

Marie Haisová, the team of the Agentura GAIA, o. s.

Quo Vadis, Femina?
The Vision of Women on Sustainable Life



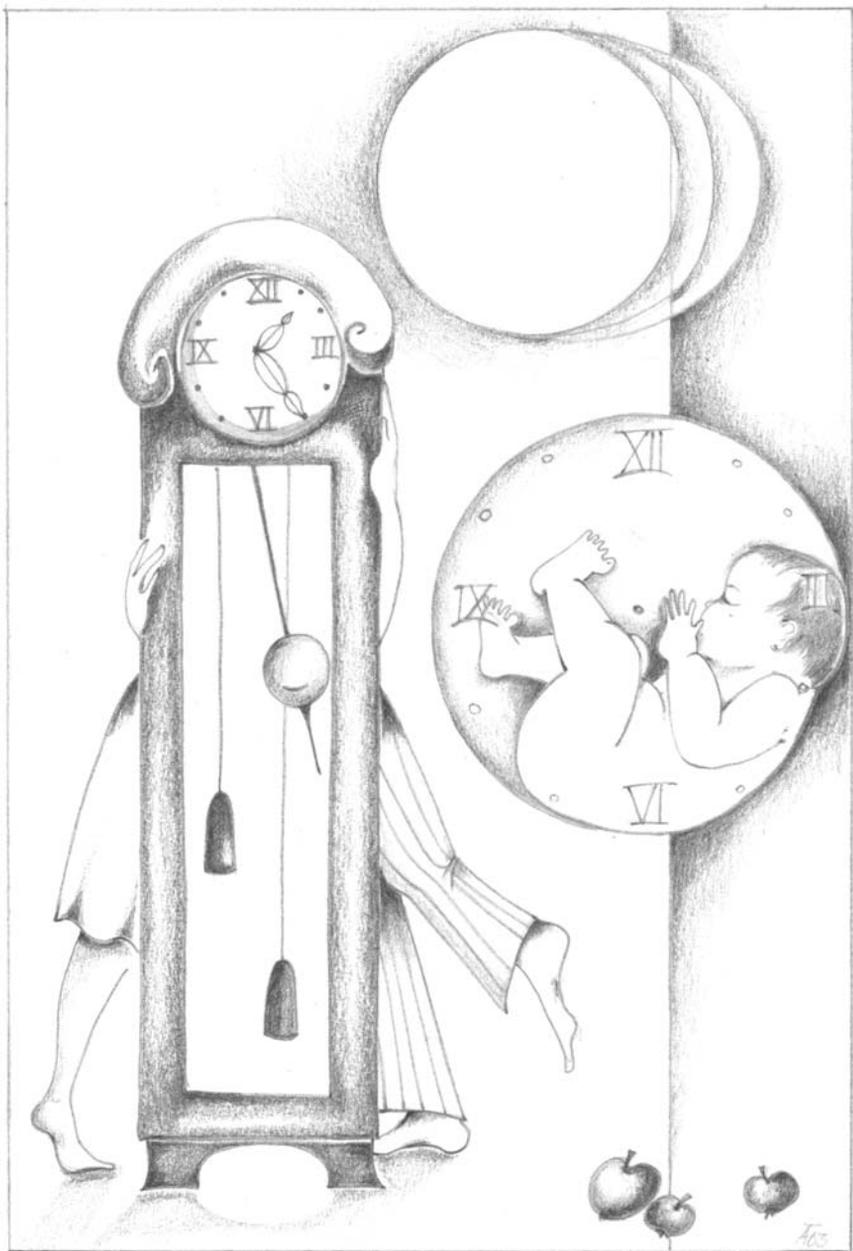


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Foreword

This book is about the outcome of the Quo Vadis, Femina? project, the objective of which was to draw up the current female vision, their ideas on what they want and need, and what makes them flourish besides their families and broader society. It is about women, for women, about nature, society, and sustainable life. For many centuries, Western civilization has been little interested in the minds of women, and what they feel and want. We were the neck that may move the head, but the head always decided on the direction in which it was to move. We do not have our herstory, philosophy, politology inspite of the fact that we are the ones who give birth to the new generations, take care of the babies and the elderly, and usually ensure all basic existential needs. In the past, there was little time to think about what was going on around us, what our place was in the sunshine, and to understand our own rights. We were born to the world of work and duties. Whilst today, most men still only do what they want to do, women do what must be done—feed children, dress them, bring them up, prepared for life. It is more than obvious that those who do not have any opportunity or time to make clear what they want, will be enforced to accept the will of others. Upon the accession to the European Union and financial means from the European Social Fund, accompanied with a demand for change and innovation, there is a gleam of hope for the Czech women based on equal opportunities and conditions under which horizontal topics can be adhered to, and where an emphasis is put on sustainable life, community cooperation and an informed society.

To awaken the interest of overworked women, who are subjected to strong social pressures to educate themselves their entire lives, to be exemplary housewives, responsible for the upbringing of children and the security of elderly parents, to keep their bodies and minds fit, to dress well, and of course to be chill-out lovers and good wives—it was a difficult task on which we worked during the first year of the project. Besides its content, there was also very demanding and exhausting managerial and personnel work. An authentic description of the process of project management and the accompanying ideas are contained in the Project Diary that were published monthly in the Endowment Journal.

In the first year, we organised four round tables with various age categories of women. A twenty-year old woman differs completely in opinion and life expectations than a woman in her say thirties, forties or sixties. Besides this, it was necessary to test the ability of women to communicate across the generations, and to find out whether the younger ones would agree amongst themselves. We put together a basic community of women who were to think about the following topics: Home, Who Governs the World?, Economically Independent, Socially Dependent, and

Possible Actions to be defined. A press release was issued about each of the meetings, and a discussion was opened on the website www.quovadisfemina.cz, and besides the round tables, lectures were organised in which the general public were enabled to get acquainted with the ideas behind the project.

The publication includes simple, real life case studies with brief comments allowing for concrete situations to be linked to the more general level of analogy. An example of a peaceful and loving coexistence with men and women living in harmony with nature or a human community, can hardly be found within the available information. Although one such community is to be found in Estepa, Southern Spain, where they utilize resources with maximum efficiency, they explain that they put it down to the fact that self-confident, wise women are represented in the decisive structures on an equal fifty-fifty basis. Way back in history, an example can be found of a peaceful and loving co-existence between men and women in ancient Crete. We are living at a time of a shift from modernism to postmodernism. We can learn the fundamentals of this shift in the final chapters, which gives examples from real life and applies questions which may lead to a better understanding of the self.

In 2007, the European Union is celebrating its 50-year anniversary. It is the year of equal opportunities and Agentura GAIA, o. s. is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. We believe that this publication, which is to be published on the occasion of these three anniversaries, will allow for a better understanding of women and men and a comprehensive view of the wider social phenomena.

The publication targets all women and men who are not indifferent as regarding the fate of mankind and our planet.

Prague, March 21, 2007

Marie Haisová



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Endowment Journal Project Summary

The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Czech Republic.

The title of the project which was supported by the grant

“Quo Vadis, Femina?—The Vision of Women on Sustainable Life”

Brief information about the subject that is the receiver of the grant

The GAIA Agency (Agentura GAIA, o. s.) is a civic association the mission of which is to seek for new forms of interpersonal communication in the areas of environmental protection, education and popular cultural activities. Through its actions, the agency contributes to a more harmonious society where horizontal thinking is on a par with the vertical, which is the basic precondition for an efficient communication among people in general, however, here it especially concerns the situation where men understand women and women understand men. Concrete projects have been implemented in three main categories: Greenery is Life, Women and the Environment, Alternatives to Consumer Life Style.

Motives that led to the decision to implement the project

The author of the project—Marie Haisová, MBA, has been dealing with the subject of equal opportunities since 1993, when she began to professionally work as a director in the NGO sector. She has implemented a number of projects, ranging from the influence of women on strategic decision-making to sustainable development. Gradually, I realized that most activities are just a reaction, a response, which tries to resolve the after-effects. What is lacking is a proactive, positive approach. “Bread and roses” was the slogan of women in the past who were denied the right to education, the right to vote or be voted for. Their goal then was economic security, social respect and esteem. What is the vision of women today,

what do they want to achieve through the gender mainstreaming program of the European Union? Can different values be promoted within a society that adores “bread and games”—money, TV, and football? Will a society that is able to listen to women, direct its investments away from fighters to education and teach peace, tolerance and mutual respect among people, nature and the miracle of life, in all its forms? The writer Virginia Woolf thought at the beginning of the last century that economic freedom is the precondition for freedom on a general level and the current assistance programs implemented in this area are based on this philosophy. Despite this, those who give life and maintain it in good, as well as bad times, are provided a minimum leverage in the decision-making process on public matters, in policy-making, public life or the media, where they could influence public opinion. They usually have to resolve the everyday problems and celebrate the joys of school, relationships, and families on their own, isolated. The situation in the Czech Republic not only gives evidence of the misunderstood role of women in society, but also about the society itself and its values on a general level. Women cannot be separated from men. They are communicating vessels and any disbalance in the division of roles, both in families and society, takes its revenge on both men and women and society as a whole. The Quo Vadis, Femina? project aspires to contribute to an increased harmony and balance at both personal and social levels.

Project objectives

The objective of the project is to elaborate on the Vision of Women about the Future and the impact of the female principle on society, with various age categories of women and various professions to be engaged in the project and cooperation developed between selected gender NGOs which deal with the issues of gender mainstreaming. We will identify the stereotypes and problems that have not been, as yet, resolved, surviving on society, for many generations, between men and women in the Czech Republic. We will describe these stereotypes and paradigms in exact words, we will make them public and talk about them so that the whole population will gradually become aware of them. The core target is to identify what has not been revealed so far because it has been taboo. Further steps to be taken from this point are to become aware of the gravity of the situation, and then start to eliminate prejudice and stereotypes concerning the equality of chance between women and men. It is a priority goal of modern society and one of the pillars of the European Union.

The programme which the project is funded under
Measure 2.2. Equal Opportunities SPD 3—The European Social Fund

Total costs of the project

5,892,100 CZK

Previous experience
with grants awarded from the pre-accession funds

1999—Environmental journey to common Europe

2000—Time is life, equality between male and female principle

Practical experience gained during the preparation
of the project, the drawing up of the application

The project was not successful the first time. The comments provided by its evaluators suggest that the project evokes emotion and provokes; the a priori condemnation that is not based on rational substantiation was evident. The author took this into account, left out some ideas, was more pragmatic, evidenced her competency by articles and promotional materials from the events realized before. The project was supported to the required amount the second time.

And finally, a bit of the “smell of man”

The project was implemented within the time period from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007. It has been a creative work, the progress of which was followed up and commented on by men and women who read the Endowment Journal published by the Economia publishing house. Not only the goal, but the journey itself has its own meaning, which is good to be aware of. I was glad we had a chance to jointly “debug” all the problems so that we could support a smoother process of the planned upcoming period 2007–2013. I wish for the resources coming to the Czech Republic to be taken as a challenge, testing our ability to make use of our opportunities and capabilities. The Czechs have a good reputation in Europe that must not only be maintained, but even improved.

Diary of the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” Project

TUESDAY December 13th, 2005

Since the beginning of December the Tax Office has been on at me to attend to my various responsibilities and so we arranged a meeting for this Tuesday. I asked them if I should bring with me our official stamp and the charter of our organization, suspecting that the problem might lie in the fact that we had changed GAIA's registered office in summer. This had been decided on in the General Meeting and yet I hadn't notified the authorities of this change. We had run out of money and had to leave the office located at Lublaňská 18 that I had reconstructed, furnished and put into operation with my own hands in a house which I too had managed to save from privatization. In the end, we had to relocate to my own house and to my own cellar. The right time to bear in mind that your failures shall be presented somewhere! I was asked to bring with me the accounting books from the years 2001 and 2002, which were to be checked by them—and to do so during the Christmas holidays. The moving of our office finally, however, turned out to be to our advantage as we now get to change the authority under whose competence we now struggle. Hence a fond farewell was said to one another having drawn up a report to confirm that we now belonged to another municipal district authority which would inevitably have its own worries and joys to contend with.

I made use of the opportunity to ask the officers present of their opinion regarding the possibility of working from home and to invoice a part of my telephone bill and rent. As I introduced our Quo Vadis, Femina? two-year long project to them, I also mentioned that I lacked the energy to search for a cheap office, which I would then have to furnish, commute to, or –as the case may be– to get it started up... From the legal point of view, there is no problem; I should only be careful not to store documents in the fridge nor welcome visitors in my bedroom. We laughed together. Nonetheless, I had to mention that the project had been funded by the European Social Fund meaning that there might be some other law superior to our law. I remember a question asked at some seminar when a person interested in applying for support from the fund asked whether he could turn his garage into an office as it would cost only five thousand Czech crowns monthly, while he would have to pay nearly twenty thousand if he rented a corresponding room. The advice then was—rent the one for twenty. When I take into account that projects are limited financially and that I would have to invest money to get rooms instead of people simply because I need an alibi in order not to be suspected of wanting to enrich myself, then I really do not know what it's all about. Thanks to a few big thieves we are all considered suspicious a priori.

MONDAY December 19th

Our project is racing to be launched, so I summoned the first meeting of the team to be held at my home well in advance. Try gathering people at the time when your project is ready to start! Everybody has other responsibilities which just cannot be easily shaken off. I got in touch with my former colleagues, all of whom I had had excellent experiences with—not only professionally, as I enjoyed the human qualities of their characters. I don't want to waste my lifetime on fruitless disputes, dealing with dirty tricks, nor small-mindedness; I have lived through so many of these such situations that I do not even want to think about them. I want my work to not only be work, but also joy, creativity, mutual inspiration, and confidence. Before we met, we had communicated by e-mail so that I knew that some functions were in higher demand than others. I had to come to a decision without causing any ill feeling. Some women refused my offer directly, mentioning their babies or jobs as the reason... I had read so many times about flexible working hours in the documents from the European Union that I admitted frankly that our office would be in my flat; I have four rooms; one of them will be our workroom from which we will make calls and organize all the necessary things, but otherwise independence is expected and required, since all we have to do has been stated in the project, although we will have regular meeting once a week or more often if need be. I repeated a touch of management theory; I neither want to be autocratic like Zeus, nor do I want to divide work into divisions like Apollo, nor dance around my colleagues like Dionysus. I imagine the team working in the style of Athena, where tasks will mingle, each of us will be responsible for her own segment, we will communicate with one another and make decisions jointly during our team meetings. One of these future colleagues ran out twice, mobile in hand, so I have strictly asked for mobile phones to be switched off during the time we work together which is non-negotiable. For me, making a phone call while talking to somebody else is both impolite and bad manners. Emphasis is to be placed on time management; knowing that it is always a problem for women with kids, their time being subject to illness, responsibilities and so on. Nevertheless... I have emphasised proactive thinking, i.e. not to make any decisions nor organize work by mobile at ten on Sunday evening.

Another topic is work contracts. The project will be funded in 20 percent installments, so I proposed employment contracts, each for a fixed period of four months—including myself. They began to grumble, demanding a two-year contract. However none was able to answer my question as to what we would do in case things did not develop according to our plans. What if the next installment is delayed? Who will pay penalties accrued from social and health insurance and from what? What if the administrative authorities do not like our monitoring report and decide not to send the next grant? Who would then pay the redundancy

payment and from what? Finally we reached an agreement and broke up the meeting, bearing in mind that we were starting to rewrite history and divided the first tasks up amongst ourselves—from having a website done to identifying participants of round tables, including their topics, and to finding a premises where they could be held. Then my colleagues left for their homes and I, in a completely unmanagerial style, and, after all, in a style lacking team spirit, washed the tea cups and glasses from which we drank the wine to toast the success of the project whilst looking forward to things to come.

MONDAY January 2nd, 2006

On Christmas Eve I was with my sons. Before I fried the carp, my boys managed to “liquidate” the Internet connection and so I was left without contact to the surrounding world during the whole holiday season. The social requirement for the holiday being quiet, peace and family serenity was mixed with anger. What belongs to mother, belongs to everybody; what belongs to male family members is sacred, which is in fact what was experienced by the UN Association in Copenhagen. When they distribute their humanitarian aid, what they give to men remains unto the men, while the women share with the whole family.

I spent New Year’s Eve with a Japanese woman who had been staying with me since 26th December. In her company I realised the need for a personal vision, i.e. the importance of the project I was to start working on from January. Together, we not only visited beautiful parts of Prague, but also welfare facilities; a shelter for homeless people, a home with day care, old people’s homes. We also went to the local municipal office where she got acquainted with Czech social policy in general. With respect to the project, we learnt that the tragedy of the local aging woman is the lack of interest in anything else except their family. They have been working hard their whole life, only caring for their closest family members, not having time for themselves to develop any interests. When their children left home and their partner died, they were left alone. They do not understand music, cannot draw, are made tired by philosophy, are not interested in politics, cannot practice any sports, and so what is left is just an emptiness connected with boredom and dissatisfaction with life.

TUESDAY January 3rd

Today, we had an operational meeting regarding the project. The administrator brought the employment contracts which also need to be discussed with the accountant. It has turned out that what is routine in large institutions where certain employees deal with personnel matters, some with economy, others with accounting, and yet others with the lawyers, has to be done in a small organisation in a way similar to that of a family. Furthermore, we have been learning as

we work. It was a surprise for some that their payment assessment would not state the sum that is determined per person in the budget, but the sum as has been reduced by the tax paid by the employer.

THURSDAY January 5th

The accountant came to see me. Work loads and the terminology of the employment contract have been specified. I have already known for quite a long time that the lowest sum in the budget has been calculated for the round tables and the research coordinator, but she is to be lumbered with the same workload as the others according to her job description. It's easy to say, "Well, it's not such a big problem to agree on that, is it?" In good faith, I sent the complete project, including the budget, to all-potential colleagues, and now I'm going to savour their creativity hand in hand with cupidity. I'm starting to realize why wages are a taboo subject in most institutions as it keeps any potential conflict under control. On the other hand, how and when will we achieve a society comprising of emotionally mature people? The accountant has drawn up drafts of the employment contracts for two years with a three-month probationary period during which we are to see whether or not we get on well together.

FRIDAY January 6th

On the Three Magi, it was Friday—a holiday for me. In the morning I met an acquaintance who would be coordinating the Equal Opportunities Inspiration project, and we agreed to meet regularly to exchange information. In the afternoon I and the Public Relations coordinator visited the graphic artist who has been working on the design of our logo. We really like her woman with a flower in her mouth, looking into the distance. Nevertheless, we announce a competition and we will wait for further designs. I can imagine the dilemma when one is nicer than the other!

At the weekend I am home, rewriting the employment contracts to the standardized form of rights and responsibilities for both of the contracting parties. What the potential administrator has brought me has been copied from material from an institution that is managed according to the top-down model. I catch myself thinking that if I'm not able to agree with my people, then I would rather give up the project. Nevertheless, I have been drawing up general job descriptions, with a strong emphasis on work efficiency. I know that someone needs just a few hours to do the same work as others do in a few days.

SATURDAY January 7th

I am printing out the Manual for Grantees on my hand-held printer. I am pleasantly surprised—it is a good guide explaining what to do during the procedure.

During the trainings, people were in a cold sweat fearing what a horror this would be, but I have calmed down since then.

MONDAY January 9th

Today, it was the deadline for registering our employees to PSSZ (Prague Social Service Administration). The administrator and financial manager “lapsed”, and I had to find “substitutes” in a hurry. It was pretty stressful with my primitive technology. Finally, everything was sent out well and I returned home, quite exhausted, where I checked my e-mails to find the following anonymous message from n.znami@tiscali.cz: FEMINIST!!! IT IS NEARLY THE SAME AS—COMMUNIST—ISN'T IT, COMARADE?

FRIDAY January 13th

We are in the process of assessing the graphic design of our promotional leaflet and discussing the structure and strategy of round tables and research. The work will get done, I can already see that, but it really is very stressful. I recognize this due to a tic in my left eyelid. I also see that the democracy I have established leads to the situation where everybody is talking about everything, wanting to decide on everything, and although this may be nice, the responsibility nonetheless rests on my shoulders, which my colleagues need to be strongly reminded of.

TUESDAY January 17th

An operational meeting of the whole team has just finished, perhaps the most constructive yet, with the most tangible outcomes. I organised it in the form of a round table, made green tea for everybody, and prepared everything in a friendly atmosphere. It's not easy at all to begin a “soft” project that makes sense and does not become just a kind of babble. In my mind, I was reminded several times of Steinbeck's “Pearl”, with the only difference being that the money had not yet arrived although I console myself with the well-known saying that every beginning has its difficulties.

THURSDAY January 19th

A meeting with a member of the Board of the GAIA Agency about the selection procedure that we have organized regarding the design of our promotional materials and the project's logo and the development of the project's website. Every person has a different opinion. The member considers my front-runner for the logo to be the front-runner for holiness, totally inanimate; on the other hand, his front-runner seems pretty chaotic to me. Nevertheless, in comparison to the ESF's kempt logos I must admit that it has more contrast, and so I quickly call the PR coordinator to have them reworked by the hired designers so as to see how they

would look in various sizes. I am writing up the minutes from the last meeting and drawing up a database structure or rather a card index of potential participants in the project's round tables. Then, I visit the Environmental Centre where I would like to find nice clubrooms. The premises are located symbolically—on a hill; where there is fresh air, domestic animals, close to the countryside, yet not too far from the city centre where most people have their work to which they must commute.

FRIDAY January 20th

Another member of the Board of the GAIA Agency has written to me regarding the logo, "The logo slightly resembles a cross sign made over the women, giving up all hope, the symbol of the body gives me this feeling when I glance at it."

I'm sending a submissive query to esf@mpsv, whether they have any idea when we will receive the money? I have purchased mobile phones and prepaid credit from my own savings as the GAIA Agency has no backup funds it could use for these purposes.

SATURDAY January 21st

Be it Saturday or Sunday, day or night, the project keeps going round and round in my mind. I'm getting up at six in the morning to compile a well-arranged file with copies of the project summary, quotation, logo designs, budget, and the time schedule. I'm writing e-mails, including all thoughts that come to me during the night concerning what has to be settled. The evening is the time for me to go to the sauna; perhaps being the only way to burn these obstinate thoughts from my head.

WEDNESDAY February 8th

I've made up my mind to resolutely replace a part of our team members in the probationary period. I have come through an unbelievable transformation since the beginning of January; I feel somewhat cleaner, have decided not to conform to my maternal feelings of compassion, to forget the theorems that people are difficult to deal with, that there are some problems everywhere. Gradually, I am less manipulable, I am attaining plainspokenness, straightforwardness, which can be wrongly perceived as severity by those around me. Inside, I feel joyful, believing that I can surround myself with straightforward, honest people who will not evoke any paranoia or feelings of guilt within me. In the afternoon I visit a company which provides accounting services in order to verify that the advice given by our accountant and financial manager in one, is correct. I'm discovering that it is nonsense to cumulate these two functions when a person lacks experience with project management and the necessary scope of personal knowledge and vision. For

example she refuses to draw up a contract for work regarding the legal services I most needed in January since they were not accounted for in the budget. She has indicated how I could solve the situation. Of course by means of tricks which would get me entangled like a fly in a cobweb. The money has arrived and I communicated this directly to the Ministry of Labour; I wish it could stay like this for ever.

THURSDAY February 9th

I bought a dictaphone today, withdrew money from the bank, and found out that the personnel manager had not prepared the documents we needed for the fees to be paid because she “hadn’t known” that they were required. I wanted to arrange for an Internet banking system, but it cannot be used for subaccounts, which nobody told me when I was establishing it. I’m learning that I have to verify things several times, to be on my guard, even when dealing with so-called specialists.

SATURDAY February 11th

I returned a minute ago from a meeting of the Czech “Ashokas”, creative individuals who are able not only to think something up, but also to implement it. We are working in various areas, the activities carried out by many of them date back deep into the totalitarian regime. These years of experience seem of little value in the current situation of projects from SF. People who are working hard have problems to fill in a form in Benefit, which is printed out in Acrobat, where it is impossible to copy or paste individual parts when one needs them handy. We agreed that the converted are more fervant than the convertors. Many projects that were funded in the past directly from Brussels were written in Word, the budget in Excel; the technology was a servant, not the master. When you want to burn a project on a CD, you need to have technical equipment at quite a high level—if you don’t have it, it’s your hard luck. People who were doing a lot for public benefit for many years now have difficulties to get oriented in the jargon of JPD 3 and OP RLZ; being under work pressures, they do not have the time to learn it. One of our colleagues was pressured by the project administrator to organize a competitive tendering for promotional materials—printed match boxes, despite the fact there is only one company in the Czech Republic that produces them.

MONDAY February 13th

Today, I received the following text message: “Marie, may I suggest that I be the financial manager in the project, but under a pseudonym. I do not insist on anything else. Realise who can support you well... ” The scapegoat won’t leave well enough alone.

TUESDAY February 14th

The need to resolve personnel-related matters is also an integral part of any project of this size. Yesterday, I took a risk and gave notice to two colleagues in their probationary period just before the launch of the first public event held within our project, hoping this would stimulate them to give of their best, which actually happened. Nevertheless, I can sincerely say it is easier to get notice than to give it. Now I want to allow myself a week to think over whether to continue cooperating with them and, if so, what form our cooperation should take. Their task was to ensure today's event—regarding its organisation and personnel. It was unbelievably chaotic and at the last moment, I had to settle some disputes with the owner of the premises where the event was to be held.

