[59] From the outset, participation of women in strike unrest was not only unthinkable to the male leaders, but also practically unfeasible because in such cases an arrested woman's family was not entitled to any material support to compensate for a loss of earnings.

A gender division thus sedimented around the 1844 summer strikes. The figure of a male worker was fostered, whose wage did not provide for the whole family but who performed skilled, physically demanding labor and was therefore entitled to become a workers' fund member. In the case of struggle on behalf of this male labor, he was then consequently entitled to receive the fund's financial support.

The workers' societies that were rapidly transformed into strike funds, however, did play a determining role in the working-class protests not only from the viewpoint of finance, but also in relation to their practical organization. When the Prague police unraveled the network of leading protest organizers at the turn of 1844 and 1845, in almost every factory it accused the elected representatives of the local funds.[60]

Everywhere these representatives played the role of the main protest organizers inside the factories and the key contact points for the coordination of strike activities with other production sites. In June and July 1844, when agitators from Prague, for example, travelled to other restless areas in order to coordinate joint action, the first and most important person they sought was always the local fund representative. Joint tactics then stemmed from discussions with him, and it was automatically assumed that he would easily push through the agreed plans amongst other factory workers. That all the discussions about the future actions will take place in the setting of the respective workers fund and hence only with the attendance of men, was self-explanatory.[61]

The specific character of working-class protests did not transcend patterns of behavior that had been cultivated in the masculine environment of the collective funds, dominated by their elected leaders. These leaders, however, represented a very specific social group. An overwhelming majority of them belonged to the oldest generation of printing workers between forty to fifty-five years of age. As skilled printing workers they had performed their jobs for decades without interruption. At the same time they held the positions of fund representatives or clerks for a long period of time, usually no less than five years.

For example, the fund leader of the biggest Prague calico factory, forty-nine-year-old Josef Ulbrich, had worked as a printing worker since his training in 1814, and held the position of a fund representative for seven years. His clerk, forty-nine-year-old Karl Sacher, received his indenture in 1816 and since 1833 had been a committee member in various printing workers' funds, that is, for a

period of eleven years.[62] The fund leader in Epstein's calico factory, Anton Schwarz, had worked as a printing worker continuously since 1810 and performed the function of fund representative since 1834, that is, for ten years.[63] The leader of the fund in the Prague Brandeiss factory, thirty-nine-year-old Josef Seiler, had earned his income as a printing worker for two decades and held his fund position for ten years.[64] A similar age structure and professional career was shared not only by fund representatives in Prague and its suburbs. The fund leader in the North Bohemian town of Kosmonosy, fifty-year-old Wenzel Thomas, for instance, had printed cloth for almost thirty years and administered the local workers' fund for nine years.[65]

Since workers' funds had the habit of summoning general meetings of all their members four times a year, in summer 1844 a majority of their representatives had attended at least eighty such meetings, directly chairing about forty of them.[66] Thus, all of them had rich experiences with the ritualized proceedings of mass meetings of male workers' groups, where the floor was formally given over, attendance was recorded, significant issues were voted on, etc.[67] Such an experience of common interest and joint decision-making in a group of male workers then constituted the collective subject that became the main actor of the protests.

For many years the representatives also administered all legal issues related to the operation of the workers' funds, and within the workers' collective they acquired a considerable amount of authority. During the organized protests they were able to draw on and augment this experience. The rapid transformation of the original insurance funds into strike supporting associations, providing affected workers with necessary financial aid, further strengthened their reputation. As a consequence of their influence, the fund's representatives imprinted the working-class protests with a character that was familiar to them—in large part reproducing the well-established patterns of behavior repeatedly cultivated during fund meetings.

Apart from the peaceful conduct of collective negotiations, the voting and the presentation of official petitions to the Provincial Governor's Office, another detail may be given as an example. Almost immediately after the first wave of arrests, the workers on strike used their common financial resources in order to hire a lawyer who helped them formulate petitions and also represented arrestees during proceedings with relevant state bodies.[68] At this climax of the strike protests, it is hard to imagine that more emphasis might have been placed on formal legality and orderliness that was so anxiously followed by fund representatives and that simultaneously demonstrated their social status as valuable masculine laborers.

VI.

It was this particular version of masculinity, produced in the framework of workers' brotherly societies and funds, which was heavily endangered by the introduction of new machinery and which subsequently shaped the Bohemian working-class protests during the first half of the nineteenth century. The same quantity of work that had previously been performed by a skilled printing worker could now be carried out much more rapidly by a machine with a capacity incomparable to that of male laborers. One printing machine was able

to replace approximately twenty workers.[69] The newly introduced machines thus challenged the very basis of the workers' masculinity—the experience of skilled labor and the earnings and social status stemming from it.

