PROTEST UNDER COMMUNISM

The Pilsen Revolt of June 1, 1953

Jakub Šlouf

The present study examines one of the most far-reaching protests in Stalinist Czechoslovakia, the revolt which broke out on June 1, 1953, in the Western Bohemian city of Plzeň/Pilsen, triggered by a currency reform that was announced on that date. Applying the so-called “new social movements” theory to the Plzeň events, the author places them in the larger context of comparable protest actions which took place in the whole Plzeň region between 1948 and 1953. This allows him to distinguish between several cultures of protest, all of which had their share of influence on the course of this particular revolt. These are: First, a socially motivated movement among factory workers, second, a movement composed of students and young workers of Western orientation, and third, latent tensions within the communist party causing passive resistance among the rank-and-file members against local party elites. Combined, these very different cultures of protest developed an enormous power. Since the protesters were so heterogeneous, the June 1953 Plzeň revolt cannot be interpreted as an anti-communist uprising pure and simple.

EUGENICS AND FEMALE EMBODIMENT IN CZECHOSLOVAK PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS DURING THE 1960S AND 1970S

Victoria Shmidt

This study deals with policies directed at women in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and 1970s. The author has studied several public campaigns in the press and on the radio that aimed at changing women’s behaviour. Their goal was to encourage women to use the contraceptive pill. This new practice was described as natural, progressive and self-determined. However, unwanted behavioural patterns (such as abortion, postponing motherhood) were condemned as old-fashioned or unhealthy. This was based on a pronatalistic policy aimed at increasing the birth rates of the majority society. While Czech and Slovak women should have two or three children, access to abortion was facilitated for Roma women and women with disabilities, but also for women from socially disadvantaged families. This image of the modern socialist woman, mistress and mother, shows clear continuities with the time of the so-called national rebirth in the 19th century.