WEDNESDAY February 15th

We have got through the first public event—a round table with women aged 48–60 years of age. The attendance was 110 percent, not only including those who had been invited, but also those we brought in at the last moment because we had met them on the way or invited them just before the event. At the same time, we did not overstep the full budgeted sums; so far, we have managed to purchase everything at prices lower than anticipated. For example: 3,000 CZK were scheduled for rent, in addition to some refreshments, although the owner did not include them in the invoice. So we paid 1,200 CZK for rent, 1,352 CZK for mineral water, coffee and tea, and 220 CZK for flowers, which I had planned to use as a tool to settle a dispute, but the person did not come and so they ended up on the table as decoration. The participants were satisfied, and they are already looking forward to the initial discussion being continued at www.quovadisfemina.cz. After a morning visit from the administrator, the question comes to my mind as to whether to adapt life to paper or paper to life? I will try the latter and see if it is feasible. For the time being, however, the form has been strongly steamrolled by the content, the process aspect of the project consumes a major part of my energy. When checking the documents from the round table, I find out that the payroll is not in accordance with the number of contracts, not to mention the list of participants, carrying fewer signatures than the document in which people confirmed that they had received their fees. So they had to have been there, hadn't they? This is a real mess—I'm glad I gave them notice. I have to give a third one notice as well, albeit for another reason. I am unable to offer the project administrator full time employment and neither is she able to do it.

FRIDAY February 17th

I have sent job descriptions to some new people whose contact information I received from a professional personnel agency, and went to visit my mum, sister and her adopted daughter.

MONDAY February 20th

I'm concluding some employment contracts with some new people, a young married couple—he is a student of gender studies and she is an experienced practitioner from the NGO sector. They are full of energy and good will; I, having learned my lesson from previous developments, give them half of their former salaries and create a mobile salary component.

I'm planning to adjust all the other salaries in this way as of March.

WEDNESDAY February 22nd

Today, I found myself in the Senate at a conference “Woman—the Planet’s Miracle”. Very interesting talks were given there on the topic of how to combine the roles of mother, professional, and wife. The women who gave the speeches at the conference talked and said something which is not the rule at conferences. However, I did not understand who had organised the event. She looked enigmatic, her business card stated “Specialist in event planning and management of conferences”. According to the structure of speakers, I came to the conclusion that it was a business company that had organised the event in the representative environment, roofing it with European values. Well, some people know all the ins and outs.

TUESDAY March 7th

The lecture at the Póček /chin–wag/ community centre on Leger Street worked out well. The people present might consider the project to be hardly tangible, but there is a difference between everydayness and the state of transcendence. On International Women’s Day, we published a press release entitled “The Voice of Women Will Be Heard Again Throughout the Czech Republic”, we are doing a pretty good job at our pre–election campaign for women running in the elections. On Thursday, I am going to negotiate with one publishing house and the editors of one magazine and have a meeting with a councillor, and on Friday I will discuss a contract with one accounting company. So I am finally going to work with joy! My son, a personnel manager, called to ask me if I am satisfied with the people he had recommended. I answered frankly that when I am silent everything is all right, but the moment I have a thousand and one comments, it is a signal that something is going wrong.

SUNDAY March 12th

One success has been accompanied by a whole range of failures, which I read about in the book *Efficient Innovations* by John Adair. So I will make a summary before tomorrow’s meeting of what we have done, what is in progress, and what we are planning to do. And we have done quite a lot: we have our logo, leaflet,

completed website www.quovadisfemina.cz with a discussion forum (where you are invited to share your experiences), we have documented the first round table, prepared a database, premises and plans for the second and subsequent round tables. The project is supported with the necessary technology, and staffed up to 80 percent. I have just come back from a walk where I bumped into the former director of the environmental centre Toulouvcův dvůr. She gave me the contact of a financial manager who has just finished working on SPD 3 (Single Programming Document 3) at another organisation.

SATURDAY March 19th

Yesterday, I was waiting for two hours at the Anděl metro station, where I had had a meeting before going to the radio where I was to sign a contract for a promotional programme to be broadcasted about the project. Telephones did not work, Vodafone is merciless, we've been disconnected. Even though I feel that we back them pretty well with the lump sum we prepay for their services, they know no mercy when one inadequate payment has been received.

TUESDAY March 21st

It is the first spring day. We have reconciled with Vodafone that it would cost five thousand crowns per phone to change operators, since this is the additional sum which would have to be paid in addition to the bargain price with which the telephones had been bought in January. The team meetings are held in a calm atmosphere, the next round table will be on 10 April in the Toulouvcův dvůr Environmental Centre in the capital city of Prague; we are mulling over the content so that it will be as efficient as possible and the participants have already been contacted via mail or invitation. Tomorrow, I will record a programme about the project for the radio, and I have arranged for Internetbanking to be assessed for our organization, and an advance of 1,000 CZK for bank charges which has been transferred from the subaccount to the principal account. We have invited all the world to participate in the discussion forum. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs contacted us to correct our mistake and state that the project is "co-financed by ESF", despite the fact that the guide requires the wording to be "financed". They are also learning as they work. Primarily, I hope they will be glad that we are keeping to the time schedule—well in the vertical direction, tumbling on the horizontal one. In the evenings, I read interesting and true observations in the *Efficient Innovations* by John Adair about obstacles to creativity.

FRIDAY March 24th

I am also filling in a questionnaire for some Austrian research project about sustainability related to our project.

SATURDAY March 25th

I have received a new version of the Manual for Grantees and was really amused by the paragraph stating that if we did not have a position staffed within ten days, we were obliged to notify the Labour Office. The authors obviously do not have a clue what this is all about. Some time ago I was looking for some jack-of-all-trades who would be able to do work related to the operation of the house I was responsible for. Processions of people came from the Labour Office to chat with us and to ask for a stamp—I did not do anything else for two weeks... Once I was completely exhausted I asked for the requirement to be cancelled immediately, but it wasn't possible to arrange that quickly as the computer system was slower than the experience of life.

FRIDAY March 31st

We have been finishing organisational matters concerning the round table, consulting the questionnaire form designed to get feedback from the participating women. Vivid discussions are going on in the discussion forum where the hot topic is the female party—Rovnost šancí/Equality of Chances. I have received a book from England entitled Environment and Democracy in the Czech Republic—The Environmental Movement in the Transition Process by Adam Fagan, with many references to similar experiences as mine. However, a prophet, not least to say a prophethess, has little honour in his/her own country.

SATURDAY April 1st

It's hard to believe that the Quo Vadis, Femina? project has passed through its three-month infancy period. It was full of typical infant diseases and I was as absorbed by operational matters as mothers are absorbed in the care of their sucklings. Nonetheless, I think I have managed to build a high quality foundation and determined clear responsibilities. I am altering one of the versions of the invitation letter for a lecture to be held at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University on Celetná Street, Prague on 20 April. The team is somehow puzzled by the manuals and handbooks, whether the logo should be placed here or there, so we finally put them all, including ours, under the bottom line. ESF may be paying, but it's we who think and create. And to add to the joy, I collected a registered letter at the post office yesterday evening, containing a sick note from one of those colleagues who had been dismissed, in the probationary period, from their job on 17 February. I was taken aback and immediately called the accountant to find out if there were to be any repercussions; isn't it me who has to pay the sickness benefits? Not yet this year, but next year I will have to. Will it be an eligible cost for the project budget?

SUNDAY April 2nd

I'm reading Michel Foucault and his categorisation of art erotica and scientia of sexualities. He writes about sexuality as it relates to power, about the process in which the perception of the female body has been made hysterical, how the sexuality of children is pedagogized, and about the economic socialization of the fertility of married couples; and how the libido has been isolated. He asks what the strategies are about, whether it is a fight against sexuality or an effort to take control of it, an attempt to command and mask more efficiently what may be indiscreet, prominent, or disobedient? I wonder if one of the protagonists of the *Quo Vadis, Femina?* project will open a discussion on the topic?

TUESDAY April 3rd

I collected a certified letter at the post office. It was from the Revenue Office at Prague 10; they wanted a penalty from 2003 to be paid in the amount of 163 CZK. I don't understand why they are writing as late as now when we, on top of that, belonged to the Revenue Office of Prague 2. I'm therefore calling them to get an explanation. The clerk who signed the certification is now in her superior's office and her colleague says that it was an order from above. I am again demotivated as a citizen. It's just a few crowns, but the arrogance, the certified letter... personal delivery?! If calculated, what would the salary invested to this whole machinery look like in order to obtain a mere 163 CZK?

MONDAY April 17th

I have returned relaxed from the spa town of Mariánské Lázně. It is a beautiful town with excellent mineral springs and nice, smiling people. Once one evening I switched on the TV. On channel 3, there was a film about a successful film star who found happiness in the arms of a common bookseller. Channel 2 was broadcasting a film about Jesus carrying his cross and that no woman was able to prevent his decision to redeem the world even at the price of sacrificing his life. In the book *The Force of the Feminine*, it is written that humanity is defined as male, and the woman exists only in relation to the man and is not considered to be an autonomous being.

TUESDAY April 18th

During our operational meetings, we have exchanged opinions on the second round table. I am pleasantly surprised by the necessity for a hands-on outcome of the project as this could take the form of a community of women who regularly meet for discussion, or a lobby group to promote the appreciation of housework. It makes me glad, although my experience up to now with management is that people come up with ideas, requiring at the same time, "So, Marie, do something

to set it up.” I can set up a lot of things, but I don’t want to do them purposely. The goal is to awaken everybody, not to rid myself of responsibility by transferring it to somebody else. The record of our three-hour meeting is so far nine pages long, and I have brought home today the first filled-in questionnaires from the post office. Among others, I am reading, “I believe each of us left the round table with conclusions of her own that will help to develop her activities. That we will reassure ourselves in the belief that our individual work is good and meaningful. As if we were singing a polyphonic harmonious chorus. Well, and this is good.” I’m glad that women like the communities we have been creating through round tables and lectures; but I don’t like the fact that when we do not work hard to organize them, they do not get together by themselves. In the afternoon, the financial manager and I finished the procedure for monitoring the report development.

WEDNESDAY 1 April 19th

The head of the accounting company brought some copies of the documents needed for the monitoring report just before eight in the morning. The financial manager came at about half past eight and we filled in the financial summary form together until four in the afternoon. We were transferring the information from the cash journal, invoices, and bank statements. We still lack information about personnel costs, copies of orders and about ten more items because of which we will have to go to the accounting company on Friday at half past eight. Tomorrow, we are going to attend training organized by the NVF (National Training Fund) about how to draw up a monitoring report.

THURSDAY April 20th

I’m back from the seminar about monitoring reports. It was useful and even though we have been working on the report for a long time, it will still be pretty stressful to get it handed in by the end of April. The monitoring indicators must be in Word and Benefit. The answer I got to my question as to why they do not unify it, was that if we want money, we have to adapt. As if it was money for our private perks! We have to rewrite the activity reports so that they correspond to the exact number of hours stated in the contract, even though we in fact worked more hours. The additional hours should not appear there as they would be considered overtime for which someone may require remuneration. Voluntary work in non-governmental organizations has as yet not been registered by the government authorities. They could, allegedly, impose on us a fine to the amount of up to half a million crowns. I asked if this was a regulation issued by Brussels; the answer was no, this is Czech law. We should organize a competitive tendering for the accounting services as the planned 5,000 CZK monthly would result in 120,000 CZK by two years. And so I have to negotiate a lower rate or find a cheaper accountant.

MONDAY April 24th

A team of six people have been working on the monitoring report. Two people have been doing indicators, two the financing of key activities, and two are adjusting the hours stated in the activity reports. We are under pressure, the seminar was held on 20 April, and we received the instructions for monitoring indicators on 21 April, although we have not received the notified budget form in which we are obliged to record any changes, and so the financial manager drew it up with exceptional skill and at a high ethical level. The proffered last minute consultations drive us crazy.

THURSDAY April 26th

I'm making copies of the last documents. The monitoring report has 300 pages: 31 contain the report itself with the monitoring indicators; 31 pages are copies of articles, minutes of the round table, invitations; 41 pages contain minutes of the operational meetings; 61 comprise of activities reports and salary documents; 136 contain copies of accounting documents. Double-faced copies are not made of all the documents, but despite that, it's quite a hard job. I'm waiting for a colleague who is coming to burn all the data—I suspect the burning device on the main computer is not working, and it's up to my colleague to deliver the documents. We completed it, and in the afternoon everything was delivered to the NVF offices, where the only staff member present was the secretary, the rest of employees being at a retreat meeting! The last minute seminar, and now—to top it off—the absence of officers in case of last minute needs!

MONDAY May 1st

I found the following among older e-mails, "Dear Marie, I cannot document the project as it isn't just a one-off but a long-term and large-scale job and I cannot bind myself to do it. I can run a hundred-yard dash, but not a marathon. Regards, Olga."

TUESDAY May 2nd

The operational meeting is on schedule; we are dividing tasks to be done, and evaluate those that have been done already. At the same time we are celebrating the birthdays that all of us, except the male member of the team, had in spring.

THURSDAY May 4th

I'm preparing the data for salaries, being very careful not to exceed the personnel costs budget; 15% may be transferred between chapters, but not in this section! In 1937, Alexis Carrel wrote in his book 'Man, The Unknown' that modern civilization is perhaps not able to create people equipped with imagination,

intelligence and courage. Actually in nearly every country the intellectual and moral value of the people who are responsible for public matters is decreasing... "

MONDAY May 8th

On the public holiday, I participated in an international conference dealing with the topic of CZ and EU. At the representative forum, one of the panelists said that, from the point of view of administration, we have one of the most demanding systems for withdrawing funds from the EU. I raised my hand and asked the representatives of our political parties ODS, ČSSD, and KDU-ČSL, why this is so? Who is responsible for the management of this country and the control of government authorities?

FRIDAY May 19th

I'm sending a contribution without having had any feedback on our monitoring report, so we do not know where we are at. What if the business sector worked in such a (non)flexible way!

MONDAY May 22nd

We met in the morning and agreed to go outside where we could work whilst breathing some fresh air. We probably should have some internal regulation which allows us to do so, but as the sun was shining, we took some refreshments with us and discussed everything we needed to discuss. We set in order the account statements of the round tables, an amendment to the financial overview for the Revenue Office, in a new form which is different from the one used in February. A press release has been drawn up, the minutes are ready, everything has been recorded on a DVD. The website has been continuously updated, we've just started to invite the youngest participants to the 4th round table that is going to take place before the holiday. I'm discovering that there is a problem with part-time employment and the paid holiday. When I was preparing the data for salaries, the accounting entries exceeded the budgeted sums. I must bear this in mind and reduce remunerations although the work has been done. The 3rd round table was attended by women from the age of 30 to 49, mostly mothers with little children; the meeting was witty, full of experiences from the most vivid period of life. I realized how eventless the world of men who are born, learn something, and then work their whole life is. Like a regulated watercourse. The life of the woman is like a brook, full of meanders, with greenery and life all around. The woman is born, then gives birth to children, brings them up, teaches them, as well as herself how to live and survive in the world of men. It is difficult and adventurous at the same time! It's just a pity that in society it is the multicoloured meander of life that must be adjusted to the cement corridor and not the other way round.

The third lecture was realized at the Gender Studies department. I remember the words of one of the participants who carried out research with respect to the highway near Český ráj (Bohemian Paradise Region). Men were responding willingly as they wanted the highway. Women were against it, yet refused to fill in the form as they thought there was no point to it. They had been brought up with a permanent feeling of powerlessness and tied hands. I see this in every discussion with a woman over 50 who is asking what she can do when she cannot find a proper job and thus has to work for 42.50 CZK per hour.

At 2:00 pm (after nearly a month), comments to our monitoring report were delivered. They do not seem to be substantial, nevertheless there are three pages of them; one of the reservations concerns the fact that we have employed a retired woman, which seems unfair to me.

THURSDAY May 25th

I have recorded an advertising spot about the project on ClassicFM Radio; this time it was full of the negative emotions which come from the project process—the administration, the paperwork. I realized where we had made a mistake: nobody wanted any articles, minutes or outcomes; the activities reports, filled-in forms and accounting data would have suited the purpose. We had needlessly added to our work. On Tuesday we have a discussion in a programme called Na bělidle broadcast by ČRo6; feedback on the 3rd round table starts coming in, “My impression from the round table was positive overall. The core point was not only that each of the participants expressed her opinion, but the whole meeting was a deep emotional experience for me. Women are sailing together on one poor, run-down boat, and, on the top of all that, they usually throw each other into the waves. However, during this meeting nobody was trying to send me down, neither was I willing to hurl anybody down. Conclusions of the meeting: the more heads the more knowledge; a discussion needs to be chaired well so that women might find the courage to think about what situation they are in, what and how they would like to change. I was surprised how many women love their husbands. There are no such women in my environment. Despite my initial doubts about sufficient efficiency of such work, my participation in the round table persuaded me that it was meaningful to carry out discussions. The discussion was an unexpectedly deep emotional experience for me. I will carry on the very positive feeling of time spent with other women for the rest of my life.”

SUNDAY May 28th

We are still working on the amendments and corrections to the monitoring report, I'm terminating the agreement to complete a job that the accountant concluded for up to 100 hours per year, as there might be problems with this in the future. We are

obliged to report any vacancies to the Labour Office, although they are only interested in full-time or over 75 percent jobs, that they may announce the hourly work loads on their notice board. In the afternoon I'm singing with the choir at the Church of St. Francis Assisi Baroque and Renaissance merry May songs. I'm preparing the first input for the printed outcome of information about equal opportunities, information to help the general public in their understanding of Quo Vadis, Femina?

WEDNESDAY May 31st

ClassicFM Radio broadcast my lament over the project administration. I was complaining about form overlapping content, the administrator mixing the role of a servant with the role of the master; they require us to send something in writing by e-mail, and when we do, they want it in the form of a printed and signed copy. They write that the attendance sheet is not completely signed, and when we have it signed, we learn it's not possible to do it after the fact. They do not accept some expenses, which we are to correct retrospectively. I cannot imagine the chaos which will result when the data is corrected on the computer, and documents are left as they are. On 22 May I get a message that they will not approve the salary of the pensioner in the 2nd quarter of the year that was paid to her for April. Nevertheless, it's an ill wind that doesn't do anyone any good. In response to the radio programme, a woman calls offering her help. However, before she arrived, I lost my temper and sent a letter of complaint regarding the bullying and manipulative behaviour of the administrator to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, asking for the administrator to be replaced.

TUESDAY June 6th

The team was complete at yesterday's meeting. I hired an administrator with the experience of a junior clerk in an attorney's office for a full-time job and a financial manager with an economic background, experienced in the administration of JPD3 ESF, the woman who had selflessly offered her help when I was lamenting on the radio. Now the staff is complete. Uf, what a burden it was! We have been preparing for the last meeting since before the holidays and after the salaries have been paid in May, the account balance will be close to zero.

SUNDAY June 11th

I'm reading a dedication in a poetry book by Zdeňka Petáková that she gave me after a round table, "Dear Ms. Haisová, thank you so much and to all the people implementing the Quo Vadis, Femina project for the emotional experience that was unexpectedly strong...Wishing you lots good luck... One verse for all: The Modern Times: So perfectly shaved/Yet left on the shelf/Is every third woman/Ach—where is the world heading?"

MONDAY June 19th

We organized the last cross-generational meeting with women younger than 20. It was merry, friendly, and the women were mutually rewarding themselves by clapping their hands; I'm looking forward for their feedback and evaluation.

THURSDAY June 29th

The financial manager, Iveta, together with the administrator, Honza, return back from training about a new and simplified form of the monitoring report. We put together the data for June's salaries in a way which would settle the overpayments resulting in April from the holiday payments, which the accounting company calculated based on the changes in contracts from full time employment to agreements on performance work. I assigned tasks to each member of the team to work on "his or her" key activities. I've perhaps finally stopped drowning in stress, details and everyday operational matters, and manage to get to strategic management, its complexity and connectedness. The next week the country will celebrate the holiday of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who brought Christianity to Bohemia, and we will also commemorate the anniversary of the burning of John Huss who was confronted with his human or rather, male, implementation. I'm taking a holiday and am going to visit my mum in Pilsen and I'm also planning to attend the Love Your Life festival. which was established ten years ago to which I've never been, as I was somewhat sceptical of its intentions and quality.

SUNDAY July 9th

The team is being haunted by health problems. Adéla, the PR coordinator, called yesterday to say that she was lying in hospital, waiting to have her double-broken leg operated on. Tomáš, the round tables coordinator, had his kidney stones removed, and Iveta, the financial manager, collapsed because of the hot weather. The accountant who works on salaries has been confirmed ill for the same reason. I hope it is only a symbol that I sang Holan's Requiem with the choir of Collegium Quod Libitum at a requiem service in Ústí nad Labem. By the way, I discovered a lot of good and inspirational things at the festival in Pilsen.

THURSDAY July 13th

I finished the corrections for the Quo Vadis, Femina? bulletin for the Listy hl.m. Praha (Leaflets of the Capital City of Prague); we will keep a number of copies for our own promotional purposes. One thousand copies were distributed to VIP, with an advertisement about the Project in A6 format in all 600,000 copies. It looked very nice with the blue-white finish. In the introduction, we present the idea of the project in the form of an interview, followed by the description of the process and outcomes of the round tables, and conclude with feedback and

perspective for the future. During the first holiday days we were intensively evaluating the work which had been done by that time in order to decide how to continue in a justified way. For the time being, we have learnt from the round tables that women older than 60 place an emphasis on the education of future generations; they think that the society is unfair towards women who temporarily interrupt their careers because of children and household chores. The women between 48–59 years feel the need to cultivate relationships among people and develop spiritual values. Women between 30–47 are burdened with the requirements to have their homes perfectly clean and homemade meals ready for their families, which does not give them any long-term satisfaction. The youngest women from the age of 18–29 are longing for independent men who would equally participate in the household chores enabling the women to become realized outside of their homes as well as within. Slowly I'm managing to implement the desired "divide et impera." The analysis of the round tables and lectures has been carried out by our personnel manager and the coordinator, the second monitoring report has been drawn up by the administrator and the financial manager. The team is motivated, working with interest, reliability and responsibility; step by step, we are considering follow-up activities.

FRIDAY July 21st

The Swiss psychiatrist and sexuologist Maitreyi D. Piontek is in Prague and so I went to visit her introductory lecture. She has been helping women to realize their own "self", to get rid of any negative burdens from the past as well as any present social ballast. She has been teaching that today's world is untruthful and malicious, that one can trust only oneself, which requires strength, certainty and self-confidence. Years ago, I read in one breath her book *Tao and the Hidden Power of Female Sexuality*, I remember what she advised to one successful businessman who wanted to improve his sexual life—when he devotes as much time to his sex as to his business, success will come naturally and automatically. My sister and her daughter are coming this evening for a few days as they want to breathe in the time-honored atmosphere of the beautiful and unique mother of cities, Prague, before my niece starts attending first grade at grammar school.

WEDNESDAY August 2nd

We organised yesterday's operational meeting at our ill colleague, Adéla's home. She has a lame leg, but her head is working well, she needs company and entertainment as she is in an otherwise depressive situation, having to lie in her bed with iron rods in her leg! We were discussing a cross-generational attendance at future events this year and also the manner in which they would be organised. We are proposing to work in smaller groups, everybody's homework is to select

suitable candidates. Today, I sent off the data for salaries only to be called early in the morning by the Social Security Administration Office to say that they did not have any information about Adéla, and then called again to say that they had found them pinned beneath other papers. Today, we will also get the graphic design for our letterhead, business cards, folders, and bookmarks.

TUESDAY August 8th

The team met without me; I've been commuting as an outpatient to spas, making use of my holiday in stages. Their task was to set criteria according to which we will invite women across the generations so that everyone who looks at the list will understand why each individual person has been invited. But—I'm looking at the list and I don't understand. It will therefore be necessary to draw up the exact characteristics of who is who. We will recognize them by their deeds, not by their words. Besides that, I learnt that the reason there are so few female spiritual teachers is that men ask questions about things which women have known from time immemorial!

MONDAY August 14th

We are preparing and distributing files of our promotional materials for the information centres in individual metropolitan districts. We are negotiating an advertisement for Radio1; it comes to my mind that women do what must be done, men do what they want to do.

MONDAY August 21st

We have submitted the second monitoring report about our project as early as 24 July—receiving the reply as late as today, after one month, despite the fact I have a letter promising that the administrator would respond within ten days! Of course, they require corrections within five days! Try to guess, how many days are determined in the manual drawn up by the administrator itself? Luckily, I have a team that gets angry instead of me, so I only have to calm them down.

FRIDAY August 25th

At night on Wednesday we sent the corrected monitoring report by e-mail, and received a helpful reply on Thursday asking us to deliver it in writing, and only then, as they say, will they start dealing with it. Thanks to the advertisement promoting our project in the Leaflets of the Capital City of Prague, a woman contacted us, offering to put up leaflets about our project at all the MHD stops (Public City Transport). They designed a nice leaflet, but the overall style of negotiations was too aggressive for my taste. They required data for invoicing before we had ordered anything, then the administrator went to check one of the places where

they had promised to put up a leaflet, and it wasn't there. It's also a kind of handicap to find a mistake every time...