Such a moment, however, is not unfamiliar in today's gender studies, rather on the contrary. As R. W. Connell notes, "In response to the challenge of such a physical experience of masculinity, many answers may arise. The only thing, however, that cannot be done by men in such a situation is to ignore it."[70]

The challenge to the core of their masculinity could not be ignored by printing workers in Vormärz Bohemia either. Mass working-class protests in summer 1844 thus expressed not only a changing socio-economic context, affecting the value of skilled labor, but also its specific masculine coding. The struggle for the protection of skill was therefore logically reduced predominantly to its male holders.[71] This reduction also heavily influenced the very character of collective protests that reproduced the established forms of masculine patterns of behavior already developed in the community of male workers.

The best evidence for such a statement is the course of the June protests themselves. In the declarations calling for workers to mobilize in order to take collective action and strike in solidarity, they appealed to each other as dignified and respectable "gentlemen and friends."[72] What was addressed was solidarity with their fellow workers throughout Bohemia, which was supposed to be expressed by means of organized and cultivated protest that would represent the respectable social status attributed to the printing workers by themselves.

The high level of organization, the minimum number of violent excesses focused exclusively on the destruction of machines, the organized presentation of their claims to the Provincial Governor, the peaceful departure following the Governor's refusal, the crowd consisting of at least 1,000 participants that gathered and moved around Prague and its suburbs in an orderly and easy fashion in terribly rainy and cold weather, so uncharacteristic of June, the long duration of the strike—all of this suggests a very strong internal cohesion of the protesting body, not unlike the case of Lancashire described by Paul A. Custer. On the other hand, however, in contrast to Lancashire, the cohesion of the protesting subject in the Bohemian case was strongly linked to the effacement of women and to the cultural demonstrations of masculinity.[73]

This gender dividing line was so influential that it even occluded the divisions of language and ethnicity, so often pushed to the fore in the historical research on the multiethnic Habsburg Empire. This can be illustrated by the structure of the protesting workers who formed a completely heterogeneous group as far as language and ethnic origin were concerned. For example, when the Prague investigating commission interrogated over five hundred workers who had been arrested in front of the Perštýn lodging house, the questions often had to be translated from Czech to German and *vice versa*.[74] Some of the arrested men obviously spoke only one of these languages and many of them did not even come from the Bohemian lands but from Saxony or Berlin.[75] They were, however, all arrested at the same time, in the same place and all of them played an active part in the ongoing unrests. The very fact that some protesters did not even understand each other did not prevent them from forming a coherent protesting body. Self-positioning into the role of the holders of valuable masculine labor, and a sense of the need to protect it, together overrode any differences of ethnicity and language.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that the early labor movement in Bohemia was shaped by the relatively strict discursive separation of male and female worlds and their integral link to the sphere of labor and production on one hand, and the sphere of reproduction and consumption on the other hand. Thus, the situation in Central Europe more closely resembled the case of working-class formation described by Anna Clark and others as having a significant dividing line between male and female actors, than to the composite, gender-mixed working-class culture portrayed by Paul A. Custer.

The masculine identity of the early Bohemian labor movement considerably influenced its collective actions. These were formed and borne by a specific group inside the working-class itself whose interests it was supposed to protect. The form of the protest was heavily influenced by the experiences and the value horizons of organized male workers and their ideas of an appropriate form of the cultural representation of working-class masculinity. Women were largely excluded from the workers' collective and hence from working-class culture and protest as well. Their sporadic protest activities were, compared to those of their male counterparts, characterized by a lower level of organization, more spontaneity and greater radicalism.

The labor movement in Bohemia prior to 1848 was thus a collective of agents united by a specific perception of skilled wage labor as a male prerogative. The strong discursive interconnection of productivity and masculinity significantly conditioned its masculine composition as well as the forms of its cultural representation, making it significantly different from its Lancashire counterpart described by Paul A. Custer. All of this would not have been possible without marginalizing Josefína Müllerová and her female colleagues.

Endnotes

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1. The articles of Joan W. Scott and Catherine Hall are widely acknowledged to be the most stimulating for the early discussions in this respect, with others adding significant contributions and impulses as well. Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), 68–92; Catherine Hall, "The Tale of Samuel and Jemima: Gender and Working-Class Culture in Nineteenth-Century England," in *E. P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (Philadelphia, 1990), 78–102. For other contributions, see, for example: Sally Alexander, "Women, Class, and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of Feminist History," *History Workshop* 17 (1984): 133–49; Laura Levine Frader and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 1996). For a recent overview, see Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice. Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca, London 2006), 123–38; Katrina Navickas, "What Happened to Class?