THURSDAY September 7th

On Monday we sent out 78 envelopes with folders, bookmarks, the *Femistry* newsletter, a leaflet and a business card to the addresses of the women who have participated in the events organised so far within our project. We carefully selected the 23 "elite" ones who are invited to the meeting in October to continue working with them in a systematic manner. The next round table will be on 9 October, and we are planning to present the project and include in the agenda a session enabling various generations to get to know one another, a workshop with the SWOT analysis of household chores, economic independence and those who govern the world. We're paying a lot of attention to the publicity of the project and its marketing for Radio1. We selected the following advertising spot:

Background noise of a pub (of the lowest category). A tired (read 'drunk') male voice, "Look, (hiccup), Jarouš, what's the sense of all this (hiccup)?"

A harsh voice belonging to a "hard-drinking" man, "It's clear, dude, alcohol, dude, football, hockey, cars, sex now and then, no problem, right dude? It's clear, dude!"

A female voice, "So perhaps men have figured it out (a slightly cynical chuckle). But what about us? If we want to change anything about the position of women in society, we have to know exactly what we want to change and how. Let's talk about it at the discussion forum www.quovadisfemina.cz. Help us find the right way."

Another advertisement is published in the Leaflets of the Capital City of Prague, slogans have been put up at MHD stops; at the first opportunity we will distribute our materials to Oriflame, Finclub, and the Municipal Library; I'm approving the final version of the advertisement for the lecture to be given at the Love Your Life Festival, I'm going to Seznam to find out about the available possibilities of Internet presentation and promotion, on my way back I call in at the publishing house Who is...?, where I'm taking corrections of my "I" completed with information about the Quo Vadis, Femina? project. I'm leaving our promotional materials with the receptionist at her desk which makes her very happy. By evening, we are already singing Czech Baroque songs after the holidays.

SUNDAY September 10th

I devoured Páral's *Playgirls I*. I admit to finding the new, unread book in a thrown out box of books by a bin. The book explains the pragmatic behaviour of people that I have been coming across during the last few years. Did the author describe reality or did he help to create it? The chicken or the egg?

THURSDAY September 14th

I return from the post office from where I had been sending off promotional materials about the project. A young man closed the counter right in front of my nose, and a large number of registered letters were being dispatched from the neighbouring counter. After ten minutes of waiting I went to find the head of the post office, as it looked as if I would have to wait for at least an hour. They explained to me that when they were closing the counter nobody was there. So I am nobody. It was impossible not to think of the film where practical jokers of post-menopause age were stealing luxury goods in a supermarket because they were taking advantage of being invisible in consumer culture... At the last minute, an opportunity came along to present our project at the Environmental Festival held at Novotného lávka. I'm quickly ordering posters of various sizes and preparing promotional materials. The GAIA Agency is to share a stand with the Movement for Active Motherhood.

WEDNESDAY September 20th

Yesterday I met the woman who has been helping us with the project's publicity in place of Adéla who is still ill, having undergone an operation. She gave me her Talks Given While Standing by a Cooking Stove; in the evening I'm going with a councillor to a social event organised by Radio ClassicFM and Express to Ladronka. The invitation card states 'Simply, come' and so I refuse to take with me the promotional materials this time; I want to be just Marie for a while, and not the head of the project. This is one of the disadvantages of working from home, from then on you work day and night, Friday-holiday, papers, posters, leaflets everywhere around. I'm making some adjustments to the Friday presentation of the project where all the "recipients of gifts" from the measures of SPD 3 2.2 Equal Opportunities will meet at a rather symbolic place at the hospital Na Františku. A few men reacted to the advertisement in Rádio1 by contributing to the website; one reaction on behalf of all the others: Petr @ superb advertisement on the radio, long live Czech feminists.

FRIDAY September 22nd

I returned exhausted from the presentation of the fourteen projects implemented under the measures of 2.2 SPD 3; I expected the community of women to be relaxed and cheerful, but the millions perhaps tie down and crowd. Paradoxically, the wittiest was the presentation given by two men from the Evangelical Theologist Seminar.

SUNDAY September 24th

I was still thinking about the Friday presentation of the project implemented under measures of 2.2 SPD 3 and additionally recalled the words of the representative

of the management body of this Prague programme. Our measure is the best, we have been withdrawing European money without any problems. It's no surprise, women are responsible and capable of managing projects, while being happy and grateful for all the support. At the same time, it is not certain if and how measures 2.2 will continue in the period 2007–2013! The current ODS cabinet are said to have dismissed the Council for Equal Opportunities related to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The meeting was also an opportunity for a discussion about practical matters. The matter concerning the 10 percent to be paid to us after the completion of the project was also discussed. It is thus a sum we have to pre-pay. A question was raised about which resources we should use for these pre-payments because non-governmental non-profit organisations do not have any funds at their disposal. The answer was just that we had signed the terms and conditions containing this provision at the beginning of the project. We were also informed that the financial limit determining the need to organise a competitive tendering when exceeded would not be increased. It is mortifying that the rules for those who work honestly are the rules for deceivers and bribers who unfortunately often recruit from the top ten thousand. When will the top-down communism system change into down-top democracy?

MONDAY September 25th

During today's operational meeting we provided feedback on and evaluated Friday's presentation of the projects implemented within the framework of measures of 2.2 SPD 3 and also strictly determined what had to be completed by next Monday because it is the last preparation before the cross-generational round table which we are preparing for the 9 October. In the discussion, we also came across the fact that the government has adopted a budget with a 91-billion deficit and a plan to sell ČEZ (the largest electricity producer in the Czech Republic) for 31 billion crowns. Dear women, can you imagine us running our household in this way?

MONDAY October 2nd

We devoted this morning to any necessary administrative matters related to the project such as the printing of contracts for remunerations or tags and information boards that we will need for the round table, and we also evaluated the expert panel of grantees under measures GS 2.2.02 of SPD3, that had been organized towards the end of September in the Hospital Na Františku in Prague. Besides the opportunity to get to know other projects implemented as a part of the grant making scheme, the event enabled another, more complex view of the utilization of European funds for projects of the same style as our own project, which is undoubtedly very useful. And how did we view the event overall?

Professional level 1

The quality of technical assistance 2: The invitation was all right, the room was good, despite some analogies symbolised by the hospital... Friday is a nice day, its disadvantage is that people think about the upcoming weekend and are rushing to get home. The time table was planned too tight. Presentations lasted a quarter of an hour without any specific discussions; a concluding dialogue was missing.

Usefulness of the expert panel 1

A unique opportunity for “horizontal” networking that individual realizers of projects create with difficulties because they are flooded with “vertical” work. It’s a pity that there wasn’t an opportunity to define the whole complexity comprising of projects implemented under measures 2.2 SPD3.

In addition to that, the meeting allowed us to define the main problems which generally accompany the implementation of projects of this type, including notably:

- 10% final additional payment from our own resources;
- 100 thousand limit on the competitive tendering which is labour and administrative-intensive as well as time-consuming;
- monitoring the indicators which do not correspond to the measures in question;
- a delayed response to the monitoring reports.

The participants also received a number of useful facts about the reasons behind other similar problems, without, however, any suggestions on how to solve them. The lack of communication for example between governmental bodies was mentioned, although due to the missing dialogue, we do not know whether nor how, we, as applicants, could change this problematic situation. To use the imperfection of the *Manual for Grantees* as an excuse, gives one a similar impression, which is logically and decidedly demotivating for the applicants. Why would a manual be drawn up in such a way as to cause confusion?

TUESDAY October 3rd

I’m glad to see that the our website’s Internet discussion forum of the project has really taken on its own life; the discussions have been joined not only by women, but also by men who are also interested in the topic. The following, for example, appeared there today: “What do you think of the opinion that today’s women are simply mere copies of men differing only in sexual characteristics and clothing? I noticed that a few were even lifting up the toilet seat.”

WEDNESDAY October 4th

The term of our fifth round table is coming close and it’s the high time to arrange purely practical matters relating to its organisation. So, today, I went to

withdraw money for the 500 CZK fees; the rental of the auditorium which we have hired as the event premises, and refreshments to be served throughout. However, the cash-dispenser was only issuing one-thousand notes and the branch of Česká spořitelna on Topolová Street closes before 4 pm on a Wednesday. I could do nothing but change the money in the nearby GEBank. To exchange 15 one-thousand notes for 30 five-hundred notes took forever, and for the pleasure, they even charged 75 CZK. The reason being, they said, that we were not their client and we had not withdrawn the money from their cash dispenser! The system of the world whose heart, arteries and veins have been formed by banks and cash flows, is shamelessly guzzling itself. The same could be said of my sponsoring Vodaphone when I buy credit for the business telephone. That's OK, unless, of course, I'm caught out using said phone to ring my ill mother. For that one must own two phones and carry them both at all times!

TUESDAY October 10th

Our fifth, this time cross-generational, round table was held yesterday in the Touloucvův dvůr Environmental Centre. I was really curious as to how women of various ages would get on. We used the SWOT analysis on such topics as Household Chores, Economic Independence, Social Dependence, and Who Governs the World? And the outcome? An appeal to future female politicians to not parrot what male parties dictate, but to bring out something from their own nature, what they themselves believe in, want to change and improve. A very open and interesting discussion, a successful evening.

MONDAY October 16th

In my mind, I recall the cross-generational round table from last week. And realize that the pleasure from a professionally successful, humane and basically lovely evening was spoiled by a misunderstanding with the round table coordinator who had been dominating the operational meetings for three months and three days before the event started to promote his idea of the presentation. What could I do but use the power of my official capacity and my responsibility to the project. During the break, I talked about the matter with the manager of another project who had been complaining about the same thing. Her friendly approach as a manager has led to the situation in which her employees overbear her friendliness as a rule, refusing to understand that it is she who concurrently bears all the risks, i.e. at some moment or other she will have to stop all discussion and decide on her own. This is the handicap for female managers—sooner or later, your subordinate employees will start confusing you with their mothers. Is the only way out to behave like a masculine boss?

MONDAY October 23rd

During the operational meeting, we were discussing all the key activities. There are twelve of them. We were trying to resolve the internal communication between me, a manager thinking in a synthetic way, and our analytically oriented researcher. Women think and talk in a manner that differs from the way men think. Women are more capable of perceiving the whole, that is more than the simple sum of its individual parts, unless of course the woman's thought has been (de)formed by an academic education. An e-mail message came from the 'dog in the manger', who had been insulted by Mr. Zrno who complained about the amount of money wasted on educating the pedagogical public in equal opportunities.

TUESDAY October 31st

I'm pushing everybody in the team to develop his/her own follow-up project to be implemented in the future. I'm willing to provide any advice and support needed in order for projects to be drawn up and implemented, and to guide young people in their efforts to learn something which cannot be learnt in books. I'm writing a preliminary offer for a publication, and doing a survey of interest. We have a sum in the budget that could easily be spent if we do everything on our own as is common practice in NGOs. It crossed my mind to contact a publishing house and negotiate a form of cooperation with them in which we ourselves would work on the content and design, while they would provide the design, graphic and distribution services. Then we would be able to issue a publication in several volumes for the budgeted sum with the aim of explaining the need of the personal as well as the social vision. They, however, would have to sell a number of copies. This weekend I gave a lecture at the Love Your Life festival, competing with a Romanian missionary in the next classroom, declaring 2012 to be the decisive year for mankind's development. Unlike mine, his lecture was crowded. The woman giving a lecture after me was talking about the need to set goals. I naively thought that we could engage her in the project. The woman kept on talking, and when she hadn't stopped for twenty minutes, I decided to ask her a question. She ignored my raised hand, waving a hand at me, indicating that my time would come. I understood there would be no 'later' and went away.

THURSDAY November 2nd

Yesterday, my defence of the 'dog in the manger' was reduced, by the editors, to a mockery. I saved the entire newspaper; there are huge photos of men, half-page articles about petty quarrels which gives us a perfect picture of the state of the world today and its masculine values. A repaired notebook was delivered, its hinges had broken, and the administrator transferred the data. The second notebook

is going next to the repair shop. An e-mail message arrived with the following: "I'm shocked. I've just 'browsed' through the article by you and Zrno, and both reactions. I thought that *Hospodářské noviny* was the only remaining dependable newspaper in the Czech Republic. Well... I don't think so anymore. With regards to the reactions of the general public (in the discussion), I am almost inclined to think it would be better to leave the country, as I don't want to live among such savages. Soon, witches may be burnt here again. Would something like that—so much semi-literate and hateful discussion—be possible at all in Western Europe? Yours completely aghast, Z.P." In the afternoon, I was singing a requiem mass at the Capuchin Church.

SUNDAY November 5th

Yesterday, there was a dance show on TV which I had seen in Denmark last year. Here it is the dancing and performance which is the focus of attention; in Denmark, the whole atmosphere surrounding the competition is much more joyful and fun. Horizontal versus vertical. In the evening, I visited a friend who has been patiently searching for Mr. Right. She's the only one woman I know who hasn't given up yet. At the moment, she has two men in the game, mutually informing them of their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The gentlemen are rivalling against one other in their effort to be the best. I invited her to participate in the first round table and I saw her astonishment at the problems discussed. In the morning, I woke up at four with the persistent thought that the road may be as much the goal. This had been caused perhaps by the fact that the title of the cycle of Czech baroque songs, the publication of which had been sponsored by the rebel, Count Špork, and which we were soon to sing in St. Ludmila's church in Tetín at 4:00 pm, was called *Where Are We Going So Quickly or About Death in a Serious and Not Serious Manner*. I was travelling by train to Srbsko, and for the rest of my trip I travelled by foot. On my way, I mulled over the most suitable way in which to create a vision.

MONDAY November 6th

A call was delivered to correct the 3rd monitoring report; I'm sending it to the financial manager and administrator. We also received the Manual for Grantees with amendments stating, among others, that in the case of competitive tendering from 101 to 500 thousand, the selection must be done by a person who is impartial to the contract. Who should he or she be, to know what the whole thing is about at the same time? Any time I get contacted concerning administrative requirements, I am reminded of the American association Ashoka which provides funds to support social entrepreneurs without (de)forming the patulous tree of life into grey theory. And I'm also thinking of the Czech philosopher Evžen Menert

and his activities in Africa. He knew his native servant was eating away at his food in the fridge, but he also knew it was cheaper than paying inspection apparatuses. I would also be very interested in comparing the Czech system and Czech projects with those that have been created in other countries.

SATURDAY November 11th

On Tuesday, I met the councillor. We were discussing the mission statement, vision and mission; yesterday we sent off the corrected monitoring report. The technically-oriented members of our team were pragmatically persuading me not to fool around—when we have one publication in the project, why make our lives complicated by publishing a series? Nobody is going to appreciate it anyway. My review of the book *A Woman's Journey to God* by Joan Borysenko was published in the *Kavárna* literary supplement of the *MFDnes* newspaper. Just above it, a long article claiming that there is still no womens' movement in existence in our country was published.

THURSDAY November 16th

We are intensively organizing lectures at the Faculty of Human Studies, in the Eurocentre, ČVUT (Czech Technical University in Prague), Pexeso, Mánes. Reality exceeds the schedule. As it had been stated in the last issue of *Dotační věstník* (Endowment Journal), the project is a product, although it seems to me to be far more difficult to sell thoughts than to sell substances. I read that the government had taken away some money from the ESF, transferring it somewhere else. Perhaps, they were of the same opinion.

TUESDAY November 21st

I've just returned from the lion's den, FHS (School of Humanities), where the academic capacities were analysing the idea and management of the project. Stimulating feedback, although I don't know what to do with it just yet. Something must come to fruition, something must be let to mature. I've sobered up to my illusion that the academic environment is open and tolerant.

THURSDAY November 22nd

I have remembered that the secretary at FHS reminded me of an obligation to carry out an audit on the horizontal topics related to the EU structural funds. This applies to compliance with the principles of equality, sustainability, community cooperation and information society in all projects. The faculty have been doing research on compliance with these conditions, getting into trouble with a fundamental misunderstanding in the vertically oriented and managed Czech society of what in fact horizontal topics mean!

FRIDAY December 1st

We've just passed through a one-week-long marathon. After the 6th round table held on Monday, where women were not only fulfilling the objective of the project, but were also ridding themselves of stage fright in front of our very eyes, they learnt how to present their ideas in a natural way, familiarising themselves with management methods and practices, communication, facilitation, and adding to this their own ideas. I gave a lecture on Tuesday at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the Czech Technical University in Prague, where, in fact, I give a talk every year to the fifth year students, on ecology and NGOs. Year after year, young people are becoming more and more open and capable of asking questions. During our discussion they passed the ball to me in the form of their concept that human beings are simply as follows; one ravages, the other rectifies. I asked who the human being was, and received an answer; the male. And so we talked about women, education, society, and Quo Vadis, Femina? In response to a proprietary objection that everything belongs to somebody I asked who owns the Moon, the Sun, stars, the Universe, the Earth? On Wednesday, we presented our project at the Eurocentre at Jungmann Street 24, a very dignified building. Quite a lot of people came and the owner of the DharmaGaia publishing house brought books as a gift for the competition on Rádio 1 and the campaign to be realised in December and January. Books were also given to the women who came before the lecture began. After the introduction, a lively discussion sprang up; people would like to get engaged, but they do not know how. Yesterday, we introduced the need for a female vision in sustainable development on the platform of the ecological organisations of Zelený kruh in Mánes. The atmosphere was friendly and supportive. I received an invitation to INSEAD—The Business School for the World, with its seat in the south of France, and so I'm speeding to finish the correction of the English version of our leaflet. We have been updating the discussion forum, the team have been working hard, they are excellent, despite the fact that I still have a lot of detailed work to do, and perhaps will last forever. I listened to an interview with Madonna, who said that she always had to keep her finger on the pulse of the team, not being able to leave for even a single minute, so 'divide et impera' is a proverb from the time of the Imperium, the top-down system. The graphic designer developed three draft versions of a holiday greeting card, which were sent off to all cardinal points for assesment; even if I had had ten of them designed, this still wouldn't be enough. Finally, I decided on the woman with a symbolic apple of cognition.

MONDAY December 4th

I forgot to mention that the secretary of the member of the European Parliament, Ms. Foslerová, the head of the Committee for Equal Opportunities in Brussels,

contacted us last week at the Eurocentre; she gave us some books by Ms. Foslerová and her regards. I read the books immediately; one of them contained a comprehensible summary of the development of the womens' movement, the other introduced her two-and-a-half year activities in the European Parliament. I said to myself that we should contact her, however the response I had in the operational meeting knocked me for six. She is a representative member in the European Parliament in Brussels for KSČM (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia) and young people are still perceiving communists as enemy no. 1, despite the fact there is a much wider scale of evil-doers in politics today, moreover the intentional demarcation, based on political parties, leaves me quite cold. The Internet access has created quite a new criteria, and I cannot see any new threat from Communists. If this party had not been judged for its deeds in the same way as the Nazis were at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, why should I plague my life because of somebody else's inconsistency? Shall I trouble myself, pretending to be Ms. Fair-Minded, and go with the crowd that parrot what they hear from the voice of mass media where everything goes and the only virtue is to define oneself against the Communist Party? As my colleagues say, 'If we were friends with other parties, the downgraded one would not be as visible', but the trouble is no other party is interested in us. In the current chaotic world I have my personal criterium. For me, it is decisive how people behave in their personal contact with me, and I'm trying to differentiate between milling the wind and reality. In the afternoon, a control came from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to audit the project's content; I am pleasantly surprised by their professional capacities, knowledge and interest in the topic.

SUNDAY December 17th

I Returned from a week's internship organised by INSEAD in Fontainebleau, where American professors prepared a seminar about social entrepreneurship management and leadership. The motto was 'We develop leaders, who develop people, who develop business.' 31 people had gathered from all over the world; with regards to the post-communist block, I was the only representative from the Czech Republic; furthermore there was only one woman from Hungary, two men from Poland, and the rest were from Denmark, Egypt, France, the South African Republic, Cameroon, Colombia, Germany, Pakistan, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Turkey, the USA, and Great Britain. I realised that nobody is a prophet, not least to say a prophetess, at home; that I feel much freer in an international community; that I get on well with people who have an international scope of knowledge, that I am accepted without any problems on the broad forum of experts on world leadership and management. However, the best reward for me was the assessment of a twenty-three year old Portuguese woman who came up to me and said that for her the greatest benefit was that she had met me. My courage to say directly what

I have in mind, even though it is not always in line with the mainstream, gave her personal courage to follow only her conscience on her return home.

FRIDAY December 22nd

We are sending out and receiving holiday greeting cards; the best gift, however, is the news from Ernst & Young that I have moved through to the semi-final of the competition which recognises the socially-beneficial entrepreneur of the year. To be able to move on to the next round, I have to provide them with a financial balance sheet, a detailed specification of the efficiency measurability, third persons' references...

SATURDAY December 23rd

At INSEAD in France I became friends with a Polish woman, an Ashoka Fellow, who takes care of, besides her own three children, three other kids who were born with an alcohol syndrom. With respect, she talked about our Jan Hus, who opposed the dictatorship of dogma and mammon. In Poland, they did not have any reformer, they are still governed by Catholic morals. Women who do not want to have a baby and get pregnant have to give birth to the baby. If their situation is desperate, they drink and give birth to a handicapped baby which they do not take care of. With the upcoming end of the year, I have been thinking about all things possible, including the invisible hand of the market, which rules democracy. Bargaining is going on everywhere and with everything; the hand has transformed to an invisible, yet noticeably kicking leg. Hus must definitely be turning in his grave.

WEDNESDAY December 27th

I spent Christmas Eve with my sons. That moment also made me realise how much they had both helped me with the project, personally as well as through their friends, especially regarding the website www.quovadisfemina.cz, legal advisory services and administration. I was singing in the Baroque church in Bezno near Benátky nad Jizerou at midnight mass. We travelled in the silent night, peace and quiet everywhere; we were like the Three Magi/new procession, Julie, Marie and Vít. It was a mystic experience. The following day, we were singing in Loreta, in a much more ceremonial manner. But today, in the afternoon, the project is on the agenda again—I'm having a meeting with the financial manager, she is bringing with her the files with the accounting documents which she will arrange according to the administrator's requirements.

TUESDAY January 2nd

The first operational meeting of the project in the new year was completed by a list of tasks that took up an entire page, beginning with a descriptive plan of the

key activities for the 4th monitoring report, moving on to the addition of data to the semi-finals of the competition organised by the Schwab Foundation which will identify the social entrepreneur of the year, and finally finishing with plans for the first round table to be held on 29 January. A video tape arrived just before Christmas that had been shot from the 5th cross-generational meeting by a student of the Film Academy. It is clever and witty and so I'm also hiring the film-maker for the first half of the year, 2007 is the year of equal opportunities and the European Union will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. Neither of these were mentioned by the president of the Republic in his New Year's speech. In his traditional style, he addressed all his fellow citizens using the masculine grammatical form, ignoring his female fellow citizens, as he typically does every year. If the Czech fish has such a head, no wonder it's so stinky here. Neither do I remember hearing the Ode to Joy played in the Czech Republic as the EU anthem; only always as the end of the Ninth Symphony. The GAIA Agency will celebrate ten years of its existence this year. We have been considering an almanach to be published with a summary of our projects, information about the philosophy of the organisation and its experience, including a list of the people and institutions we know and that are interested in us. Should you want to make yourself known, send a message to marie@quovadisfemina.cz. During the holidays I was studying the "Balanced Scorecard" book which has a yang quality, and "Tao and the Power of Female Sexuality" with its yin quality.

MONDAY January 8th

Today, we were networking and building the community as part of the project. We are making use of the anniversary celebrated by the GAIA Agency circulating letters to our past, present and future acquaintances. However, the social life in the Czech Republic has been declining, and so I'm quite curious who will respond. In the afternoon, I had a meeting with a member of the European Parliament, Věra Flasarová, and asked her to act as my mediator in inviting the EU Commissar Vladimír Špidla and the other members of the Committee for Equal Opportunities in Brussels and Czech female members of the European Parliament to the final conference of the project which will be held on 10th October. In the Gender Studies organisation, I met the writer Alena Wagnerová, who lives in Germany but keeps on bringing good ideas to the Czech Republic. I have known her since 1995 from the first Czech conference on the topic of women in politics—A Rose Among Thorns. She was very pleased by the idea of the project, where we had been looking for a simple point of departure, of what we have in common, and of what unifies us. Since there are more than enough separating forces surrounding us.

SATURDAY January 14th

On Wednesday, I gave a lecture in Arnica, Žižkov. We may no longer have lectures in the project's schedule but nonetheless, personal meetings with people I don't know is so very interesting and fecund that I have continued to give them. So many people came that they hardly got in the room, the discussion was vivid. Before I went to give the lecture, I had been to my dentist's; she opposes my opinions, saying she has nothing against men. I was trying to explain to her that to work and think together with women is against nothing and nobody. When somebody stoops to manipulating conclusions, he/she has problems with herself/himself, with the concept of democracy, freedom, equality. A new government was appointed towards the end of the week, and the new Minister of Defence said immediately that she is for an antiballistic base to be built in the Czech Republic. I sent a declaration to the media that those who give birth to new lives know how difficult it is to give life and raise it with care, and how easy it is to kill it. The global armament and the continuous development of new killing technologies costs so much money that just a fragment of it would solve the environmental and social problems of the world.

TUESDAY January 16th

Today, we are submitting the 4th monitoring report of the project which presents a pretty voluminous file. Last year, we filled 18 files altogether with documents related to the project. When I take into account that they will have to be stored for ten years, this will be a lot of nourishment for dust archived at our own cost.

MONDAY January 22nd

Within the project, we have been preparing for a hectic half-year, because we are going to concentrate all the meetings with women into the first six months to gain time for the project assesment, publicity, international conferences and the release of the publication. We received an e-mail: "Perhaps, this will sound a bit high-flown, but I can say that thanks to your efforts in Quo Vadis, Femina? I have better realised my own female values and I'm learning to assert myself faster, not to remain seated as the 'lass in the corner'. I'm very glad you exist. Really. Sometimes it is difficult to arrive at an agreement with men, since it seems to me that my efforts to achieve emancipation and equal rights are perceived by them as hostility. However, what is most important is my conscious awareness that I am allowed and able to assert myself. KŠ"

FRIDAY January 26th

We prepared topics for the 7th round table, they are related to the Home. As the public opinion has been stimulated regarding the antiballistic base in CZ, we have

been quickly preparing some sub-questions for the topic Who Governs the World? So, as women, we might realise what is going on around us. We will let them choose as to which topic they want to pursue. In mid-February, the round table coordinator will leave the team. It was a useful experience with a gender studies' student. Men have been taught to control and govern us, now they are going to fiddle with how equal we are allowed to be. The ministry of education appointed a man to the position of advisor for equal opportunities in schools! I've read three books from the publishing house for thoughtful people DharmaGaia, saving the Dalai Lama and his meditations about quietness, peace and love for last. He inspired me in the initial part of the publication for the Quo Vadis, Femina? project This will be an acknowledgement to the EU's ESF for their support in equal opportunities and to those who contribute to the implementation of the project and its entire realisation, and also to the chief editor of *Dotační věstník* (Endowment Journal), and those anonymous who take care of everyday commonplace things such as heat, light, food, regardless of whether it is a right-wing or a left-wing party or nobody currently in power. The infrastructure that has been built by mankind for hundreds of years is amazing in its viability under any political situation.

MONDAY January 29th

I have learned about the suicides of a composer and a writer. It is peculiar how they were represented in the public arena and what was probably going on at home in their private lives. We were also advised on how to account for the last 10 % of the payment; it is better to let them forfeit it than to get mixed up in shady dealings of possible dependency or blackmail.

WEDNESDAY January 31st

At the 7th round table, women unequivocally decided for the Home topic. You may search rows of books in libraries and, besides a few romantic effusions, you will find nothing. We've structured it as follows:

1. Housework: time, evaluation, division.
2. Moral and emotional responsibility: what unifies us, home management, coexistence.
3. Environment: locality, community, influence.
4. Upbringing, education: examples—work wonders, attention, care, influence of the environment.
5. Relationships: sex, love, generation, partnership, friendship. Using the brainstorming method, women wrote down everything that crossed their minds, then presented and discussed it.

FRIDAY February 2nd

During the week we finished the text on the ordering proceedings for the publication of *Quo Vadis, Femina?* and sent letters to six potential suppliers with the deadline of 20th February at 4:00 pm. The Internet and e-mail connection has not been working since Tuesday, the technician will come after Sunday, and so I was finally able to concentrate on what was to be in the publication. There are enough words; strict selection will be necessary. I watched a programme about one creator, who was talking about how she has been turning her visions into reality; about her personality being the secret to success, and that it is only she who knows exactly what the end result will be. She is improvising, inspired when the work is in progress, and the team is working according to her vision, limited by the same token.

WEDNESDAY February 7th

On Monday, after an operational meeting, representatives from the Swiss Ernst & Young came to conduct a face-to-face interview. It is always refreshing to meet foreigners and talk to them; they were interested especially in the holistic approach, unlike the local structures who take pleasure in the intricate details. On 16th January we submitted the 4th monitoring report. Today, we received the 1st call for corrections, we are to respond within five days. They criticize the monitoring indicators that the Benefit signed: the number of participants in the courses—clients of the services, and the share in a successfully passed course—clients of the services per total number, while, of course, we do not have a single course in the project, only round tables, lectures and work with the general public at various degrees. To insist on detail means to miss the reality. A notice was delivered in the form of a return receipt saying that there was to be a control from the Prague Social Services Administration on 21st February, and then the General Health Insurance Company on 8th March.

FRIDAY February 9th

Yesterday, I attended a regular social evening organised on the premises of U Outratů; a lecture was given and discussion held about Karolína Světlá; I finished the day at the Dutch Embassy, where they commemorated the support Matra programmes; I met a lot of old acquaintances there who are otherwise difficult to meet; these are excellent social events. For reasons of comparison, I would like to recall the time I was awarded the Green Apple Award from the Czech Ministry of the Environment. It was delivered by mail one year after the announcement of the award.

FRIDAY February 16th

By order of the administrator, we left out from the indicators people who were engaged in the discussions held on the project's website, as well as those who had

learnt about the project from daily newspapers, radio, advertisements or leaflets, and then later began to become interested in the project, communicating and cooperating with us. I don't understand why we invested funds into promotion and publicity events.

THURSDAY February 22nd

We are in an information vacuum. We have no feedback from the administrator, nor whether they have accepted the corrections of the 4th monitoring report. On Tuesday, there was a selection procedure concerning the publication; as we received three offers of a similar quality, it was difficult to decide, but finally, by a few more points, the most complex offer won, thanks to their experience with book publishing. The evening before, we had been at a gala evening in Žofín where the best social and business entrepreneur of the year had been announced. The language used was exceptionally masculine; those acknowledged were solely men, not one woman!

SATURDAY February 24th

The last week was charged with activities. A staff meeting on Monday, evaluation of the selection proceedings with respect to the publication, a social meeting and networking during the Entrepreneur of the Year event on Wednesday, a lecture at the esoteric festival on Thursday, where women were coming and going restlessly, while men were listening and discussing actively. The topic Who Governs the World has been prepared for the round table to be held on Monday. It is structured as follows:

1. good practices, influence of the environment, education, upbringing, prejudices;
2. sexuality, love, family, friendship, egocentrism;
3. power, time, money, ideologies, technologies;
4. superpowers, leaders, media, policy, vision;
5. religion, morals, men, women, nature... a space for other ideas.

TUESDAY February 27th

Twenty-six women came to participate in the round table, bringing their friends with them; an interesting community is being created. Although, earlier, they did not say nearly anything as regards this topic because of other concerns they had and lack of time to think about the strategy of power, now they were lively discussing, presenting themselves, their opinions and experiences. We publish press releases from all the meetings, they are available at: www.quovadisfemina.cz/jakpracujeme. One sensitive man, who was shocked by the advertisement spot—a blurb for our web, reported me to the Commissioner in Brussels. I wrote to obtain feedback; it's

interesting that the one who is always blamed is the bearer of “bad” news. I was quite amused what matters may be handled seriously; well, well, it must be serious when they label it as “Importance: High!” I haven’t heard the spot yet, I don’t have head pieces, but the transcript gives me the feeling that a normal person, who is not encumbered with prejudices, will take it with humor, as an overstatement, satire. I don’t think this will cause any trouble; I hope they still have a brain in their heads. In any case, you have made yourself visible again—by the way, it’s quite fine. Well, I am curious about how this will continue (You may be so privileged that they will invite you to Brussels). So I keep my fingers crossed for you, this is sure to turn out well and maybe, finally, this will actually bring something positive. Or: It’s OK with me, I like the spot, it’s evident that it is an overstatement; well, maybe not so much. I’d rather say—removed from its context. In Brussels, they do not understand Radio 1; I’ve just returned the spot promoting the “Award for Courage”, that it should be more striking.

I understand it. I’m supporting you.

WEDNESDAY March 7th

On the eve of International Women’s Day we are sending wishes of respect and social esteem to women on behalf of the Quo Vadis, Femina? project, reminding them of history and asking why the holiday is still clogged in some politicians’ stomachs? The payment was credited to our account, thank God/Godess. The Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has sent an explanation to Brussels as regards the complaint about the spot. I’m grateful for the understanding and I thank them for support.

SUNDAY March 11th

Yesterday, I went to the Mari Boine concert at the Akropolis Palace. She sings traditional songs of the Sami tribe; one of them starts: “The Earth is our mother, when we take life away from her, we will die with her.” I reserved some time for having a look at Prague from the Žižkov tower. In the hierarchical symbolism, the highest is usually the most powerful. Today, it is neither a church, nor a castle, but television.

As a part of my self-education I went to see the film *Returnable Bottles*, and I realised the emotional and erotic frustration of today. I instinctively reached out my hand to take the book *Women Who Run with Wolves*, and I’m again studying the analogical situation of woman and nature. I already see it will be necessary to lobby for the bridging of the biggest gaps in human resources. But where?

WEDNESDAY March 14th

During the meeting on Monday we prepared the subtopic for the 9th round table, the main topic of which will be Economic Independence. We structured this

round table session as follows:

1. self-confidence, freedom, opportunities, relations;
2. the possibilities of help, influence, money, relations;
3. time to express one's own creativity, time for oneself, self-fulfillment, relations;
4. fear, loss, envy, relations;
5. education, travelling, consumption, relations.

FRIDAY March 16th

I went to the cinema, Forman's film *Goya's Ghosts* was on, the drama of inequality, injustice and suffering from the time of the Inquisition. The roots of European civilisation are harsh; it comes to my mind that the topic of equal opportunities may be simply understood from such a film and its analysis. The inquisitors simply wanted to punish Goya—the messenger—the sneakiest of them, however, noted that the painter only paints reality; it is the reality that has to be punished!

There was a lecture about Christianity and Islamism at a place called U Outrátů. It is interesting that fundamentalism originated in the USA, in Protestant circles, as regards adherence to the Holy Scripture. Various analogies come to my mind with respect to the project. I met an acquaintance of mine there, she confessed that she had moved away from the flat where she was terrorised by her daughter, a manipulator. After five years of searching for the fault on her side and attempts to solve the unsolvable, she received help from the men in the civic association *Bílý kruh bezpečí* (victim support in the Czech Republic). I'm thinking about the system created by man; the system that oppresses man subsequently. How to ensure and solve the causes and not whirl around in the vicious circle of aftereffects?

In Chinese medicine, a doctor is appreciated for his or her patient's health. Similarly, the social system should also be preventive. We were building up our team in the *Švada Theatre*, where we went to see *Clara's Relationships*, an example of a life lived without any interest, energy, or goal.

THURSDAY March 22nd

Thirty women have registered to participate in the round table on Monday, interest has been growing. We drew up a seating plan during the meeting, seating side by side, not only various age categories, but we also took into account characteristic features, professional and personal interests. The meetings are usually friendly, despite that, I'm sometimes brought a complaint about occasional impertinence. The more experienced feel they are more competent as well, sometimes they pass a motherly well advised note towards the younger generation, I'm patrolling the overall atmosphere. Some years ago, I went through a training in

facilitation; its American lecturer took me aside after the course and said, “Some people hit the target in the situation, while the others have no idea yet that the target exists.”

SUNDAY March 25th

We are preparing a text to be included in the publication about the difference in management styles applied in the eras of modernism and postmodernism. It enables to understand clearly the source of our problem with structures. On Friday, auditors came from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the National Educational Fund to carry out a thorough check of the project. We had cleared up a lot of issues, nevertheless, further questions kept emerging. For example I signed a statement that all calls from the business mobile phones have been related to the project. However, is it not a paradox in a situation where each of us pay all the operational expenses, such as rent, fixed line telephone, electricity, gas, heating, internet, from his or her own financial resources? At the same time, we have been trying to introduce innovations and testing the flexible forms of work.

We have been saving operational expense funds and despite this, we will not be exempt from anything. There may be more money left for promotion, but a new problem always arises—a selection procedure of over one hundred thousand crowns as regards to one supplier. We are ordering the promotional services from a company that has already proved professional. What are we to do once we get close to the one hundred thousand crown limit? Found another company even though we are very satisfied with this one, and as it does not have a personal relationship to any of us, nor do I get any commission money, then what else could be prevented by the selection procedure? To organize a selection procedure for each and every amount that exceeds the one hundred thousand limit? Will we have any capacity left to work? At the moment, we are not solving what cannot be solved anyway, and so there is enough capacity even for follow-up activities. We have been developing a similar project for the Vsetín Region. The project would need to be tested nationwide. What is created in Prague may encounter problems outside the capital. And so we have been looking for contact persons in regions and if you are interested, get in touch with us at info@quovadisfemina.cz. For the time being, all the people who have contacted me and wished to cooperate were characterized by an amazing theoretical education but zero experience on how to turn the idea into reality. Not to mention the required experience with project management.

TUESDAY March 27th

Yesterday, the last but one thematic round table on economic self-sufficiency was held. Participants were sitting at five tables arranged into a circle. During the

first part of the evening, they were discussing the sub-topics opened during the previous meetings. I draw their attention to the fact that they should concentrate not only on the content, but also on the form, the process. Which of them sitting around one table makes decisions, who takes notes, whom they select as their spokesperson. Is it their decision or the decision of the most dominant person among them? After the break, using a flipchart, they presented what they had drawn up. We finished the session by a discussion.

There was one woman who was disturbing the others all the time. She was impatient, childless, with international experience. She would have rather dashed through all the topics, regardless of the abilities and knowledge of the other women. Another woman reminded us that T. G. M. said one hundred years ago that every woman is the minister of finance in her house, and she asked why this ability is not used more by the current society. The core of the women participating in our events are women who take the initiative to ask to speak, an immense progress can be seen in their development. They are relaxed, free, self-confident, tolerant.

Newcomers are different at first sight. Not knowing anything about SWOT analysis and time-management, they apply the black and white approach. One of the newcomers was surprised by our negativity. I realized that when people talk about women, those who have not been in touch with gender issues interpret it as attacks against men. We received a feedback: “Good morning. I am writing as regards to yesterday’s meeting. I feel pretty depressed after that. Women had to persuade women once again that it is appropriate to be equal human beings. This is awful, I tell you. The topic was diffused. It was not mentioned at all that economic dependency is the chain by means of which men keep a tight hand on us. It is my fault. I should have been more active in the discussion. I still feel indebted to you. If there is any work available, please, let me know for sure. You also seemed very sad to me—those eyes of yours... Take care, please.”

SUNDAY April 1st

I sent a draft of the publication contents to the publishing house:

Foreword

Endowment Journal Project Summary

Project Diary

Round Tables

Draft of the Women’s Vision on Sustainable Life—for the purposes of a public discussion

Research

Case Studies Home: Hausfrau or Home Management?

Who Governs the World?

Economically Self-Sufficient
Socially Dependent
Possible Actions
Research
Change Management
Acknowledgements
About the GAIA Agency
About the author
Epilogue
References

I am curious to know their opinion. We have found a contact to a translator on the Internet. We are getting contracts ready, there will be a lot of work with it.

SATURDAY April 6th

On Tuesday evening, we were invited to Na bělidle to talk about our project. We were answering questions, what had happened since the last evening held one year before, what women agree on, why the vision, why women's vision, what is our opinion of the Prime Minister's speech given on the occasion of the Year of Equal Opportunities? At www.cro6.cz there is an MP3 recording under the misleading title *Elderly Women Finding Their Place in Society*. The former Free Europe radio station is now seized with the fear of giving proper names to what has been said. Elderly women are not friends with the Internet, and younger women and men will not listen to an interview with this title. Tyrš's House was full of NGOs yesterday. Forum 2000 organized an exhibition of socially beneficial activities. There were a lot of young people there, their interest in and longing for a better world is touching; in any case, it gives strength and enthusiasm to keep the efforts going.

MONDAY April 16th

Late in the afternoon, a meeting with the creative part of the team finishes. We were burning the midnight oil with administration duties yesterday in order to draw up the 5th monitoring report. I mentioned in the report that we had lost our motivation to initiate a discussion at www.quovadisfemina.cz after a denunciation made by a local macho and the fact that the administrator has reduced our monitoring indicators one year retrospectively.

SUNDAY April 22nd

We issued a press release on the occasion of Earth Day and celebrated it by giving a presentation at Touloučův dvůr. I am reading a fresh gender analysis of the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. We come out as the worst country, while

a public discussion about patriarchal vertical thinking and the effects of decisions made by the “one-eyed” is still a taboo.

THURSDAY April 26th

We handed in the 5th monitoring report about our project last week, and we have already received one page of comments back. Generally, they concerned formal drawbacks that showed evidence of our disorder and the “order” of the system.

For example, I am surprised that there are various forms used to record a list of expenses in Prague, i.e. they are not unified within one single city. We recorded our expenses in the form provided by the municipal authorities, and so we have to rewrite it. Horizontal communication and coordination seems not to be functional anywhere, not even on an official level. Twenty-six women came to attend our jubilee 10th round table. We changed the topic of social dependency, which was a bit puzzling in the past, to a meeting with feedback and preparation of the finale. To encourage myself, I put on a T-shirt from the UN conference in Johannesburg, with a slogan on it “When Men Control the Global Purse, Women Get Short-Changed” to remind our dog-tired women how the local black women were irritatingly offering multi-colored T-shirts to stiff and starchy delegates in black suits as a present for their wives and lovers. The important representatives of the nations were trying to steer clear of them, in order not to have to explain why they would not buy a T-shirt and support the local initiative.

I opened the round table with a discussion about the fact that women usually tend to fall into self-accusation for the state of society (well, after all, it is us who bring up the men) which is followed by feelings of unfairness arising from exploitation by their families and society. After the break, I asked to address the meeting with regards to philosophical reflections on social dependence; I usually only facilitate the meetings and do not present my theories. Now, however, the time came to introduce the synthesis that I had presented at the Humanistic Alliance years ago, together with our significant philosopher Milan Machovec.

I drew a symbolic picture of a man and woman. In western culture, their hearts have been fixated on the Godly Father in the heavens for more than two thousand years, turning to him with their prayers asking for everything possible. About two hundred years after the industrial revolution, the belief was transferred to science, intellect—the brain. Since WWII, people began to believe in economics, which is symbolized by the stomach. Work done by people’s hands sustains us however it is not a subject of respect within society, especially with regards to housework done by women. The same lack of respect is paid to the Earth that is indiscriminately plundered by a domineering economy. Sexuality, that formerly used to be a taboo subject, has materialized as a consumer style.

Eastern philosophies show a different priority flow of energy—in men, they are oriented upwards, in women downwards. Referring to Stephan Covey, I furthermore described that we need to develop from the dependency of a suckling towards adolescent independence, which is the phase where many people get stuck for the rest of their life. Some other people degenerate back to an infantile dependency on money, possessions, children, partners, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, thinness, etc. They do not learn any higher levels of consciousness, which carries the form of social dependency, mutual context, relationships and interconnectedness of everything with everything. Neither are they motivated to do that. It is hard to say whether a low IQ of social intelligence is the cause or effect of social and personal problems.

TUESDAY May 1st

Last week, I participated in a meeting of the Gender Section of the Green Party in Parliament. It concerned the cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations and it was full of good will. The minister, without a portfolio, was flexible and invited me to visit her on the 30th April. I therefore studied all the materials drawn up by the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 2003 for the purpose of an institutional change as part of the gender mainstream Czech–Swedish partnership. I also cancelled my trip planned for the days when Czechs celebrate an old pagan tradition of witch-burning on the May 1st, and prepared everything that might be of use. Once I was dressed up and had set off on my journey to the Government offices, my telephone rang and I received a call apologizing that the meeting had been cancelled and a new term had not been proposed. As if it had been me who suggested the meeting. Later on, I wrote to the Gender Section of the Green Party with my opinion on their impoliteness and unprofessional approach. If they are interested in my know-how and organizational skills in the future, then only for a fee.

SATURDAY May 5th

We are trying to promote our project and its mission as much as possible. I was networking during a bookfair entitled Svět knih (The World of Books), got to know a number of new friends, participated in the negotiations held by the Anna Lindth Foundation that supports European projects in the Mediterranean region with neighboring Christian and Muslim countries. My colleagues from the project were at a meeting of environmental organizations with the minister of the environment in Mánes; we have been preparing a presentation, a press release and a lecture for exhibition of natural births BabyExpo. For many months, we have been trying to present the project at the general meeting of the Association of Women's Organizations; after many telephone calls we were however told that Agentura

GAIA, o.s. is not its member, which is an obstacle. We have been working hard on the publication, writing comments and corrections, trying to come up with a fair outcome, deciding which parts of the research should be made public and which not. I have just listened to an interview with the French director Dumont; he was criticizing intellectuals who have been unfaithful to their mission to be the consciousness of society having sold their souls to Mammon. He was also criticizing sociology and its tendency to stick to the surface of phenomena.

SATURDAY May 12th

I returned from Veletřní palác, where we have been successfully networking at BabyExpo for two days and promoting our project. I will have to work on the monitoring indicators that have been crossed out again in the factual part of our 5th monitoring report. I am racking my brains over the question of how to resolve the dilemma of having many women interested in realizing a similar project in regions outside of the capital city, however, there have been no calls to apply for donations to which we could react.

TUESDAY May 22nd

Yesterday, it was our last but one round table. The women were creating a vision, it was an inspiring evening and we are getting ready to present its outcomes by means of a Log Frame.

THURSDAY May 24th

I signed a contract with the auditor who came to check the closed fiscal year 2006. I was sincerely amused by her astonishment over the formalism that we are victims of. We received the 2nd call to correct the 5th monitoring report, we have to divide the indicators in Benefit to men and women, exclude subscribers of the publication and the attendance list where the present participants filled in their first name, surname and contact in their own hand, but no space was left for their signature. We were trying to identify further possibilities to promote our project and we were told that we did not have enough money for a real campaign and so we had to rely on our own creativity and imagination. We had a banner made and on Sunday we will ask women if they want the radar or not.

FRIDAY June 1st

Last week, we walked with the banner from Wenceslas Square, via Národní třída and Malostranské Square to the Castle, we were building a community in the Community Garden, and, in a solidary way, signed a memorandum concerning the care of children. I wonder what solidarity our outcomes will meet with. We put the ideas arising from the last round table into a log frame; yesterday, I was given

feedback that women do not understand the project's language. We have already filled in the goal, purpose, and expected activities. We created concrete examples at the meeting to clarify the purpose of the method, and we will discuss and complete them at the final round table. It will be the vision of women's priorities that we will submit for public discussion. I am writing fair-spoken queries to the directors of Czech Radio, Czech TV, the Council for Radio and TV Broadcasting about what we should do to get the public project to the public service media? The effort to reach any agreement with their editors is a waste of time and energy. At the moment, two advertisements are published in *Sondy*; we are distributing order forms for the publication to Prague schools. At the very last moment I am looking for one more translator, the text in English has been swelling; the deadline set by the publishing house is threatened.

THURSDAY June 7th

The following text was published in *Pražský deník* (Prague Daily) today: My first meeting with the Quo Vadis, Femina? project—one year ago—and the memories are still alive. I am learning about the project from *Krásná paní* magazine. I have received an invitation letter, a discussion has begun—my first round table. About fifteen more women. We are to talk for five minutes about ourselves. We can talk or stay silent. We are free to open ourselves as well as being free to stay enclosed. The women at the round table are talking. They have selected the choice to open themselves. They are disclosing their inner feelings and discovering the colorful world of thousands of possibilities, choices and opinions. The world of hope, the world of disappointment. The essence of human existence itself in a fast sequence. The topics that are clearly emerging on the surface of the discussion are solidarity, compassion, the feeling of togetherness, clear consciousness: we are sailing on the same boat. I am leaving, enriched with a feeling I have never had before: women do not have to be enemies, rivals, and critics of one another. During the discussions we repeatedly achieved surprising agreement of opinions concerning the issues of the overall direction of the social development in our country. I am excited when I can observe, up close, an excellent collective mental work of a large number of female personalities. When somebody asks me for how long have I been influenced by the two-year Quo Vadis, Femina? project, my answer will be brief, "For ever!"

On Tuesday, during the Environmental Day, we collected four pages of "indicators"—the people who want information and the publication. I have received an invitation to Denmark to participate, together with eight young people, at the seminar about the 50th anniversary of the EU and the Year of Equal Opportunities.