New Histories of Labour and Collective Action in Britain," *Social History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 192–204.

2. Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, 1995).

3. Paul A. Custer, "Refiguring Jemima: Gender, Work and Politics in Lancashire 1770–1820," *Past & Present* 195 (May 2007): 126–58.

4. See the seminal essay collection: Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World. Essays Towards a Global Labor History* (Leiden and Boston, 2008).

5. For a comprehensive overview of the historiography on Central and Eastern Europe in the past two decades, see Sórin Antohi and Balász Trencsényi and Peter Apor, eds., *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest and New York, 2006).

6. Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe 1850–2000* (Oxford, 2002), 64–66.

7. Pavel Kolář and Michal Kopeček, "A Difficult Quest for New Paradigms: Czech Historiography After 1989," in *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, eds. Sórin Antohi, Balász Trencsényi, and Peter Apor (Budapest and New York, 2006), 198.

8. For a summarizing account of pre-1989 Czech research on labor history, see Jiří Matějček, "Die Arbeiterbewegung in den böhmischen Ländern bis zum Jahre 1914. Emanzipation der Arbeiterschaft oder eine Proletariatshegemonie?," *Mitteilungsblatt des Institusts für Soziale Bewegungen* 23 (2000): 27–35.

9. There is a huge amount of research carried out by Czech historians on the early industrialization of Bohemia in the first half of the nineteenth century. For practical reasons extensive references to literature in the Czech language are relinquished here as well as further in the text. For an English language overview, see David F. Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire 1750–1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles and London, 1984), 38–73.

10. *Eine Stimme aus Böhmen über die neusten industriellen und Merkantilischen Verhältnisse dieses Landes* (Leipzig, 1846), 1.

11. For extensive empirical evidence, see Arnošt Klíma, "Domestic Industry, Manufactory and Early Industrialization in Bohemia," *The Journal of European Economic History* 18 (1989): 509–27.

12. Jiří Purš, "Struktur und Dynamik der industriellen Entwicklung in Böhmen im letzten Viertel des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 2 (1965): 107.

13. Arnošt Klíma, "The Beginning of the Machine-Building Industry in the Czech Lands in the First Half of the 19th Century," *The Journal of European Economic History* 1 (1975): 76.

14. Here Switzerland is the most notable example. See Pavla Horská, *Kapitalistická industrializace a středoevropská společnost* (Prague, 1970), 26–53.

15. I would like to thank Ing. Václav Pokorný from the Czech Hydrometeorological Institute for providing the meteorological information used in the text.

16. Zdeněk V. Tobolka, *Textiláci. První průkopníci dělnického hnutí v Čechách* (Praha, 1950), 43.

17. Report of the Governor's investigating commission of August 4, 1844 on Prague printing workers' unrests, National Archives of the Czech Republic in Prague (NA), collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 461.

18. Arnošt Klíma, "Die Arbeiterunruhen in Böhmen 1844," in *Demokratische und soziale Protestbewegungen in Mitteleuropa 1815–1848/49*, hrsg. Helmut Reinalter (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), 238–44.

19. Fritz Walter, "Die Böhmischen Arbeiterunruhen des Jahres 1844," *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung* 11 (1929): 721–23.

20. Tobolka, *Textiláci. První průkopníci dělnického hnutí v Čechách*, 48.

21. Karel Novotný, *Severočeští tiskaři kartounu v 1. polovině 19. století* (Praha, 1993), 151–228. Vladimír Ruda, "Události roku 1844 v Boleslavském kraji," *Sborník archivních prací* 8 (1958): 50–97.

22. NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 88, fol. 148–55.

23. Relatively large publicity was given to disputes between textile workers and their employers since the 1820s. See, for example, the unrests of calico printing workers in the Porges factory in Prague in 1823: NA, collection 874/3, Police Headquarters 1824–1830, archival box 99.

24. See Jiří Kořalka, "Protest gegen technologische Innovation: Maschinensturm in der böhmischen und mährischen Textilindustrie des Vormärz," *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde* 20 (1990): 87–91; Jiří Radimský, "Dělnické bouře v Brně roku 1843" (Workers Riots in Brno 1843), *Český lid* 4 (1949): 9–13.