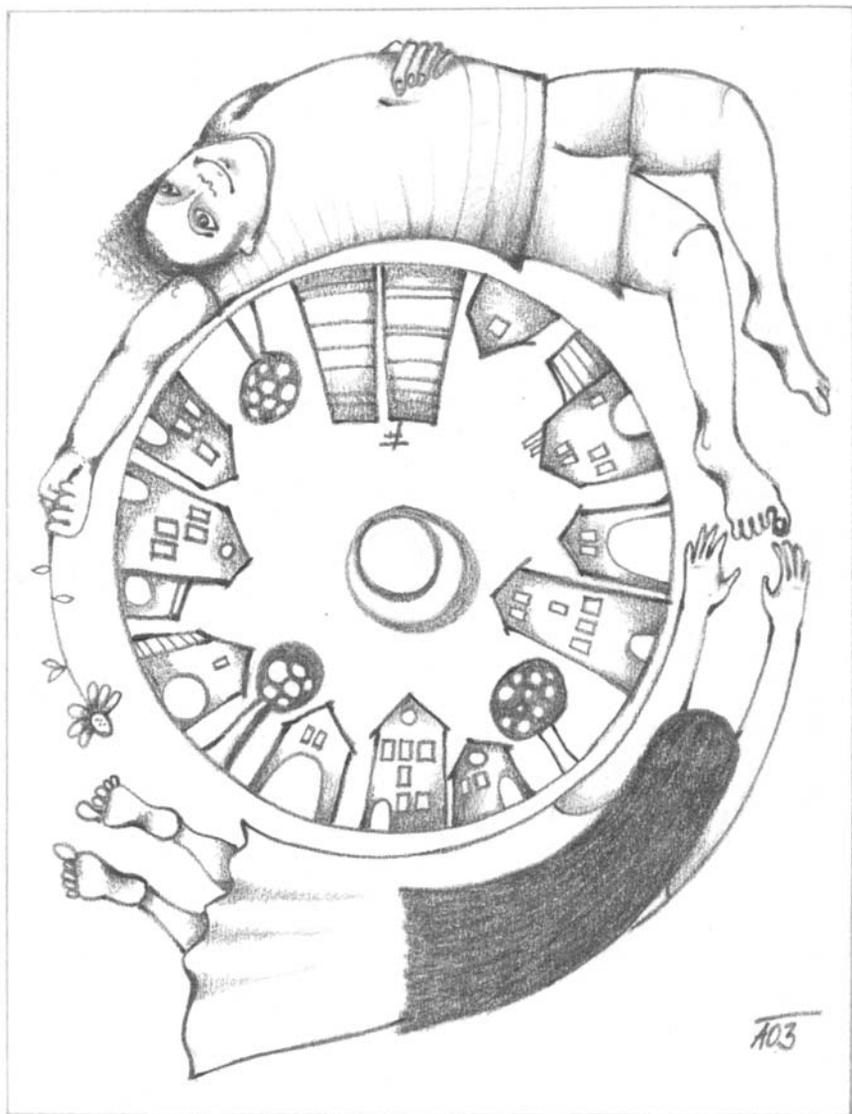
TUESDAY June 12th

We are making a copy of the log frame for each participant. I am falling from my inner euphoria to an external depression when I find out that some women's organizations have chosen for their mascot the man who has been working here for one year and has been medializing himself now successfully. He talks about his equal participation in the household work and yet his wife repeatedly has to solve the problem of who will look after their child on Mondays when we have our working meetings with iron regularity, and during most of the public presentations of the project. After the experience I have obtained as an employer, I cannot recommend flexible forms of work which may get completed, yet people's energy is as a result restless. It does not matter in the case of mechanical work, however in the cases when creative and innovative work is expected, personal commitment, interest, and soul is necessary. This is the type of work that the employers who really create something pay for first of all. I have been solving property settlements after my divorce to find out that no regulation existing in society where time is money in order to estimate the value of the time investment made by women to their families. The time of woman is not money.

I have suffered an unexpected shock; my mum has been taken to hospital and after various diagnoses I am told the worst. I am going to visit her and I am crying, being absolutely unprepared for this life situation.

TUESDAY June 19th

The last round table was excited, full of plans for the future and willingness to measure the achieved change and progress. We handed out the copied log frames and asked the women to comment on them. The work was intensive; the outcome includes many ideas; it will bring us joy to elaborate on them. I encouraged the women with the information that we are on the highest evolutionary level, as those who maintain the human race. I was revealed evidence of this by a famous neurologist who claims that a woman's nervous system is much more intricate and complex than a man's. If ten women and one man remain, the *Homo sapiens* specie has a chance to survive. If ten men and one woman remain, it might be very complicated. Some time ago, we were submitting an analogical *Quo Vadis, Femina?* project to the Equal Programme for the Vsetín Region; after three months a letter was delivered from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs that they would not support it as we had not met the formal requirements. They do not write which requirements they had in mind. And so I am packing my luggage and leaving for a Danish-Japanese community whose form I will fit into without any problems, including the content.



2

Round Tables

The objective of the round table is to enable women to meet in order to exchange their life experiences and opinions. The GAIA Agency has been trying to catalogue experiences, stories, and arguments that would help women to perceive and identify their female values and position in society in a better way. These days, social sciences are crying out in one united voice, “Modern civilised man is lonely.” However, this is twice as true for the modern woman. She is not only isolated as a human being in general, but also as a woman. The woman of today is often trying to balance herself between the man’s world, typically in her working environment, and in her private domain which is no longer what it used to be. Lost are the times when women used to meet while doing their housework, during walks with their children, or could talk at least to the women who worked as their hired help. The modern woman therefore often misses the opportunity to share and compare her life situation with other women, lacking the mutual support and understanding found among women. So as to assert themselves in society and have a positive impact on the surrounding world, women need to know themselves well.

The issue that is often discussed both inside the project team and during consultation with the professional public is the selection of participants in the round tables and their representativeness. Because the project has been supported by the JPD 3 programme, we work with women from Prague. These women mostly have a university education and are interested in women’s issues. We use this target group as a starting point because we firstly want to map the priorities and values of women who are active, communicative, and interested in public issues. To be able to concurrently take into account the priorities of the various women’s groups, e.g. classified according to their ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, etc. The project also includes a network of women and gender organisations with various objectives and targets, the representatives of which are regularly invited to the round tables. The basic assumption underlying our activities is that the work carried out by all women’s organisations are of use. Although the organisations may often differ in their opinions, their activities and experiences allow for the formation of a very precious mosaic and a base for deeper changes in society.

The strategy for the first four round tables was to divide women into groups according to their age. Therefore, we came up with the following age groups: 18–29, 30–48, 49–59, and over 60. Besides age, another criteria for the selection was the willingness and interest of these women to participate in the discussion. In order to recruit the twenty women we needed to make up the round table group, we had to address at least forty women altogether. The database of women that initially included our friends, acquaintances or the acquaintances of our acquaintances has been continuously extended by women who contact us out of their own initiative or those we have met or got to know us during the project's implementation.

As regards the younger generation, the most frequent obstacle to their participation in the round table sessions has been lack of time, with regards to the oldest generation, it was their low self-confidence, “Who is interested in the opinions of an old woman today?” and also an aversion to travel—Toulcův dvůr in Hostivař, where we organise our discussions, seemed remote to many, and they were especially afraid of the journey back to their homes late at night. Other women did not want to be associated with feminism, which would have been possible if they had participated—especially repeatedly—in the round tables of this project.

After we had organised the 4th—generational—round table, we had to decide what would be the strategy for the remaining eight. The team spontaneously came across the idea of realising the following discussions across the generations, i.e. to hold so-called cross-generational round tables. This implied a need to organise the group structure so that the participation of women was well-balanced with regard to their age. This means that none of the groups were to exceed the number of the other age groups. It has been a complicated task because women often decline their participation just before the discussion is to take place and they cannot be substituted by another woman of the same generation at that given moment (on the day when the discussion is to be held).

The cross-generational round tables were implemented in the form of two rounds; during the first, women were to briefly introduce themselves, within a 4-minute time limit, and during the second round, each were to comment and give their opinion on the following topics: Housework, Economic Independence, Social Dependence, Who Governs the World?, and Ways Out. During the cross-generational round tables, we divided women into five groups, each comprising of four participants; who were then to work on a topic using a brainstorming method and write down the results on a sheet of flipchart paper in order to present their ideas to the other participants. The presentations were then followed by a discussion.

While the first two cross-generational round tables worked with all the topics, i.e. one topic per group, the round tables held in 2007 were assigned topics

according to the scheme of one round table/one topic. The project team structured the main topics and sent them to the invited women for consideration and further elaboration. In the same manner as the previous round tables, the task for the participating women was to present the outcome of their group work to the others and discuss them in a follow-up session.

2006	18–29	30–48	49–59	60+	total	2007	18–29	30–48	49–59	60+	total
1st RT			21		21	7th RT	5	4	6	7	19
2nd RT				20	20	8th RT	4	10	6	6	26
3rd RT		19			19	9th RT	8	6	6	7	27
4th RT	20				20	10th RT	4	8	6	8	26
5th RT	5	5	2	6	18	11th RT	8	8	6	7	29
6th RT	7	2	2	6	17	12th RT	7	9	5	5	26

Table Summarizing Participants Broken Down According to Age

Round table for women age 48–60, 14th February 2006

Women Require Tolerance

At the first of the twelve planned round tables, fifteen women met aged 48–60, who, in the main, had already lived through the period of bringing up their children and taking care of them, and yet they still had a considerable part of their lives ahead of them. Part of the discussion focused on what they wanted to fill it with and what life-wisdom they wished to pass on to society and younger generations.

Regardless of the type and level of their education, the women were divided into two main opinion groups. One of them was calling for the renewal and development of the traditional woman's role and characteristics mostly ascribed to women. "Now, we are economically self-sufficient and educated as never before, but we have unfortunately lost much of our femininity, little by little. We should return to our roots and to the natural woman, which includes emotions and a sense of family. Unless women return to traditional female values, we will soon die out as the birth rate is continuously declining." These were the arguments presented by one of the advocates of this opinion group. On the contrary, the second group comprised women striving for maximum equality of both the genders in all areas of life. "The existence of different unchangeable features characterizing genders is an illusion. The majority of our behaviour is defined by our education and socialization. It is important to realize that the generations of women before us lived in a completely different time. The world has been changing and women will never be as they were before."

The women also differed in their approach to success—whether they prefer to get ahead in their private or public life. Some wanted to start foremost with themselves and develop their own personality. As one of the participants expressed, “I’m glad that I’m enjoying my physical health and am able to take care of myself. When my children left home, I started to think about what to do with the rest of my life so that it would be of value and I would be able to pass that quality on.” For other women, the priority was, in particular, a harmonious family and interpersonal relationships. “Man and woman must learn how to communicate together. Between most spouses, communication has been blocked. One needs a considerable portion of empathy and should not let oneself be discouraged by the first communication failure.” The third group of women, on the other hand, spoke mainly about their careers and how to assert themselves in society. As one of them said, “We may be really good, even great at home and in interpersonal relationships, but as soon as we venture out into the world, we face problems. We should do something about this, especially in the Czech Republic. Policies will remain ‘ugly’ unless women engage themselves.”

Across the whole opinion spectrum, however, a strong need was expressed by most women to cultivate interpersonal relationships, communicate openly, and share life experiences. Many women were unanimously calling for the development of spiritual values in society, psychological and communicational education, not only in the family, but also at elementary schools, and for mutual tolerance between genders and generations.

Round table for women older than 60, 10th April 2006

Society underestimates the education of the next generations, women say

Twenty women older than sixty participated in the round table held on 10th April 2006. The largest percentage of those engaged in the discussion comprised of women with secondary and university educations, most of them were experienced in the upbringing of children. But also nearly all of them had asserted themselves in the field in which they had studied and had been living an active life in retirement. One of the main topics that emerged during the discussion was how to attune family and professional life. The responsible upbringing of children still remains an important value for women, the key one for the positive development of our society. However, at the same time, women are afraid that this value might be devalued due to ever increasing demands placed on employees and the overall orientation of society towards maximum performance at work. “The task of every generation is to prepare the next generation as well as possible for life, therefore women, and also the men, who stay at home to take care of children, should not be perceived as inferior. The partner who stays at home with the children for some

time is always handicapped because of this and pays for it through lower qualifications, salary and old age pensions. Unless society places the same emphasis on education as it does on money-making, nothing will change,” said one of the participants. Another woman talked about her daughter, “My daughter has stayed home with her kids for ten years, she has brought them up very well and you can see it in them. They have a rich vocabulary, a lot of hobbies; my daughter has prepared them excellently for life. However, she herself remains in a role unduly appreciated. Society looks down its nose at her for staying with her kids at home for such a long time, considering her incompetent. Now, my daughter would like to return to work and has encountered tremendous problems. During her maternity leave she continued to educate herself, but now it is of little help.” Household chores, which are still done by women in most households, were perceived by participants as an important, albeit rarely discussed problem. “Housework is in fact exploitation. Family is an economic unit that needs its operation to be secure. Why, when I have regular employment, am I also responsible for my household? Does my salary not allow me to ensure some assistance? I would consider this emancipation,” a university educated pensioner who continues to work contributed.

Round table for women age 30–47, 15th May 2006

Housework is grinding us down, women complain

The discussion between women of the ages thirty to forty-seven confirmed that it is at this age that the inequality between the productive and reproductive function of man in the social system reveals itself most strongly, creating a lot of inner conflict and tension between the genders. Most of the participating women had given birth to and brought up one, two or more children with whom they stayed at home on maternity leave. For a large number of them, the start of their maternity leave signaled a critical turning point, a change in the perception of their own needs, values, interests, as well as social identity.

It is a general rule in Czech families, that she who stays at home must do the cleaning and tidying up. However, the moment a woman begins her maternity leave, she often finds it a problem to find the time to take care of both the child and the household, especially if she is a primipara. In addition to this, many women have to work for money during their maternity leave as their partner's income is not sufficient to cover the household costs. “I want to pay maximum attention to my daughter, but finally I cannot devote that much time to her despite being at home. I must do a lot of things regarding both the housework and work done for money in the evenings on the PC as my husband's salary is not sufficient to cover the needs of our family. At home, my parents taught me by example that

a household was to be immaculate at all times, and this is the reason why I consider myself to be a huge failure,” confessed a mother of a two-year old daughter who was not the only woman having such problems. The opinion of the majority of the women engaged in the discussion was expressed by one midwife on her maternity leave, “One day, I’d like to again do the job I like and one that is financially appreciated by society. Doing housework for a long period of time cannot satisfy. For me, it is not so important that it is devalued by society, but I personally just don’t enjoy it. I see it as a boring and quite exhausting responsibility.” Most women do not have high enough salaries to be able to afford home-help. Those who are lucky enough to have somebody to help them are very satisfied with their situation, such as e.g. a 37-year old therapist and a mother of two young children, “My husband has hired help for me at home so I now understand that he does not expect me to do all the housework as I had previously imagined. It has helped me tremendously.”

However, housework is not the same as taking care of children. As the discussion showed, despite the aforementioned problems, the upbringing of their children is fulfilling for most women and they are even able to reconcile with the temporary dependence on their partner’s income. Only until, however, the situation changes, as described by a woman who deals professionally with equal opportunities for women and men, “Only when I divorced and stayed alone with my two-year old son, did I understand what it meant to be financially dependant. At that moment, I was interested in nothing other than how to make money as fast as possible. In such a situation it is nearly always the woman who becomes disadvantaged.” Most women with a similar experience think that the journey towards the freedom and equality of women begins with economic self-sufficiency. However, they also consider the negative impact of the above mentioned stereotype of the perfect housewife to be of no less significance. As one of the participants pointed out, “Women are merely hard-working little ants, all the time picking up crumbs from the floor, having no time to look around. Why don’t we read, for example, the election agendas of the political parties rather than the never-ending housework?”

Round table for women age 18–29, 12th June 2006

Young women call for the equal representation of women in politics and of men in households

The vast majority of young women at this round table were aware of the value of housework, comparing their situation with the situation of older generations, indicating the injustice of the past regime in their statements, which encouraged women to leave their families for work, although, concurrently—a heritage from

the old days—most of the responsibility for household chores was left up to the women. “My mother is at work from morning till evening, and when she returns home, she has to start the second shift. In the case of the older generations, the situation is perhaps made a bit more complicated by the fact that our fathers were brought up differently from the men of today. Mostly, older men were brought up as the mum’s loved ones who did not have to do anything at home. Since then, however, the situation has changed; women go to work just like men, whilst still having to return home to play the same role. They have to do the work. It’s up to us to bring our sons up differently, learning to share the housework with a woman and to respect her,” a 23-year old student expressed. The fact is that young women today realize that this unfair situation has a significant impact on their approach to the division of housework. “I often have to resolve the dilemma at home of whether I should help my boyfriend with the washing and ironing as he whimpers over a pile of shirts. In most cases, I don’t help him, as I want to have an independent man at home who is able to cook a dinner and turn on a washing machine. The same applies to me; I’m able to mend a dripping tap when the situation arises,” disclosed a young woman of herself who has been sharing a flat with her boyfriend for several years.

Despite a considerable shift in the age limit of when people start a family, the period between 18—30 years is still considered to be the ideal age for a marriage and the first child. However, many women also study at this age, earning on the side while studying, preparing themselves for their future profession. They are aware of the workload associated with motherhood and housekeeping, and so they hesitate to start a family. The women participating in the discussion often admitted they felt exposed to the social pressure which makes them feel more or less unsettled. “I realize the very strong pressure in society, for example, regarding parenting. Many of my acquaintances already have children and I still do not know for sure if I want any. I always feel awkward when a gynaecologist asks me how many children I have and I say—none. When I, in addition to that, mention that I have been studying feminism, I feel an automatic prejudice against me,” a student of gender studies complained, as many others did.

The participants in the discussion were also calling for women to be more interested in what was going on around them, providing them the opportunity to have an influence. Some directly voted for the active participation of women in politics which they see as one of the solutions to strengthen women’s social role. Contrary to older generations, they do not perceive the introduction of compulsory quotas for the participation of women in policy as negative. Quite to the contrary. A 25-year old woman who has just graduated from university said, “As a way out, I’d like to see a change in the proportion of men and women in politics. We could educate the general public, try to persuade women to vote for women on the ballots who would then gain functions in a natural way. This, however, does not work as

yet in our country. The second option is to introduce quotas. Many people may consider this artificial and they often protest against it. However, once women are in politics, nobody will consider this unusual and women will be able to get settled into the political world. I see the solution here.”

Cross–generational round table, 9th October 2006

Four generations of women outlined their idea of social change

The first subject that the women participating in this round table expressed their ideas about, was their common opinion on housework, i.e. the organisational management of family life and child care. They identified, as a significantly positive factor, that it is work done for those close to you and the environment in which they live. “When a woman stays at home with her kids, she can bring them up well and find satisfaction in doing something useful for the whole society. She can pass on a good example and positive values to the next generation and serve as an example to her immediate surroundings,” said one of the participants, by common consent of the other women, a young mother on maternity leave. However, she added, “Despite all the positive aspects of housework, we should try to engage men into the process as much as possible. In case of the contrary, we may never pass on a fair example to our children when they do not see their father’s working at home.” It is the unfair division of housework between man and woman that the women participating in the cross–generational round table see as one of the most significant negative aspects. According to them, it is the employed women who have the most difficulties coping with this. “In fact they do double the work, but the housework is not included in the gross national product. Society, and especially men, appreciate work which is well–paid. Housework is discredited and stigmatised as second–rate.”

“I think we can agree on the fact that the world is governed by young, white, heterosexual and privileged men,” noted one of the participants ironically in the round table on the topic Who Governs the World? However, the women’s insights mostly give evidence of a relationship–oriented, holistic and psychological approach to the situation in the current world and its values are growing. They express discontent with the value orientation of western civilization resulting in, according to them, a world governed by money, materialism, egocentrism, carnality, aggressivity, hierarchy, masculine values, prejudice and stereotyping. The women at the cross–generational round table see a way towards change, especially through education, as tolerance and an effort to change the social priorities. “It is apparent from the standpoint of the women engaged in the discussion that their attitude towards the topics of government and policy are responsible, not superficial. They realise very well the necessity for overall and profound change. Women

mostly understand the word ‘power’ as the capacity to achieve something and have a positive impact, not to control and command others,” Marie Haisová evaluates, from the outcome of the fifth round table, adding that, “The results of the *Quo Vadis, Femina?* project are worthy of attention and can serve as incentive for politicians, male as well as female, in the upcoming elections. Our policy definitely needs more women with a positive vision of our common future.”

Cross-generational round table, 27th November 2006

Women opened topics that had not yet been discussed

Other women were invited to participate in the second cross-generational round table so as to make it possible to compare how both groups differed in their opinions, but especially to see what they had in common. Concerning the household, the women participating in the discussion expressed their opinion—similar to that of the previous group—that housework still remains invisible in society, morally and financially underestimated, despite the fact it is actually a second full-time job, which demands considerable time and energy. “Even if in many families today people are able to agree on some kind of labour division, a hidden expectation remains that the housework should be mainly done by women,” two university students stated in the presentation of their group’s outcome. The women participating in the discussion furthermore drew attention to the fact that such an expectation may, in extreme situations, lead to domestic violence and the psychological manipulation of women. Similarly, as in the other round tables, they appreciated the possibility of using paid services in the household, which would partially remove the burden from women, and in this way the value of housework might be expressed financially.

The participants in the discussion saw economic independence as one of the ways to improve the overall situation of women in society. They exemplified the current situation by the statistical fact that globally women own only one percent of all existing property. “For a woman, a sufficient amount of financial resources means the possibility of self-fulfillment, and the freedom of movement leads to the extension of her general knowledge. In addition to this, wealthier women have a better opportunity of having a positive influence on their community, supporting charities, or environmental projects,” explained the speaker of one of the working groups. On the other hand, the women expressed their concern that in a society ruled by egoism and profit maximalization, the wealth possessed by men as well as by women may be the source of self-centeredness, enslavement by money, loss of empathy and contact with the real problems of society. According to the discussion participants, this is further encouraged by the fact that there are generally only a handful of economically powerful women.

With respect to the subject of the social dependency of women—contrary to the previous round tables—the women focused on the specific contribution of women to society as a whole. They see it particularly in the introduction of the female principle and the so-called soft values in society. However, they also emphasised the economic aspects as women still have lower salaries on average than men, taking care of the household and the up-bringing of children, i.e. individuals that society comprises of, without being paid for it. The women considered the role played by women in developing social contacts and interpersonal relationships to be a contribution of no less importance. “Unfortunately, the influence of society on women is still stronger than the influence of women on society. The opportunity to change this situation could be the development of a community life of women and larger popularization of female topics and needs,” the women agreed.

At the second cross-generational round table, the women specifically developed the subject *Who Governs the World?* Whilst in previous discussions, the women stated rather abstract values, here they worked with the existing power relations. They agreed with the first group on white, heterosexual men governing the world. Furthermore the financial capital, strong personalities, and also, of course, the legitimate leaders. Women consider the threat to the third world, exploitation of natural and human resources, concentration of power in a ever-decreasing circle of people, escalation of aggression, expansion of western culture, and terrorism as a reaction to the above-mentioned phenomena, and as the biggest risk to the current power systems.

1st thematic round table, 29th January 2007

Women were discussing the topic of “Home” with an appeal for the greater engagement of men in household chores

The theme of this round table focused on home and everything related to it. The starting point for us was the fact that, in most households, women are still—thanks to their historic experience and the manner in which they were brought up—the person who takes care of the hearthstone, responsible for the operating of the household. The ‘Home’ topic however does not concern only housework which has been discussed by women at round tables so far. The home also includes relationships among generations, partners, parents and children, sexuality, love, the surrounding environment, upbringing, education, and culture. Therefore, the women were asked to use a brainstorming method in groups to analyse five subtopics which they were allowed to expand to other subjects. These included: 1. Housework: time, evaluation, division. 2. Moral and emotional responsibility: what unifies us, home management, coexistence. 3. Environment: locality, community, influence. 4. Upbringing, education: examples work wonders, attention,

care, influence of the environment. 5. Relationships: sex, love, generation, partnership, friendship.

For women, the notion of 'home' mainly represents the place to which one belongs, and where he or she feels safe. According to them, this feeling is created both by the environment, and the people with whom we share our home. At the same time, the women also drew attention to the fact that home may also be a place of enormous frustration and fear in the case of domestic violence, the physical as well as psychological, committed by both men and women. In this respect, the women talked about the educational function of home and about the methods in which to ensure that children are brought up within an as harmonious family environment as possible. They agreed that any upbringing requires shared moral responsibilities and goals by both partners, their mutual respect and a good example to be passed on to their children, as examples are far more effective than words, "If this is achieved and a good emotional background has been created, they are much more able to resist any negative influences from their surroundings," remarked one of the participants at the round table. The discussion participants also ascribed great importance to emotions brought into the upbringing by women. "If a woman has the feeling that she can realise herself also outside her home, e.g. in her profession or hobbies, she is satisfied with herself, and the upbringing of children means a conscious decision for her. Then she is mostly able to pass on a good example," explained a woman working in the field of personal and family counselling. However, some women questioned this opinion, stating that people today postpone their decision to start a family especially due to their career and establishing material subsistence.

With regard to housework, its division and appreciation, the women agreed that it is not valued by society, neither morally, nor financially. They see the solution in the equal division of labour amongst family members, the possibility of paid home help, or alternatively, mutual support provided by neighbours and the exchange of services, which partially works in villages, while in Prague such a form of support is limited by isolation and anonymity. "Housework would also be definitely more appreciated if people knew how much time and energy it requires. NGOs and the professional public deal perhaps with all the areas of human life, but we will learn nothing about households from them, despite it being the foundation of our life. It is also important to put pressure on laws to be changed, especially regarding the appreciation of child care," agreed the participants at the round table.

Last but not least, the women talked about the urban environment, which mostly forms our homes. They expressed their dissatisfaction with urban anonymity, the loss of natural relationships in cities, pointing out that the current architecture does not inspire social contact. "Modern constructions and life in cities has adapted

to the high demands for hygiene in all respects, becoming cold and sterile, while we live in a polluted environment, which is a paradox. We all should try to endow the spaces in cities with life, not to be afraid of greenery, nature, and other people,” noted the women.

2nd thematic round table, 26th February 2007

Women were discussing the topic of Who Governs the World? with an appeal to the greater engagement of women in public life

Twenty-six women from Prague, mostly with a university education, participated in the discussion at the eighth round table organised as a part of the project “Quo Vadis, Femina?—the Vision of Women in Sustainable Life.” Once again we developed a specific structure, as follows: 1. good practices, influence of the environment, education, upbringing, prejudices... 2. sexuality, love, family, friendship, egocentrism... 3. power, time, money, ideologies, technologies... 4. superpowers, leaders, media, policy, vision... 5. religion, morals, men, women, nature... and space for other ideas.

In accordance with the mission of the project, the women agreed that the current policy needs a vision, especially a female vision. “There is no good policy without vision. There are short-term, long-term, global, national and personal visions. The world however also needs a female vision. Men and women should have the same share, as regards assets, policy, and spiritual life, in the future of our common world,” one of the participants in the discussion explained, adding, “The precondition of a gender-balanced policy and the same decision-making power is supported by equal rights and opportunities for women and men alike. Our goal is a 50/50 share in decision making carried out by the consensus principle.”

A responsible approach to their own lives and their immediate environment appeared to be very important for the women. According to them, this responsibility is the unconditional base of a good influence on wider society. “Good governance starts with your personal responsibility to your own value. One should be faithful to oneself first of all. If one achieves this, he or she does not have such a need to dominate the surrounding world,” agreed the women, however, they concurrently noted that, “One lives in society, he or she does not exist on his or her own. We make part of the system, a hierarchy which is determined by a strong economy, physical superiority, and a high level of technological development.” Under these conditions, women shouldn’t enclose themselves into their own micro-world, but should accept their share of responsibility and get engaged on a wider social and political scale.” One of the participants referred to her long-term working experience with women and added, “I have a feeling that in the Czech Republic, women do not help women. When a woman starts performing a high

political function, she is not interested in helping other women and thinks that she has got to this position only because of her abilities. However, when you operate in the environment of the international women's movement, you will find that women from Europe in particular, have a lot in common and it would definitely be worthwhile for them to support one another."

As a part of the round table, the women were also lively discussing the current issue of the antiballistic base to be built in the Czech Republic. They see the biggest problem in the lack of information that the general public needs to make up their minds. "So as to be able to give a qualified answer, we need information and this is what we do not have in the Czech Republic. We do not even know what is the development tendency regarding the waging of war or disarmament, this information is strictly confidential. Today, we have got into a situation when only the structures have the right to have information, not the democratic society," said one of the participants. Generally, the women were inclined to support the disarmament development, and a majority of them—according to a questionnaire—said no to the antiballistic base. As another of the participants expressed, "We will never know enough. Today, you will find information to the contrary for every piece of information. The armament will either continue to accelerate or we will do everything possible in the world to stop the arming. The armament industry is the biggest industry in the world. It always needs some wars somewhere, at least local ones. This is a mistake in principle."

3rd thematic round table, 26th March 2007

Women were discussing their economic position within the society

The next thematic round table in the sequence was titled "Economically Dependant" and twenty-seven women from Prague representing all generations were discussing the economic situation of women in our society. We were interested in what weight women assign to money, how they see their economic position, and what they expect from the support given to equal opportunities in the area. According to the statistical data, the surviving secondary position of women is especially evident with regards to the economic side of life. Globally, women own only 1% of assets and 10% of financial resources.

A similar opinion was held by many of the women participating in the round table who described the situation in the following words, "Unfortunately, the freedom obtained after 1989 has not generated any equality for women, especially in the economic sphere. Women are still working for lower salaries than men, despite the fact they work as much as men do. Withal, equality is absolutely essential for independence, freedom, opportunities and relationships. In addition to this, the poor conditions for small and medium businesses and a legislation system that

does not work very well, also deprives women of the courage to be in business and apply all the abilities they undoubtedly have. It was T.G. Masaryk who used to say in his time that every woman managing her household is the Secretary of the Treasury on a small-scale.”

The notion of ‘economic independence’ itself was perceived by most women in a subjective manner. “The economic independence is as individual as it needs are. If a woman is able to make both ends meet having limited re/sources at her disposal, she is economically independent and free, regardless of how low an income she may have. It is important for her to be able to take care of herself as a woman—and, unfortunately, this is the capacity not taught to most of us as we were being brought up. Financial dependency on a partner may lead to blackmailing and domestic violence, it is a position that is prone to victimization.” The women came to this common conclusion. Despite that, many women worried whether financial independence is not at the expense of the proper upbringing of children and family relationships, “Women are afraid of being financially dependent on their partner. If they allow themselves to be in this position, they would be more relaxed to bring up their children.”

The opinions became polarised also among generations. The older generation of women rather inclined towards the standpoint that no personal and economic freedom and independence may be fully realised within the family. “I’ve been bringing up my children for fifteen years and I myself was brought up to believe that the care of family is the absolute priority. I have no space left to make money for myself, neither for my hobbies nor self-realisation. We were thinking in a different way. The women of our generation were rather led to self-sacrifice themselves,” said one of the older participants at the round table. On the contrary, younger women believe that the capacity of the woman to be independent is one of the prerequisites for good family relationships. “When a woman acts according to her heart, doing what she likes and what she believes in, she will soon become economically independent on her own. She will support her femininity, thus creating a space for man to become a man.” At the same time, the women participating in the round table admitted that an economically independent woman is still not perceived as commonplace in many families and she can trigger negative emotions because she is acting contrary to tradition.

4th thematic round table, 23rd April 2007

Socially Dependent

The purpose of the 4th thematic round table was not only to discuss another of the topics entitled, Socially Dependent, dealt with under the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project, but also to evaluate what had been said so far, how women have perceived

the development of the project so far and what they expect from its continuation. Therefore we have designed the conception of this round table to be much freer than the previous ones. It had the form of a moderated discussion preceded by a brief introduction to the Socially Dependent topic. We chose this form because women had been more or less avoiding the topic of social dependency during the previous round tables as it seemed to them too abstract and difficult to grasp. The author of the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project, Marie Haisová, originally perceived the term ‘socially dependent’ to mean natural, horizontal relationships that could be very familiar to women. She understands the awareness and strengthening of relationships within society, as one of the ways out of a depersonalized and vertically managed world. “For me, social dependency means the awareness of the very narrow interconnectedness and complexity of the social system that has been created through the efforts of many generations. Of course, the system is connected to natural resources, the whole planet and the universe as well. If we realized every morning that thanks to other people we can wash ourselves in warm water, buy fresh rolls for breakfast, and commute to work by public transport, maybe we would live more joyfully.” The topic of social dependency may however be far broader and the participants in the various round tables mostly coped with it in their own way.

What society offers

Women were for example interested in what society offers not only to women, but to people in general. What does it help people with and where, on the contrary, does it hold them down. Among the strengths of social dependency, was included the feeling of solidarity and unity within a broader community and the pride we take in belonging somewhere. They also mentioned the possibility of personal development that every society more or less offers within its rules and norms and the certainty provided by these social norms and the rules governing behaviour. The greatest threat was perceived by the women as social rigidity, an enclosed character and strong orientations towards consumerism.

Public and private spheres

Some women talked about their dependency on friends and their cultural and social life. This aspect was emphasised especially with regards to women on maternity leave who have lost contact with their former place of employment and have not much free time left. Unfortunately, today, most social life takes place at work where people spend most of their time. This may be one of the reasons why so many women want to return to their jobs after maternity leave. A participant in one of the round tables, a twenty-two year old student of ecology, saw a concrete possibility in the strengthening of social bonds and rapprochement of the home

and public spheres, “I would like very much if housework and economic self-sufficiency were interconnected. I understand the household in my own way, as the care taken of life and the country in which I live. It would be ideal if the place where I work and live were the same. It would be nice to have enough time for kids, to invest more of my human potential, feelings, and emotions to my work. The fact that private and professional spheres are separated is maybe a bit of a problem of our society. I would like to create a completely new form of entrepreneurial activities. I was very much attracted by the idea of social enterprising. It is a profit activity that also solves some social or environmental issues at the same time.”

Media

The participants in the project did not omit the significant influence of the media on society either. They also emphasised the efforts to change their approach to women. “Media has a tremendous influence on our opinions. Therefore, they should provide space for the opinions on current events as seen by men as well as women. Because the female perspective is missing in the media, we are receiving, in fact, distorted information”. This was stated during one of the round tables.

Women’s solidarity

Under the Socially Dependent topic, women also included the importance of the strengthening of friendly, professional, and interest relationships between women that would provide them with support and background within a broad and complex society. “It could help women if they created women’s groups where they could share their specific experience and try to change something together. If no solidarity exists among women, there can not be the equality of chances either,” said the women.

The contribution of women to society

Women very often concentrated on the contribution of women to the whole society. They see it especially in the introduction of the female principle and so called soft values into society. “Male and female principles, called yang and yin in eastern philosophies, are inherent both in men and women and the goal is to enlarge and develop them equally. The symbiosis of the male and female principles brings benefit to society as a whole. It is important that society acknowledges and duly appreciates the specific character not only of the female role but also of the role of every human being as an individual,” said one of the participants in the 4th thematic round table. The women in the Quo Vadis, Femina? project paid attention also to the role of women in the developing of social contacts and interpersonal relationships and the position of women in a democratic society.

This situation was described by one of the women by the following words, “We are living through a radical social change, because, contrary to many generations before us, we may live as we really are, regardless of the environment in which we were brought up and who our parents were. To take her own way, still demands a lot of risks for women today, but not social exclusion as was the case in the past. Nowadays, we need to find the place where to direct our freedom. We will not achieve much through a mere definition of ourselves against others and exaggerated individualism. I rather see the road to be taken by women as the joining of their purposefulness and cooperation.”

Sustainable life

As was already mentioned in the Foreword above, social bonds are related to the bonds between people and nature, and this aspect of social dependency was mentioned repeatedly at the round tables. During the 4th thematic round table, women drew attention to the fact that resources of energy are getting scarcer all over the world and that it is necessary to change the overall life style. “For example, upon a transfer to community, and a less centralized way of life, man would be able to better realise not only his or her dependency on other people, but also on nature,” said one of the participants and added, “The mission of each of us should be to hand over our planet to the next generations in a better state than it is today.”

11th round table, May 21st, 2007

Creation of the vision

Step by step, the last but one round table brought up the rear to the cycle of the previous ones. Its goal was to create their thematic synthesis and outline the core of the women’s vision, i.e. the main objective of the “Quo Vadis, Femina” project. Twenty-nine women of various ages came to participate in the round table. Most of them had participated in our events repeatedly. In this way, another of the important partial objectives of the project was met—to build a community of women who can be identified with the idea of the project and will want to actively participate in its further development for a longer period of time. We chose the brainstorming method to work with women at this round table. On their own, each of the women was to propose her own vision structured in individual points, both on the personal and social level, especially in the areas solved by the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project—home, economic self-sufficiency, social dependency, and who governs the world.

Despite the differences in age, interests, and educational backgrounds of the women, some topics and requirements appeared very often according to statistical criteria. We, as the project team, were pleasantly surprised by the fact that the “Quo

Vadis, Femina?” project had in fact been looking for unifying ideas of the women’s movement and saw a chance how to present the issue of equal opportunities in an integral and meaningful form bringing it into the broader social consciousness. As an illustration, we offer an overview of some of the frequent topics and examples of the requirements raised by the women.

Harmony

- Ability to listen to others, understanding, interconnectedness
- Partnership between man and woman as a way of cooperation
- Harmony between body and soul, man and woman, home and society
- Perception of complexity, everything is mutually interconnected
- Interconnection of male and female principle
- Mutual inspiration

Ecology

- Love and respect of everything on the Earth
- To restrain ourselves so the Earth and everybody on the Earth can breath better
- Silence, seclusion and forests for those who will come after us
- We were born to administer our world as well as possible and to hand it over to our descendants in as good a condition as possible
- Cleanliness of the Earth should be taken very seriously and without any tolerance towards its pollution
- More efficient protection of the environment
- To make use of nature, not exploit it

Equal representation

- Men and women should participate together in the upbringing of children and the creation of the home, and they should engage in public life
- 50:50 ratio should be a commonplace in political life and the governance of the state
- Balanced representation of women and men in decision making bodies
- A woman for president
- Equal chances in managerial positions
- A ministerial post = 1 man + 1 woman

Appreciation of home

- Work of a person who stays at home to take care of children should be financially, socially, and morally appreciated
- The state should honour work done by women in the family and household as regular employment and be paid a modest salary for it as for any other work

- Appreciation of not only mental, but also manual work
- Appreciation of home and household chores
- Interconnection of the family and job spheres so as they would be mutually continuously connected and complement each other

Issues to be discussed

The discussion and exchange of opinions that followed the presentation of the individual visions especially concerned the steps that should lead to the fulfilment of these general requirements. Different opinions were expressed especially with regard to the tools needed for the evaluation of household chores. While some women thought that housework deserved financial remuneration comparable to the salary of an employee, taking into account its time and organisational demands, others were more or less sceptical in this respect. “If housework is remunerated, many women will face the pressure in their families to stay at home and they will lose the possibility to achieve professional qualifications and develop their career,” expressed one of the participants who had been dealing with the topic of equal opportunities for a long time.

A large part of the discussion concerned the equal representation of women in the policy and decision making processes. Will the 50 percent ratio automatically ensure a higher quality of policy? Do women have better qualifications to make “better policies” than men? On the one hand, the opinion prevailed among the discussion participants that with a higher percentage of women in policy-making, the chance to promote women’s interests would increase as well, and because of this reason the introduction of at least temporary quotas for women’s participation would ease the situation. However, this statement was challenged by some women who mentioned that in the political environment with the minimum level of morals it is hard to make a “good policy” regardless of gender, and that, together with the gender balancing of policy, higher ethical and professional requirements should be imposed on its actors, be they men or women. Attention should be paid not only to physical aspects and quantity, but also to mental aspects and quality.

12th Round Table, 18th June 2007

Activities leading to the vision

Attended by its participants in great numbers, the last round table of the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project was held on a hot Monday in June within a very friendly atmosphere. Most of the regular participants in the round tables came to actively support the creation of a vision. At the beginning of the session, the women were acquainted with the plans of the project for the last half-year and invited to the international “Quo Vadis, Femina?” conference to be held in the autumn. The

introduction was followed by a lively discussion over one of the case studies contained in this publication and then by independent mental work by all the participants. While the conception of the previous round table consisted especially of the general visions of individual women worded in short items, this time we asked the women present what concrete steps and activities they would take up to implement their visions. Thanks to the creative and friendly atmosphere created by women at the round table, there was also time for a lot of informal social contacts and personal dialogues, besides the work. One of the results is a working group of women who offered to devote their free time and potential to keep the project going, to implement and promote its outcomes.

We worked out the whole mosaic of general visions, enterprising wishes as well as concrete practical ideas into a table that makes a part of the publication and should serve as the basis for further continuation of the project, as well as an inspiration for individual women. Therefore, we state here only some of the proposals developed by the women during the round table session to illustrate the others.

- Extensive, strong and witty media campaign eliminating gender stereotypes in the upbringing of children and in employment;
- Gender educational campaigns in small towns and villages;
- Strong women's lobby;
- Organized incoming of women to political parties;
- Courses of experience-based pedagogy for married couples aimed at mutual tolerance and social responsibility;
- Creation of a working group at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs responsible for a unified conception of family, gender and social policy;
- Courses and advisory services available to women on law and finances;
- Trainings for companies on equal opportunities in employment;
- Training courses for women aimed at creating and wording the visions;
- Creation of a network of community centers where people would meet regularly to discuss their personal and social problems and search for common solutions;
- Theatre and arts interest groups organized at schools to support empathy, cooperation, mutual tolerance and self-knowledge;
- Production of a history textbook that would take into account the contribution of women to the development of mankind;
- Hard work of every woman on her own self-respect.

At the end, the women present were acquainted with the structure and contents of the publication, the case study about Auntie With the Five Ps was read together with comments on it, contacts were agreed to be exchanged, and regular meetings and cooperation were planned to be held.

3

Research

Opinions of Authorities

- Simone de Beauvoir wrote that women were the root as well as the object of man's power.
- Ferguson (1989) and Segal (1990) wrote that men and women's principles are not essentially different. To be a man does not mean being "a masculine hard-hearted brute," and for a woman to be "a feminine, romantic and sweet little wife." Yet their makeup does not create pre-conditions for all women to be social workers and all men soldiers. Quite the contrary.
- David Icke, a member of the British Greens, once remarked that "men and their values had been destroying the Earth". He insists that men equalized the roles by themselves. "The most important significance of emotions and sentiments in relation to the environment we Greens call women's values."
- Dorothy and Walter Sharz (1987) argue that "these values do not belong exclusively to women, but in our society it is the woman who accepts and expresses them." Nevertheless, women consider themselves to be the weaker sex. So it is not only man's domination causing the problem, it is also the fault of women to accept a more defensive role; they should take up an active role rather than a subservient one.
- Mary Mellor (1997) remarked that we can crack the nut of disproportion between men and women by the term Women's Principle, and by the struggle for unity. Glorifying femininity and its principles establishes a holistic society. The women's principle is seen as a sense of balance within the dominant male world. Women's love and devotion can restore humanism and emancipate human beings. These principles contribute to a certain way of thinking about their roles, and reflects their helplessness in the dominant male society. Women are excluded from power and thus have no impact in industry, the military, science or politics. When linking ecology to feminism, we see that eco-feminism perceives woman and nature as an object of the modern, seemingly patriarchal society. There are wars, the military, capitalism, and industrialism. Eco-feminism seeks a solution by presenting values such as love and devotion. And that peaceful and

less hierarchical culture should address the larger social, personal and ecological issues. Man's superiority over women would not exist without the submission of women in social, emotional and economic areas. Mallor states that nothing like exemption from work exists, only work that can be shared. Women's lives are always decentralized; they cannot go far from their families and duties.

Communication

- Elaine Storkey (1995) writes that stereotypes often limit the differences between men and women as being biological. These stereotypes are wrong because of the enormous influence resulting from the culture we live in and from social, economic as well as verbal understanding. In fact, it is a complex game between rational and emotional elements, historic impact, ethics, esthetic feelings and legality. Everybody plays his/her part in personal experiences, which also affects one's social life. Storkey observed six different groups and discovered that men talked far more often and longer than women did. Men spent 73 % of their time in mixed groups. When men talk, their style is usually direct, informative, detailed and authoritative. They also interrupt other speakers four times more often, especially if they are women. She observed that men show disapproval when a woman is making a speech. Yet when women showed an interest in contributing to the discussion, their speech often began with an excuse: "This may not be the right comment, but..." Women's presentations were much shorter on average and were interrupted more often. Women usually turned to other group members for help when expressing some ideas. Storkey says that this problem appears because we communicate differently. Men and women very often understand each other incorrectly. Men interpret women's pleasantness and readiness to negotiate as a weakness, compared with male decisiveness. They assume that a woman is not self-assured and doesn't state what she wants, provided she knows it at all. This is also the reason why a female manager who doesn't instruct her employees, does not act autocratically, but tries to inject other views into the decision-making process, embarrasses men. This method is often seen as confusion and a waste of time.
- No male or female characteristics can be solved easily and in a simplified way when it comes to gender, social, historical, cultural and moral differences.

Economic (In)Dependence x Housework

- The 1985 United Nations study about the world situation says that women represent half of mankind,; they carry out two-thirds of the work (measured in hours), but earn one-tenth the money and only own one-hundredth of one percent of

property. The unpaid work of women in Africa, e.g. farm work, housework, child care, is not usually included in these national calculations. The report also states that 95.5 % of the entire world property belongs to men.

- Gita Sen and Caren Grown (1987) wrote that women's work, although undervalued, is the basis for survival and reproduction of human existence in all societies. Whether it is food or its preparation and processing, responsibility for fuel, water, children upbringing, and health care. Work is heaped onto the poor and oppressed, either for racial or class reasons, and usually it always affects women.
- Vandana Shiva (1988) adds that women's efforts are to provide the basic needs for themselves and their families. For Shiva, women's work is an essential economic contribution not only for survival of individuals and society, but also to secure ecological preservation of this planet.
- Svasti Mitter (1991) admits that women's work guarantees a minimum standard for providing basic human needs such as health, food and love. We contribute to society as mothers, daughters, friends, neighbors and volunteers. We provide the work that must be done, whether or not we get paid for it. It's necessary to do this work in order for life to have some meaning. Altruism is fine, but it's not measured by personal reward. However, it's of little value if women are treated like slaves. This surely concerns the poorest ones who provide primary needs either individually or collectively. Race and social positions allow her to avoid doing some jobs; nevertheless, she is still responsible for it. In an optimal case, she will have to find somebody else to do the work for her—usually another woman. The key element in women's community care service is that she's an "emotional drudge."
- Nicky James (1989) writes that emotional work is perceived as being natural and invisible as it's done in the privacy of one's home. Its value and significance are ignored.
- Deborah Clarke (1992) mentions that women are fully responsible for running a home; they lend emotional support to their partners, children, relatives and friends. Their job is to see that the home runs smoothly, and food is on the dinner table every night. Women are expected to offer food and drinks when family and friends drop in unexpectedly. They are also expected to arrange and organize everything without the help of their husbands or live-in mates. Many accept this as a matter of course; but others, fearful of rebelling, end up constantly exhausted, have headaches, smoke more and turn to drink and/or drug abuse. Unfortunately, many women feel guilty about expressing their needs since they have not done so for many years. So they convince themselves to wait until the children are all grown, until the husband's career is well established and/or their parents retire and go off on cruises.

- Trainer (1985) writes that there are trends to romantically veil the future of the new “green” world based on small divisions of labor. He recommends our becoming self-sufficient by growing vegetable gardens, and buying goods and clothing locally, in our neighborhoods. He also proposed giving up appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers, adding that manual work is natural physical exercise.
- Waring (1989) defends “green economics” as seeing the choice between salaried jobs and working for free.. But it’s not obvious whether women will still be responsible for “women’s work“ or if male writers will discuss housework as something one can do as a hobby during leisure time. There will always be children, routine home duties and people needing care and attention. Women’s work should naturally be decentralized and localized, but this does not make it “autonomous” or “free.” The “organic” way of life is the destiny for women in many places of the world. Working in the field, needlework, sewing, and long hours spent cooking food, carrying heavy jugs of water and wood long distances.
- James Robertson (1985) is one of the few male Green“ writers who made the sexual division of jobs the center of their analyses by referring to the male’s paid job and its separation from unpaid work at home. In Robertson’s SHE (sane, humane, ecological), sensitive, human, ecological and unpaid work will be shared more, and redefined into “useful and valuable” activities. He acknowledges women’s double duty and argues that the base of women’s work consists of the care and concern for others, which is the basis of society; while the larger part of a man’s job is redundant. According to his future vision, everyone will share in the work now being exclusively done by women. Part-time jobs will be combined with women’s housework; and volunteer jobs will include both genders.
- Gorz’s (1989) view on women’s emancipation points out that man and woman voluntarily share unity and belonging to each other.
- Fjitrif Capra (1983) sees women as seers of the future Green society. In his opinion, all women suffer from their work being regarded as useless, although woman is a Deus ex machine that helps to free man from chaos.
- As James Robertson (1983) wrote: “The present crisis of industrial society and the world is man’s values.” Women should show men the methods of a “new moral world”. Men may well be the problem, but women are the solution. Man’s dominance is not considered to be a problem solely for women, but it is one shared by an entire society. Men are disadvantaged because they’ve lost the aspect of women’s nature.

Social Dependence

- Francoise d'Eubonne (1974) states that women have a unique position enabling them to face an ecological crisis. Not only attending to the miseries of the world, but it also refers to our spiritual development.
- Ursula King (1989) assumes that women are going to glorify life and new spirituality on Earth. This will be admired for creation, beauty and magnificence of nature in its entirety. This is an integral vision of the mystery of life perceiving all creation as an interconnected network.
- Irene Diamond and Gloria Orestein (1990) perceive the eco-feminist movement as a main accelerant to ethical, political, social, and creative changes that will "change the world". Eco-feminism opposes the dualism that constitutes the dominant male vision of development. It opposes the hierarchic egoism, materialism, competitiveness, and destructiveness as being generated by some men, unlike women's caring, devotion and nourishing of the next generation. A world where emotions, feelings and human relations count. It is a world without "primitive" solutions or technical fiction.
- Petra Kelly (1984) described women aligned with nature; women who are the "ombudswomen" of future generations because they've managed to revert to their roots, natural rhythms, and internal searching for harmony and peace; whereas men deal with power struggles and exploit nature with their militant egos.
- Sara Ruddick (1990) argues that men are capable of caring as well as of developing "maternal thinking", but a patriarchal society limits their maternal tendencies by transferring these responsibilities exclusively to women.
- Judith Plant (1989) writes that "Women's values relating to life giving must be re-evaluated and lifted up from their inferior roles. What women know naturally and by experience must be respected and appreciated. Our practice in reconciliation and sharing interpersonal conflicts, which currently happen in family life, has been proven over the years. We know what it means to share with others since we socialize and interact with others on a daily basis."
- Ynesta King (1989) continues that the extraordinary importance of eco-feminism consists in what and how women perceive and from what they suffer. Not only social dominancy, but also dominancy over nature is endangered and that's a major part of life.