25. See Otto Urban, *Die Tschechische Gesellschaft 1848–1918* (Wien, 1994), 82.

26. See Josef Polišenský and Karel Novotný and Věra Vomáčková, *Boj dělníků na stavbách našich prvních železnic* (Praha, 1956), 59–74; Walter, "Die Böhmischen Arbeiterunruhen des Jahres 1844," 717–34.

27. NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 257–94.

28. See Eberhard Wolfgramm, "Der böhmische Vormärz, im besonderen die böhmischen Arbeiterunruhen des Jahres 1844 in ihren sozialen und politischen Zusammenhängen," in *Aus 500 Jahren deutsch-tschechoslovakischer Geschichte*, hrsg. Karl Obermann and Josef Polišenský (Berlin, 1958), 194–221; Miloslav Novák, "Rakouská policie a politický vývoj v Čechách před r. 1848," *Sborník archivních prací* 1–2 (1953): 119–23.

29. During the early 1840s official Austrian statistics recorded a total of 1389 factories in the Bohemian lands; 442 of them, that is approximately one third, were textile factories.

See Cyril Horáček, *Počátky českého hnutí dělnického* (Praha, 1933), 22. For the prominent role of the textile industry in the early industrialization of Bohemian lands, see Arnošt Klíma, "Industrial Growth and Entrepreneurship in the Early Stages of Industrialization in the Czech Lands," *The Journal of European Economic History* 6 (1977): 549–74.

30. For a summarizing account as well as more particular examples, see Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman* (London, 2002), 182–198; Deborah Valenze, *The First Industrial Women* (Oxford, 1995); Ute Frévert, *Frauen-Geschichte zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), 80–92; Jean H. Quataert, "The Shaping of Women's Work in Manufacturing: Guilds, Households, and the State in Central Europe, 1648–1870," *The American Historical Review* 90 (December 1985): 1122–48.

31. Klíma, *Die Arbeiterunruhen*, 234–35.

32. Tobolka, *Textiláci. První průkopníci dělnického hnutí v Čechách*, 31–2.

33. Klíma, *Die Arbeiterunruhen*, 234–35.

34. The most severe excess was the public symbolic humilitaion of the Porges family. See the letter of Anton W. to an anonymus recipient of August 10, 1844, in: Josef Volf, "Příspěvek k dělnickým bouřím roku 1844," *Socialistická revue Akademie* 27 (1924): 387–89.

35. *Die Unruhen in Böhmen. Ein Wort zu seiner Zeit* (Leipzig, 1845), 21–7.

36. NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 222.

37. "Když je všechny odvedli, shromáždily se ženy, šly dům od domu a strhly s sebou odbojníky, každá si nabrala plnou zástěru kamení, a když napřed vytloukly všechna okna v továrnách, šly v houfu na Dobytčí trh a vrhly se krupobitím kamení na vojsko." The letter of Anton W. to an anonymus recipient of August 10, 1844, Volf: 388.

38. *Prag und die Prager* (Leipzig, 1845), 202–203; NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 194.

39. In summer 1844 many appeals circulated around Prague, in which the printing workers encouraged each other to remain peaceful "... as ordered by His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Štěpán." See testimony by Josef Ulbrich of 25th January 1845, in: Karel Novotný and Milan Myška, eds., *První kroky k vítězství. Čtení o počátcích našeho dělnického hnutí* (Praha, 1966), 315.

40. "... v Praze se před týhodnem pozvedly ženy a děti a chtěly ty tiskaře, otce rodin, zpátky" Věnceslav Metelka, *Ze života zapadlého vlastence* (Praha, 1982), 283.

41. This no doubt sounds better in Czech than it does in English:

> Ženy když to viděly,
> že jsou muži zavřeni,
> žalostně si naříkaly,
> sem tam s dětmi jsou běhaly,
> sbíraly pak kamení ...
> Song on the Revolt over the Printing Machine from 1848, in: Novotný and Myška, 257.

42. Ruda, "Události roku 1844 v Boleslavském kraji," 92–5.

43. Novotný, *Tiskaři*, 151–75.

44. For a comprehensive overview, see Gisela Bock, *Women in European history* (Oxford, 2002), 99–108; Rachel G. Fuchs, *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge and New York, 2005), 110–35.

45. "Tovaryš musí Prahu opustit a hledat práci v nějaké jiné továrně na venkově, a jakpak to může udělat tovaryš, který má na starosti ženu a děti, a těch je přece tolik, téměř většina?" Complaint of Prague Calico Printing Wokers to the Bohemian Land Governor of April 30, 1819, in: Novotný and Myška, 125.

46. Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995), 196.

47. Øystein G. Holter, *Gender, Patriarchy and Capitalism* (Oslo, 1997). For the Bohemian environment see Antonín Robek and Mirjam Moravcová and Jarmila Št'astná, eds., *Stará dělnická Praha. Život a kultura pražských dělníků 1848–1939* (Praha, 1981), 122–26.

48. "Tak ty jsi chtěla mít Františka pana studenta, ne, ne, to se nestane. Tiskařem bude jako já... V sobotu dole koupíš režné plátno, uděláš mu zástěru a v pondělí ala hajdy se mnou do fabriky. A je to má vůle a ani slovo víc a při tom zůstane, aby nebylo po tvé a synáčka vůli. '... V pondělí ráno po snídani otec se oblékl, hrubě si matky ani nevšimnul a pravil ke mně:, No, jsi již připraven, ty studente?!' " František Hais, *Vzpomínky pražského písničkáře 1808–1897* (Praha, 1985), 45–6.

49. Raewyn W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Los Angeles and Berkeley, 2000): 11.

50. Statutes of 13 workers' funds in Prague and its suburbs confiscated by the Provincial Governor's Office during the 1845 investigation: NA, Bohemian Provincial Governor, General Register, 1841–1855, archival box 2923 (Governor's commission on working class unrests in 1844).

51. Novotný, *Tiskaři*, 99–113.

52. Paul Johnson, *Saving and Spending, The Working Class Economy in Britain 1870–1939* (Oxford, 1985), 43–45; van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, 111–12.

53. NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 565.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., fol. 567.

56. Novotný, *Tiskaři*, 100.

57. "... ist jeder welcher seine Nahrung in dieser Fabrik findet, verpflichtet, hier in Kasa einzutreten. Im Falle er nicht hier steuern will, auch seine Arbeit weiter zu suchen hat." Artikel 10 der Statuten der Holleschowitzer Bruder- und Krankenkassa, NA, Bohemian Provincial Governor, General Register, 1841–1855, archival box 2923 (Governor's commission on working class unrests in 1844).

58. Contributions for arrested and striking workers were approximately 40 Austrian pennies a day, i.e. a third of the usual daily wage. NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 592.

59. "... Weiber der gefangenen Männer" NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 566.

60. Ibid., fol. 587–91.

61. An illustrative example is the agitational journey of the Prague printing workers' envoy, Ignác Čáp, to Northern Bohemia in July 1844, reconstructed in detail by Karel Novotný. See Novotný, *Tiskaři*, 176–228.

62. NA, collection 874/2, Presidium of Police Headquarters, archival box 86, fol. 580.

63. Ibid., fol. 587.

64. Ibid., fol. 589.

65. Ibid., fol. 79.

66. Some societies even stipulated in their Statutes that regular general meetings were to be held every three months. See Statutes of the fund in the Przibram calico factory: NA, collection Bohemian Provincial Governor, General Register, 1841–1855, kart. 2923 (Governor's commission on working class unrests in 1844).

67. See the testimony by Josef Mottel on the functioning of the Porges factory workers' fund of January 25, 1845, in: Novotný and Myška, 316.

68. Testimony by Josef Ulbrich of January 25, 1845, in: Ibid., 311.

69. Tobolka, *Textiláci. První průkopníci dělnického hnutí v Čechách*, 30.

70. Connell, *Masculinities*, 55.

71. This passage draws inspiration from Gregory Kaster's study of the American labor movement: Gregory L. Kaster, "Labor's True Man. Organized Workingmen and the Language of Manliness in the USA, 1827–1877," *Gender and History* 13 (2001): 24–64.

72. See the wording of workers' circulars in the summer 1844 in: Novotný and Myška, 264–65.

73. For an even more detailed account of the Prague working class protests during June 17–24, 1844, see Walter, "Die Böhmischen Arbeiterunruhen des Jahres 1844," 718–34; Tobolka, *Textiláci. První průkopníci dělnického hnutí v Čechách*, 43–53.

74. Jaroslav Charvát, "Výslechy stávkujících dělníků roku 1844 v Praze. Příspěvek k metodice studia hromadných výslechů jakožto historického pramene," *Dějiny a Přítomnost* 1 (1937): 35.

75. Auszug aus dem Verhörungsprotokoll des Gustav Adolph Kreblin vom 21. Juni 1844, NA, collection Bohemian Provincial Governor, General Register, 1841–1855, archival box 2923 (Governor's commission on working class unrests in 1844).