Who Governs the World?

- Elaine Storkey (1995) writes that the masculine power structure influences intimate relationships. One of the factors, which must be taken into consideration,

is the fact that men hold the power, and emotional responsibility rests on women. Men are in control of the public arena whereas women have the task of controlling their private life, which often means that men are free from emotional obligations and sensitive development, whether their own or that of their children or wife

- Riane Eisler (1987) mentions that men have been writing human history for more than 2,000 years. The image we derive from history and philosophy books, artists and priests, is about a world created by men. In Christian history, women are mothers taking care of children, home and family. Their role is passive; the woman follows the man, mostly the husband, and lives her life through him. Men become bosses, managers and presidents.
- *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a French weekly, (1997) published a list of fifty global leaders, mostly businessmen and managers who control the world. There was no woman on this list; on the other hand, Pope John Paul II was surprisingly named among twenty-seven Americans, seventeen west Europeans, six Asians, three Chinese, one Japanese, one Korean and a man from Singapore, but no one from Central and Eastern European countries. Among the powerful Americans, there was Microsoft's Bill Gates, fashion designer Calvin Klein and film director Steven Spielberg. From Western Europe there were Nestle's Helmut Maucher, Peter Job from Reuters, and the head of Greenpeace, Thilo Bode.
- British social research in 1990 showed that women ages 35–54 were far more interested in the living environment than men are. Unfortunately, international evidence shows that women's participation in politics is minimal, although the data from sociological research determining age, profession, and religion says nothing about the differences in the opinions of men and women.
- Marry Mellow (1997) asks why women have disappeared from the Green political scene. If women's ideas are at the heart of Greens politics, they should be the first "variable" on the political scene. Is this a mistake of male political commentators in the Green movement? Women should be present in large numbers, but they are not. This does not involve the women's perspective, as it has been tested on many women who support "traditional" values in religion and conservative political parties. Feminist changes in inferiority and oppression represent these values. In a patriarchal society, the fact that Green politicians do not recognize women's interests, experience and needs, which differ from those of men, can be considered as a failure in performing their duties.
- The German Greens were the first political party to take positive action for women to get their fifty-percent representation. In 1984, women were party leaders. The Greens were opposed to what they considered the enormity of modern industrial society, so they defended the principals of anti-hierarchy and decentralization governed by the ideals and methods of the women's move-

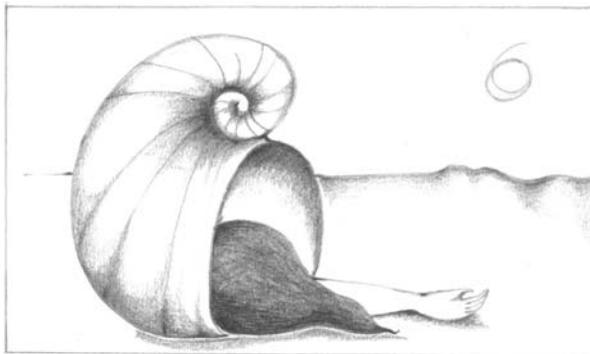
ment. Politics and decision-making must be personal. Women can no longer be condemned to “passive femininity” and silently sit by when men do not pay attention to them and their interests. Women must play an equal role in the economical and political arena if the life of future generations is to be safe. The Greens saw themselves fighting against the system where men were in the center of the patriarchal world of North, South, East and West. They decided to put an end to the “oppression, exploitation, injustice and discrimination of women under which they had suffered for hundreds of years” by reflecting the origin of the women’s movement and their initiatives. They stated that it was necessary to establish absolute sexual equality. Their political program required that housework be acknowledged as full-time work with the same rights as other jobs have; where men and women equally share in domestic jobs and child rearing. Violence and rape in marriage, along with sexual discrimination at work, is illegal.

- Petra Kelly wrote that women had to struggle very hard within the group to make their feelings known. Men were inclined to consider abortions and other social issues as less important than other problems. Women often had to argue very aggressively to have their issues seen as part of a larger problem. It was very difficult for the Greens to insist on the fifty-percent proportion for women at all levels. They found through a rather discouraging study about Green politics in Germany, carried out by Charlene Spretnak and Fjitorf Capra that pro-women’s politics had been mechanical, without deeper analysis of the situation. Activism is only possible for women who are relatively “free” and economically secure (without need to depend on a man).
- A report by Werner Hulsbert defines the existence of women’s management in the German Greens, including political support and sexual oppression.
- André van Lysebeth (1988) wrote that we are now part of a highly technical world, which has revealed many of life’s secrets. Science is on a high technical level; everything is analyzed and described; and there is a desire to know more and more. On the other hand, we are in a global ecological crisis, with an enormously developed consumer society that concentrates primarily on material things. We have severe problems with communication, cooperation, and mutual relations among people. High crime and drugs are an everyday occurrence all over the world.
- Stephen Covey (1992) says that brain research helps to understand why some people are effective workers, yet bad managers, and why excellent managers often are weak leaders. Research reminds us that the brain is divided into two hemispheres, left and right, and each one specializes in different functions; it processes various types of information and problems.
- A special report on EU employment informs us that women are on lower levels in all areas even though they are in the majority. In public administration,

women are 40% represented, but only 10 % are managers. Women accept positions without power and responsibility. Their number is increasing in middle management, which often has a negative impact on women.

In all EU countries, the average woman earns less than a man does. The difference for manual workers is between 15–35 %, and for others it is 30–40 %. Men aim to be managers; and women, secretaries. In case of manual jobs, the range is restrictive; fewer possibilities are here. Childcare mostly rests with women. A great many stop working after childbirth, while, interestingly, the percentage of employed men increases at this time. The ratio varies among different countries, but on average more than 30 % of women do part–time work compared with 5 % men. Part–time work enables women to combine a job with childcare. These jobs are little paid, less skilled and are on the lower rung of the work ladder. It is not known whether women accept them of their own free will or they simply do not have other possibilities.

- In 1992, the United Nations published Agenda 21, a document accepted by representatives of 178 nations at a conference in Rio de Janeiro. It is a global concept for permanently maintainable life. Chapter 20 mentions that women play an important part caring about the environment and for the maintaining of life; they have sufficient knowledge and experience to decide on control and protection of natural sources. In this document, the role of women in society is described as being limited by barriers, such as discrimination in professions and little access to education or a suitable job. Agenda 21 prompts governments to develop strategies for (!) eliminating legal, administrative, cultural, social and economic obstacles that prevent women from participating in permanently maintainable development and public life. At the conference in Johannesburg in 2002, Agenda 21 was not discussed at all, nor was any recap or feedback.

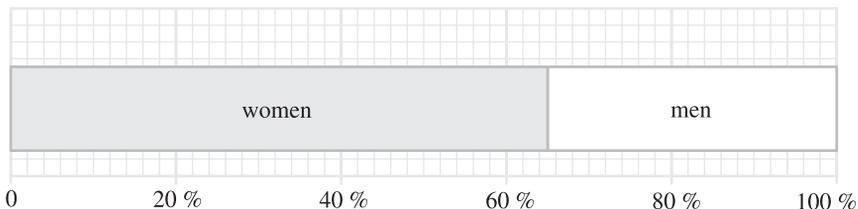


Czech Men and Women

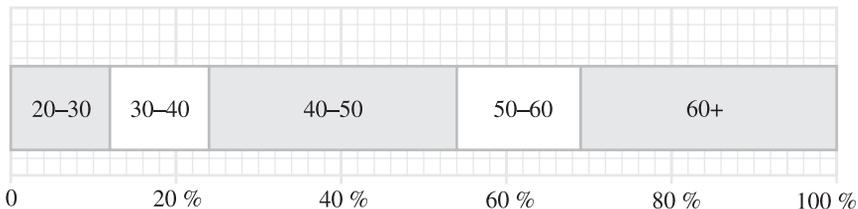
The social atmosphere, lifestyle and position of Czech women and their relationship to the environment are evident from the following research. The questionnaire focused on differences between men and women and social priorities, and is made up of personal and fundamental questions such as society, household, responsibility and possible changes.

Personal Questions

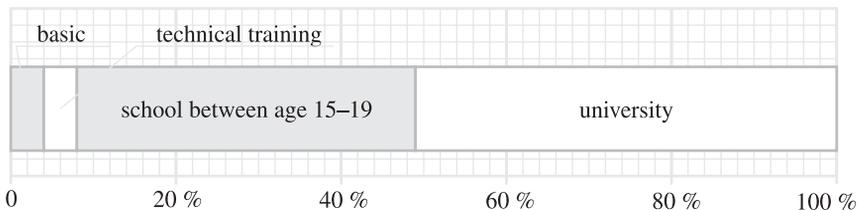
The questionnaire was equally distributed between men and women; 43 completions were returned—65 % by women and 35 % by men. Most were from people in the 40–60 year age group; 51 % with higher education, and 41 % with secondary schooling.



Graph 1: Respondents by sex



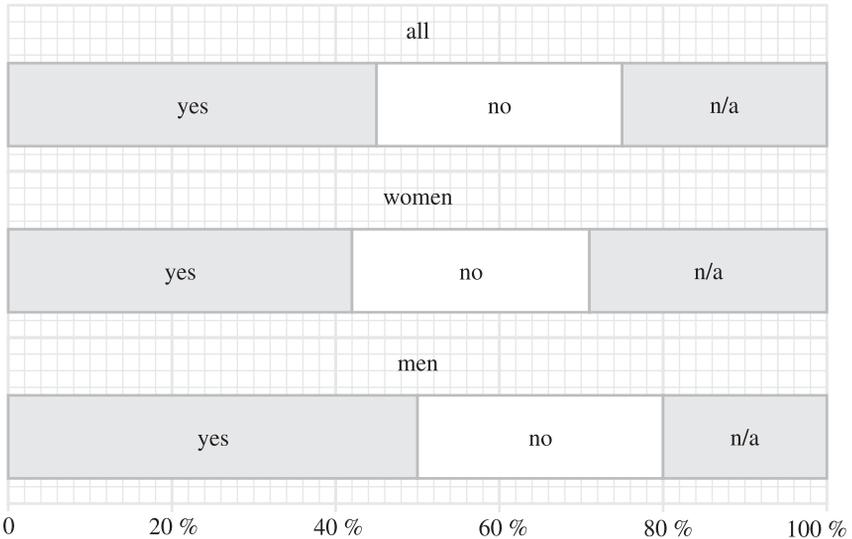
Graph 2: Respondents by age group



Graph 3: Respondents by education

Fundamental Questions

1. Whether people find it important to think about men and women and gender; 50 % of men and 66 % of women answered negatively.



Graph 4: Do you perceive mankind as men and women with different qualities related to sex?

Among answers to “why?” The following are the positive comments:

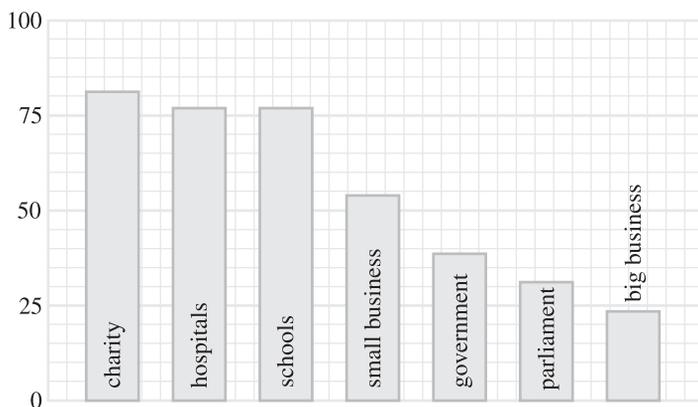
- Because woman’s biological mission is maternity. For men, their career is utmost as a rule
- Because we have different interests, temperament and abilities
- A wife cannot be a friend
- We have a different mentality
- It cannot be blended because we are so very different
- I try to understand what a human being is and what are his/her possibilities
- It is very important in our culture which role is played by men and which by women
- So that we can get on well together
- The differences are in thinking, tradition, and upbringing
- It is not completely possible to ignore the differences.

Among answers to “why?” The following are the positive comments:

- The personalities I’ve found in people have shown me that it does not matter whether I am a man or a woman. It is important how we spend our lives.

- Men and women form one unit just by their diversity. I judge people according to other criteria
- I think of people
- I do not find it necessary to deal with this idea (I have never wanted to be a man)
- Mankind consists of children as well (especially adolescents)
- I have not thought of it
- We have to stick together, don't we? I don't find it important; nor do I think of mankind as blacks and whites, Americans and Europeans, children and adults. A woman is different from a man, but she is not of another species
- The value of human beings does not rely on whether one is a woman or a man
- I am busy
- I find it important to think about a person regardless of gender
- I automatically assume there are identical possibilities for both genders.

2. The question in which organizations women have sufficient opportunities to realize their talents and aptitudes has been answered:



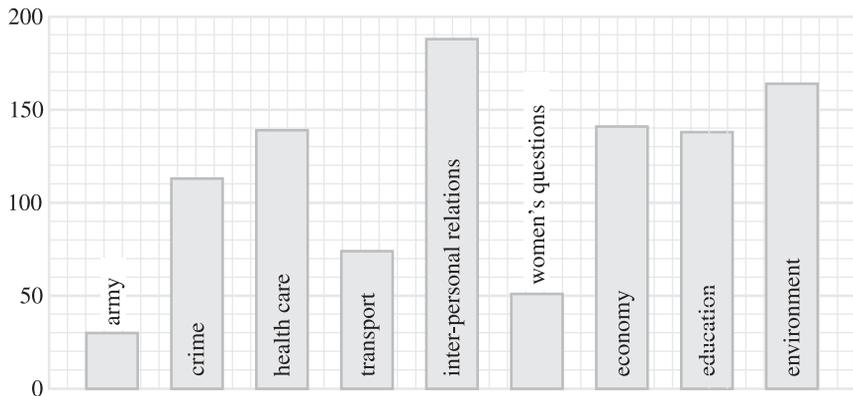
Graph 5: Women have good chances in...

In the remarks about women fulfilling themselves, we find the following comments:

- In most areas, if not in all
- Women have few possibilities to realize their talents since they are overworked by their double roles and limited by various masculine prejudices
- They have a chance of self-fulfillment everywhere
- Perhaps everywhere if they want it

- They have enough chances, but they do not want to use all of them
- It only depends on personality and ambition
- I think women can find a position at any organizations if they are talented, but for most, I think they'd be happier in less stressful professions
- In running the household
- In nursing homes, for example
- Research, music, literary activity.

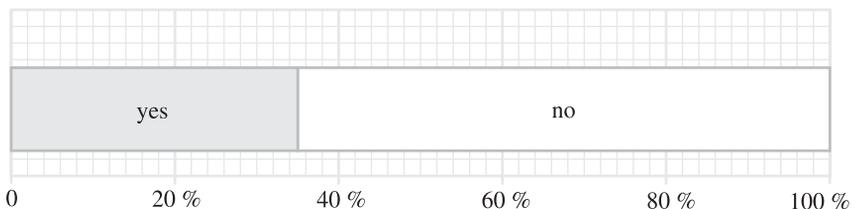
3. I asked what interviewees considered to be most important in society.



Graph 6: What is the order of importance of the following fields?

Interpersonal relationships have definitely won high appreciation; women's issues came in last.

4. The question whether interviewees thought that women's status in society affected their everyday life, was answered by 35 % with "yes" and 65 % gave a negative answer.



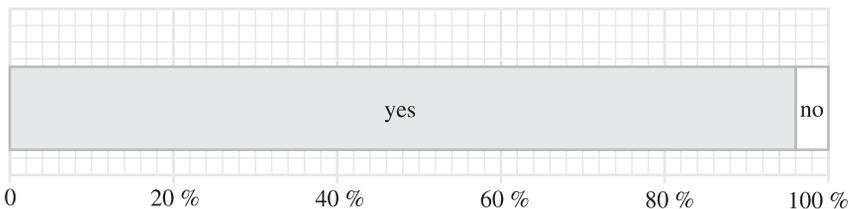
Graph 7: Does the question of women's social status affect your everyday life?

Among the answers to “yes and how“ is the following:

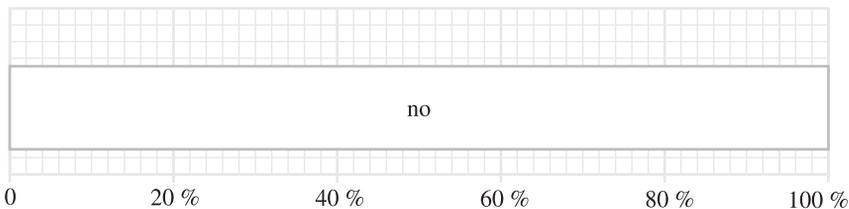
- We are children of mothers and women are our everyday partners
- Instead of dealing with other matters, I have to write about the position of women because it is not clear in my mind
- As a divorced mother, I am expected to take 99.9 % of the responsibility for my children
- I am a manager in my job
- Priorities in society lean toward men
- Excessive feminization in the legal system, the school system and in health service
- The areas where the majority of employed women have markedly lower salaries. Salary = appreciation of women’s work. Society does not respect women very much
- I am a woman
- I work in the educational system where more men should definitely work
- Everyday contact with people.

C. Society

1. To the question about whether interviewees had bothered to vote, 96 % answered yes; the gender of candidates influenced none of the voters.



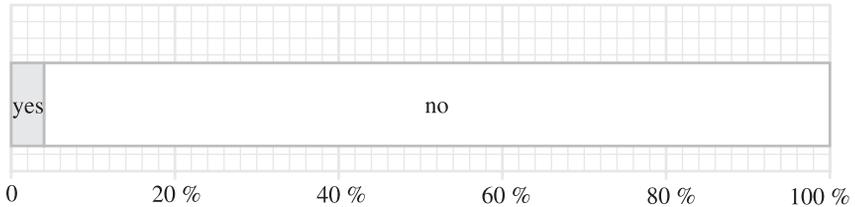
Graph 8: Did you vote in the last elections?



Graph 9: If so, did you take the sex of the candidate into account?

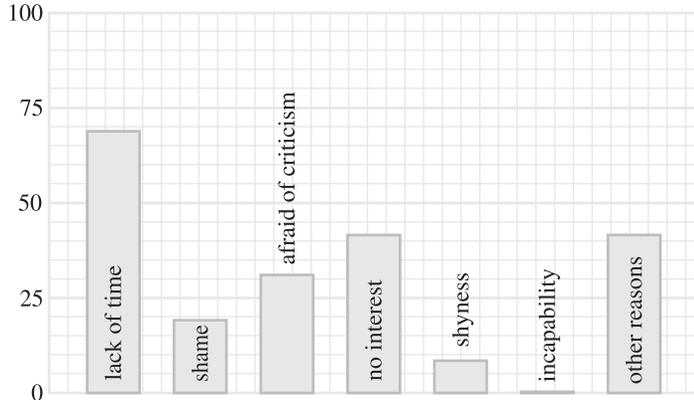
2. To the question whether the interviewees knew Agenda 21, a UNO document from Rio de Janeiro, only 4 % of them answered with yes. They came across Agenda 21:

- When studying the literature
- At work
- In an ecological organization
- I heard a broadcast about this document on Czech Radio several times.



Graph 10: Do you know Agenda 21?

3. The opinion on the reasons for small women's participation in public life and managerial posts has been expressed as follows:



Graph 11: Why do women take so little part in public life?

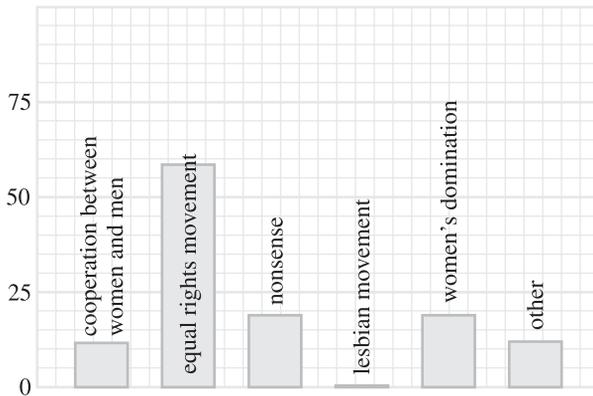
Among other reasons, the respondents mentioned:

- Interest in the family
- Character, personality
- Social custom
- Reluctance to constantly struggle with men about jobs

- Lack of courage in facing unpleasant situations
- Traditional views in organizations about men’s work
- Conviction that it is not natural for women
- Women influence the male members of their families, so participation in public life is not that small in our masculine society
- Eliminating the stereotype
- Men do not readily accept them
- Upbringing
- Lack of opportunities.

None of the interviewees agreed with the opinion that women were unable to assume responsibility when in public life. The greatest problem has been lack of time, but also the usual opinion that women don’t care, fear criticism, or feel ashamed.

4. In their opinion, the question what is feminism has been answered:



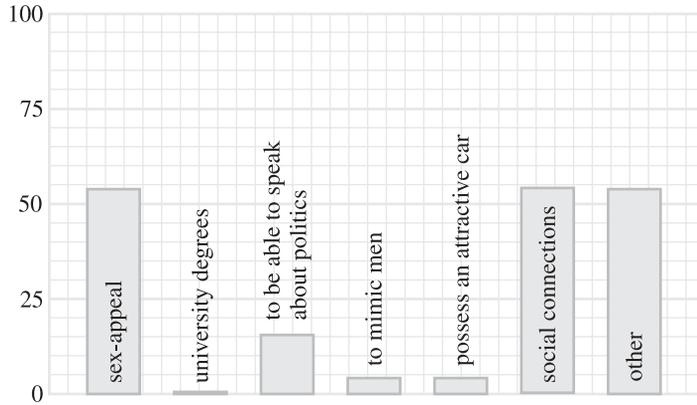
Graph 12: Feminism is...

Among other answers, there were the following replies:

- Independence
- Exemption of men and women from masculine prejudices
- Assertion of women’s views about the world
- Endless philosophizing.

Feminism has been much more defined as an equal rights movement with cooperation between genders. A large number of respondents felt that dominance of women falls under the category of feminism; no one, however, associates feminism with the lesbian movement.

5. What is the precondition for a woman's social success?

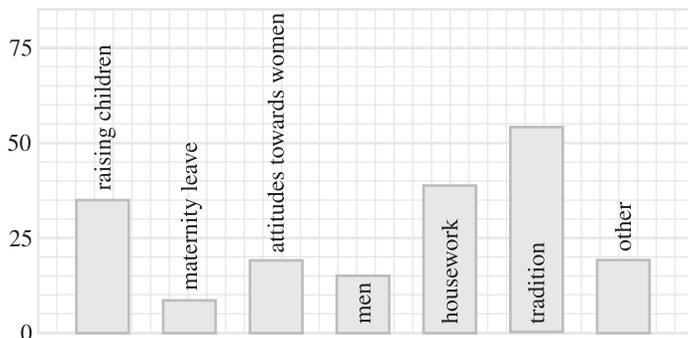


Graph 13: What are the preconditions of a woman's success?

The "other" opinions have been as follows:

- Natural behavior
- Ability to win recognition
- The same as in the case of a man: sexual attraction, college degrees, ability to communicate, good connections and well behaved
- Public demeanor
- Self-assurance supported by specific work results!
- Education, observance of social norms, seriousness, and professional specialization whereby she tries to achieve her objective
- Intelligence
- Personal charm—perhaps secretly imitating men
- Accepting herself; and self-fulfillment in society
- Ability, education, readiness to help others
- Self-confidence
- Natural intelligence
- Everything + an IQ over 150
- Developing pleasant feelings
- Independent initiative-taking.

6. What is the main obstacle to social self-fulfillment?

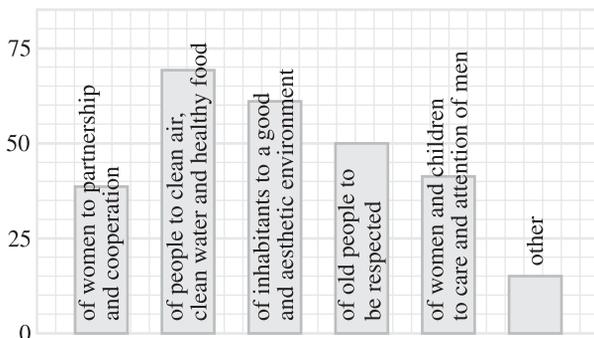


Graph 14: What are the obstacles for women to get more involved in public life?

“Other” obstacles have been as follows:

- Lack of ambition
- Professional envy of others, especially partners or husbands
- Many women do not want to assert themselves
- Mothers-in-law, female neighbors and mature women
- Keeping busy at work and at home; many of us are not able to organize our time
- Abilities
- Most women do not long for significant self-fulfillment—they would rather win acclaim as actresses, singers, etc.
- Character.

7. What should the claim to human rights include?

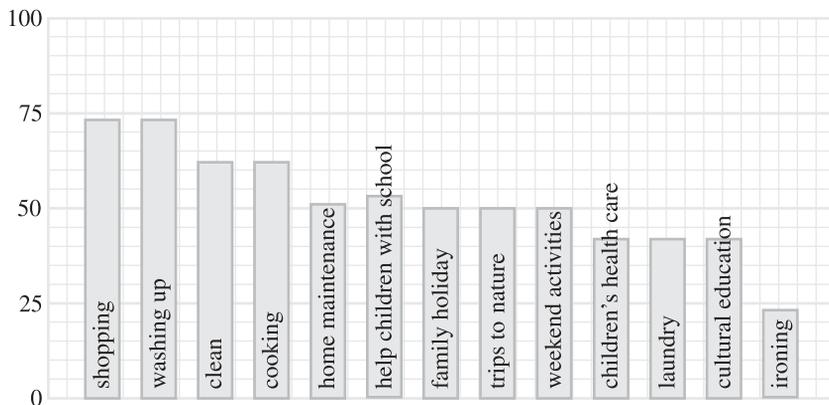


Graph 15: Does your idea of human rights involve the right...

“Other” rights have been as follows:

- Men and children deserve the respect of women
- Children’s right to esteem and respect. It’s necessary to entrust children to men more often, not to speak about mothers, but about pleasurable and neutral topics
- Claiming ‘I have rights’ means to demand something you don’t have and want. Human rights means to bear responsibility for them
- The same rights for everybody regardless of color, sex or age
- Respecting people’s opinions
- Human rights concern all people.

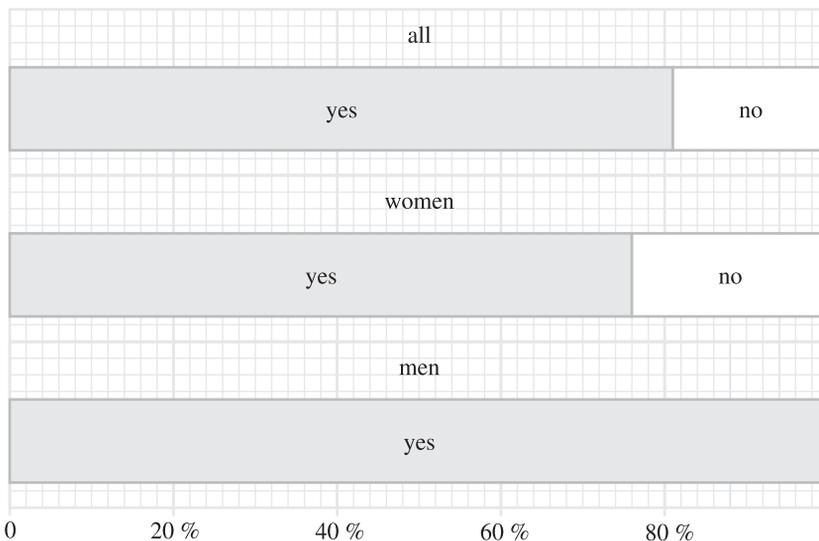
D. Household



Graph 16: The man in your house does...

The questionnaire did not specify whether men performed house work regularly or just occasionally. Nevertheless, it is evident that there is some domestic work primarily done by women.

1. The next question whether the interviewees considered sharing house work to be fair, was answered yes by 100 % of men; 76% of women were satisfied.



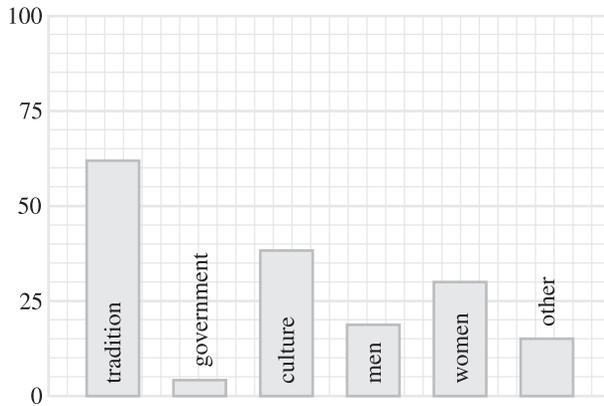
Graph 17: Do you find this arrangement just?

The supplementary explanations were:

- My husband prefers cooking in the kitchen rather than helping to plan a holiday or a weekend getaway, for example
- I am on maternity leave, so I have more time for housework
- The teenage males in our family never clean their room, which is always a mess
- In a lot of families (in mine, for example), the man considers “women’s work” to be beneath his dignity. But when both partners go out to work, he has no choice but to chip in and help. When families began moving to cities, traditional “male work”—repairing the roof or the house, chopping wood—disappeared and just women’s work remained—cleaning, washing, cooking
- Technical maintenance is lacking
- The proportion of time I spend on house chores is substantially longer than my husband spends on them
- The burden of house work predominantly lies with women
- My husband could spend more time with the children and their homework
- Men think that everything concerning the household, short of technical repairs, is beneath their dignity.

E. Responsibility

1. We see that men are in the government, parliament, congress and preside over large companies, while the educational system, shops and services are in women's hands. Who is responsible for this role division in society? The answers are as follows:

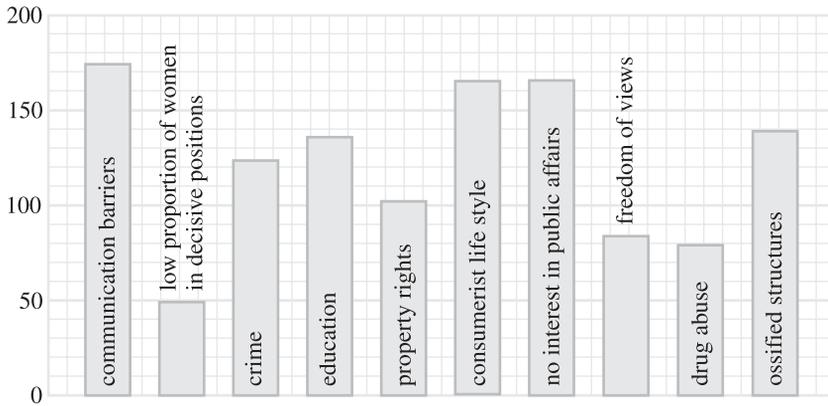


Graph 18: Who is responsible for the low proportion of women in the government and enterprise management, and for their high proportion in schools, shops and services?

Among “Other” were the following opinions:

- Everyone
- Ambition is for those crazy enough to be in any government job
- Tradition and culture above all: and then men and women, fifty–fifty
- All those who did not achieve recognition
- The value order is different for women (family first), and for men (career first).

2. The next question was: In your opinion, what causes the greatest social problems?

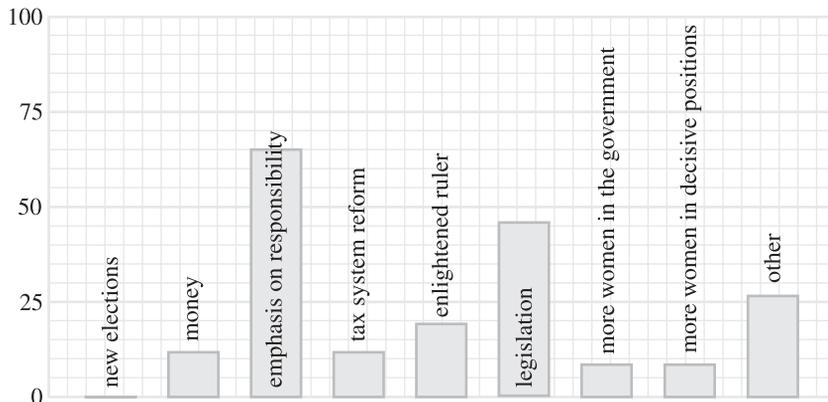


Graph 19: Put the following causes of problems into order of importance

It is interesting that lack of women in strategic positions has ranked last.

F. Suggestion for Change

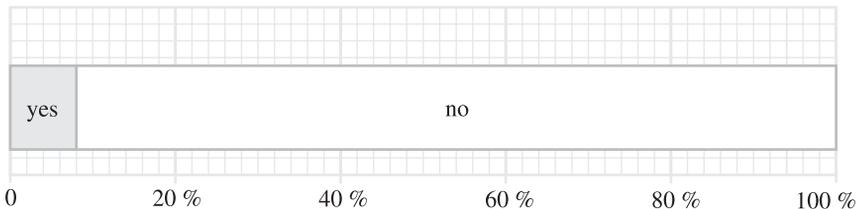
1. In your opinion, what would solve social problems?



Graph 20: What would solve the social problems?

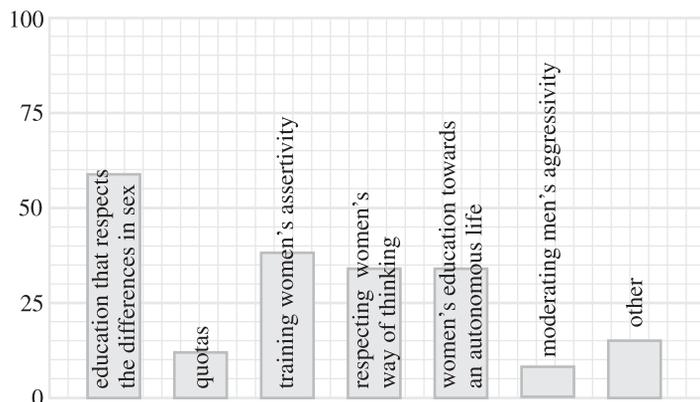
The “Other” answers are as follows:

- New forms of social relations that are gradually changing
 - More knowledge
 - I do not see any reason for change
 - Education and learning more about democracy and communication
 - Responsibility and a sense of duty that all managers should have
 - It's not the resolution, but the analysis of certain factors such as social problems; and participation of men and women
 - A blank A4 page is missing from the proposal, but it is possible to phone the GAIA Agency.” (ed. note)
 - Improvement of communication, better listening
 - Consequences when sentencing criminals; observe the rules and insist on fairness. Morals are not relative
 - More women in the government? Nonsense!
 - I don't have a definite solution.
2. The question whether the interviewees would have found it natural to have the same proportion of men and women in government jobs as in the educational field has only been answered by 8 %. The question was not phrased properly; there is no proportional representation of women and men in education, there are more men in managerial jobs.



Graph 21: *Would you find it natural that all governmental structures should have the same proportion of women as e.g. schools?*

3. When I asked how to create conditions that would enable a higher proportion of women to enter public life and thus ensure their participation in the decision-making processes, the following answers were:



Graph 22: Do you think society should encourage higher proportion of women in public life by...?

Among “other” the following answers were:

- By setting a good example
- By no means
- The proportion of women in these jobs is as high as society allows and that women are capable of holding. It is very complex; changes cannot be made by just a few people; it has to be done by the entire society.

Additional Personal Comments:

- If a woman is not very capable and has adolescent children, it is okay for her to look after them, otherwise everything will collapse and everyone will suffer—the family, society and the city you live in (children may well succumb to drugs, alcohol, prostitution or violence)
- I think if a woman is interested in gaining recognition, she can do that even within our culture
- I do not know what will happen with the results or recommendations of this questionnaire, but it certainly would be worth testing (it might have been done already) what women themselves think about sharing in decision-making
- Questionnaires should not be done like this—what about the analysis of items, instructions? Women will not break through this way!
- I think that the writers of these questions are deeply convinced of the inferior position that women are in, so there is the risk that by means of suggestive

questions, you will manage to prove what you want. On the other hand, prejudice and stupid “public opinion“ does exist. So I wish all of you well in your new undertakings

- Learn, learn, learn; and keep learning throughout all your life. This is the only thing Lenin was right about
- A difficult topic; taboo for hundreds of years
- I myself see no discrimination of women in society and do not think it exists at all. To my mind, this questionnaire is much too pessimistic and assumes that women are some kind of supplement and nursemaids for men (I feel that it is tied to the exploitation of women. I strongly feel the position of women in our society to be equivalent to that of men. It depends on each person, how they behave in certain situations in their lives, but there is no difference between man and woman. Everybody has their hobbies, ambitions and obligations (politics, work, family, cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- The unhappy situation of our educational system is caused by excessive feminization; most teachers are unable to win respect from their students. Badly designed curriculums lead to bad studying of subjects; it becomes a–learning–by–rote process and does not sufficiently develop their intellect; it makes the subject matter uninteresting. When a teacher brings her personal problems into the classroom, it has a considerable impact on the quality of teaching
- Mary, I feel that you would like to quickly lead women into managerial jobs and politics and you think everything would be automatically solved by this. I don’t think so. This must first be accepted from “below.” Undoubtedly positive examples are more important than quotas. To my way of thinking though, the greatest problem lies in people not being able to see an alternative to the existing situation and so they automatically resist new ideas
- The questionnaire starts with discrimination of women in society, but also implies there is real inequality of rights when men are confronted with it. Both genders have more or less capable members who have their own agendas. It is not fair to discuss gender and ignore their capabilities and aptitudes.

The questionnaire were both mailed and distributed personally. Although I didn’t enclosed stamped envelopes, 43 % of the questionnaires were mailed back, which shows that people did not regret spending time, energy, and money to fill in the questionnaire and send it back. Evidently many people are interested in this topic.

Two–thirds of women answered the questions; men were less willing. Answers also came from a higher percentage of university graduates. The interviewees were aware of the differences between men and women and of their position in society. Women are perceived as being better in social and charity areas than in

government or business. It's assumed that in order for a woman to be successful, she must have sex-appeal and be well-connected rather than well-educated.

The absence of women in government and business is explained by lack of time. There is housework to do and children to take care of. But other factors, such as shyness or fear, prevent them from asserting themselves. Culture and tradition also play a part.

As for housework, the interviewees were content with the situation. They insisted that men did help at home, which might actually mean they were used to it and saw no reason to make waves.

When I asked how the proportion of women in decision-making jobs could be increased, they recommended education. They felt this would change the attitude toward women. Quotas are not popular in the Czech Republic. It is interesting however, that although the interviewees are aware of a consumer lifestyle and the sad state the environment is in, they're unable to see there is a dearth of women in decision-making positions.

Despite these opinions, the respondents did not judge women as being less capable in assuming responsibility; nor did they discriminate against them when selections were made for placing people in high office. They were prepared to think about how to place more women in decision-making positions, although this was not their main goal at the beginning.

Interpersonal relationships began to be of great importance; feminism was considered as a "movement" and not as anything having to do with relationships between men and women. The majority did not consider the situation of women was a "current problem"; and they accepted the division of housework and a job. There are many ideas here that need deeper examination.

The ignorance of Agenda 21, a strategic, global and conceptual document for the solution of modern problems, is comparable to the lack of interest by the media, politics, and the United Nations itself.



4

Case Studies

We, women and mothers, have a great, albeit invisible, power in the world. But... women have neither unified nor used this power for any good, until now. Gossips, plots, sly seditions and the ruddy apron patronages used to be the result of our governance. A new era has arrived upon us. Freedom is here. Are we, with all this secret power, free?... We are not because we are slaves to vanity, fickleness, finery, and... foolishness... We, women, have been lagging far behind the age, with its flag of freedom and enlightenment. Let's confess to it, let us not be ashamed, as the fault is not ours, it is the fault of those who took little to no care of the nation's education, not least women's, whose cultivation was left utterly to happenstance. Let's get acquainted with our foolishness, hidden behind our capriciousness! Through knowledge and understanding we will find our way, and no matter how uncertain the steps of us who are older may be, let us support our young generation in their rapid march!

Božena Němcová

The integrating element of, not only the short stories and comments, but also the sociological research and reflections within the texts composed by Marie Haisová, is her unflagging desire for a true civic society in our country in a form we had already dreamt of, prior to 1989, and hoped to develop through a process of change in the years to follow. To replace the lethargy, laziness, and gregarious nature, which had slowly settled upon the Czech Republic, with an active, interesting approach, with an understanding of the need to work towards general welfare, and—as the final consequence—an understanding of the need to maintain a natural as well as human resource for future generations: these are the objectives supported by the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project in anticipation of their future implementation—a vision of women in a sustainable life. Besides having others, the project's main aim is to depict the world through the female eye. To describe experiences that have been lived through, and to understand, in its entirety, their interconnectedness and orientation. This is the original intention of the literature, published as part of the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project.

It is no secret that there are two rational reasons behind the writings of common literary production found on bookshop counters: some of them are written for

money, the others strive for fame, visibility or even a kind of immortality. The original notion of literary creation is slowly vanishing. Contemporary authors, publishers and book sellers avidly seek profit (or at least basic subsistence). Moreover, we may never know certain texts which express thoughts differing from what is habitual or customary, which do not conform to the main-stream approach, rather professing themselves to belong to an alternative, sometimes created by our contemporaries, men and women alike. Some of these texts are buried away forever in writing table drawers, others are occasionally stumbled upon, if we are lucky, whilst surfing the net.

Some texts may have waited decades before we even learn of them, the author later being noted, dryly, as being ahead of his or her time.

Zdeňka Petáková
Round Tables Participant

The quotations found at the beginning of each case study were selected from a Czech collection of quotations and translated into English for informational purposes. In cases where the quotations were translated into Czech from their original languages, including English, the translators have not used official translations or their original wording.

Home: Hausfrau or Home Management?

*Speech requires briefness, let a thought head forward, while not burdening
the tired ears with overflowing words.*

Horatius

Father Unknown (1972)

Every lover is a soldier.

Ovidius

He was nineteen and conscripted, as was common during the normalization regime. Hardly anybody was granted what was known as ‘the blue book’ (a certificate deeming a man unfit for military service), and he wouldn’t have tried to get one anyway. He was glad to have escaped the lair of his meticulous mother; and two years lay ahead of him in which none would ask him if he had a clean hanky, or socks and a scarf. Mum’s care, especially when it came to freshly-made cakes, was not unpleasant. However, once he had joined the army, where underwear had to be straightened into neat stacks on command and stagers harried him during policing, he realized that life was about something other than what he had thus far experienced under his mother’s wing, and this experience, despite being a rather nasty one, might indeed turn out to be of some use.

He was in the forces in a small town which was full of barracks and soldiers. Girls were in sufficient numbers there, too, commuting to the secondary schools located in the town, from places all around the region. It was however difficult, almost impossible, to come into contact with them. They only used to go dancing with the local boys, replying “I don’t dance with soldiers” to the soldierly “May I have this dance?”. When the local school of economics was preparing a school-farewell ball and the girls decided to practice the typical Czech Beseda quadrille, only ten out of thirty found a partner willing and able to practice “gentlemen, ladies, the Beseda is beginning...” twice a week. The other girls made single-sex pairs rather than addressing the local army units, where twenty adroit soldiers with approval from their commander would definitely be found among the hundreds of young men. They searched attics for local costumes and danced together to the melody of a folk song beginning with the words: “Just you wait, I’ll reveal you coaxed me...” In the center the girls in white monofilament dresses swaggered with the boys dressed in black with bow ties, surrounded by the rest of the girls in costumes of all possible

colors, circling around them. The final result was spectacular, yet confounded and galling for a young soldier who would have also liked to dance.

The little town seemed to be bewitched in its withdrawal and mistrust of the uniform, where mothers urged their daughters to be careful and not have an affair with a soldier. “Our” soldier went for a walk one hot summer afternoon where he met a girl with a bouffant staring out of a window on a ground floor. He greeted her as would any well-behaved gentleman and proposed her to take a walk with him. The girl nodded approvingly and soon enough they were on their way walking to the local grove. There he kissed her, hitching up her skirt hurriedly, ripping off his trousers, and making love to her in an upright position. She didn’t even have enough time to tell him she was a virgin and had never had intimate contact with a man before. His experience was no richer either, not that he cared. Everything happened so quickly; as soon as he had relieved the over-pressure he had been feeling, he accompanied the girl home. He said good-bye, promising he would call in a week, when he had had an outing approved. Despite not having had any previous sexual experience, he knew the girl could become pregnant or they could have infected each other. He didn’t bother about it for a long time, although to play it safe, he did not come back as promised the following week. Neither did he come the week after; in fact he decided never to come again.

After the week had passed, the girl dressed up and waited at the window. She realized that she had neither asked the soldier his name, nor about the army unit in which he was doing his military service. She was not going to be so stupid today. She would ask him about everything. However, she did not get the opportunity to do so as the soldier did not come. She didn’t get her period and was confirmed pregnant by a doctor. She went to the first barracks she came to, where she told her story at the porter’s lodge. The stagers who were on duty were in a good mood and so they invited her to name the father of her child; in fact the commander would line up the whole platoon. She walked along the soldiers lined-up, trying hard to recognize his face beneath the green caps. She couldn’t see him; and neither was he in the second barracks, nor the third. Well, in fact he was there; in the first and in the first line. His knees had been buckling with fear. What if she recognized him? What shame! Everyone would laugh at him. And what about his family? What would they say to him at home? He dates a girl, who would hardly win a beauty contest, and gets her pregnant right off?

When the danger was averted, and the girl passed by without recognizing him, he began to relax and started to laugh at the girl along with the others, making vicious comments. She left, defeated. Later, on Sundays, she would walk along the barracks, in nostalgia, hoping to spot the father of her child. They would never

meet again. Her pregnancy was by then very visible and she hoped in her mind that he would speak to her. He had to be curious to get to know his child. He was not, however, and nobody will ever know if he ever saw her or walked secretly beneath her window. After nine months, she gave birth to a beautiful, healthy son who had “father unknown” written on his birth certificate. He was brought up by a mother whose sexual life was limited to this one singular event. The boy completed his schooling with the stigma of a child who doesn’t know his father, and, having been hardened by the comments made by his classmates, he made tracks for an independent journey in life.

Responsibility, sex, naivety, stupidity...

Sex as such is discussed in today’s society; the question is whether it is done sufficiently and in an appropriate manner. Relationships and responsibilities are talked about all the time, however, mainly in the private sphere; such information often leaks into the public space only when some tragedy occurs. However, compared to the past, contraception is widely available nowadays, and girls of a very young age can obtain information about all the traps that might be set behind a seemingly innocent walk with an unknown young man. Nevertheless, incidents of this or similar types have been and will be happening; only their coulisses change. Today, men leave women in a more “sneaky” way; they may use their biological role and predisposition (there are theories about that) as an excuse, and in many cases they leave their partner and children without scruples because of a new, younger, more beautiful woman.

A woman who is a sole wage earner has a very difficult position. As an experience shared with one of the women participating in the round table showed, a woman can understand what financial and economic independence means only when she is left alone with a small child. The woman has to struggle with her frustration caused by lacking financial means, a desirable and meaningful profession or the harmony and contentment she longs to achieve through a good relationship with her partner. Despite this, a woman who is a sole wage earner and single mother is stigmatized and perceived pejoratively. It still remains an open question how we should behave so as not to lose trust in life, joy, and love?

Auntie with the Five “Ps”¹ (*1933 †1989)

Is a fragile woman any good for you? When you cannot guard your precious property, the key is stuck in your door in vain.

Tibullus

She was the youngest and the most beautiful of the four girls, as if nature and her parents had only been rehearsing for the last of my aunties to be born. A natural blond, with an angel’s smile, sweet in nature, and a beauty to behold. Since her childhood, boys had flocked to her leaving the other sisters forever in her shadow. The oldest sister studied hard and became an intellectual; the second in rank did manual work and physical toil became her lifelong destiny, and the third sister set upon the religious path, spending much time lost in prayer. The youngest and the most beautiful decided to dedicate her life to a man. To one man whom she had met at the tender age of seventeen. He was the local good–looker and successful. They got married, built a house together for which my auntie worked as the hod–carrier for the bricks and mortar. Besides being beautiful, she was also industrious, the ideal model for a woman with the five “Ps”. Two daughters were born soon after, retracting nothing away from her beauty, on the contrary adding to it. In step with the concepts and requirements imposed by the surrounding community, she presented an exemplary figure for her husband who became director of the local brewery and at the beginning of his career, proudly took his belle to all of the social events and banquets.

Having been home already a few years on maternity leave, she came to the decision to earn some additional income, as all women did at that time. And so, in addition to being employed, she dutifully did all the routine housework, took care of her own children, and would invite us, her sisters’ children, to spend holidays at her house. As time went by, all these maternal, work, household as well as social related duties resulted in fatigue and exhaustion, and so she began to gradually remove herself from society. Her avid hobby and way to relax during free moments was to knit. She was master of the knitting needles; the speed at which her hands produced patterns and shapes of singular beauty was magic. Sometimes she also made some additional money by selling her knitting or helping in the local shop where customers used to come from all around the neighborhood, looking forward to a smile, a good word, and pleasant service. Once however, one of the customers made a vicious remark, asking my auntie if she really believed that her husband worked evenings and nights? Had she ever been sure of this? By asking this question, the customer had planted a seed of doubt in my auntie’s mind

¹ *Pretty, Painstaking, Pure, Pious, Pecuniary*

and she started to suspect her husband–director. When he told her next that he would be home late, she followed close to his heels only to catch him passionately kissing another woman, one of poor repute and even poorer looks. She lost her head, and as she would later entertain her audience darkly, she swooped down on her beloved, and started to berate his lover, screaming, “What does this mean, how can you dare? Leave him alone.” She did not hesitate for a moment and “put a knife to his throat” with the following ultimatum—it’s either the whore or me. She asked for an immediate solution or answer. My uncle decided proudly and promptly. He packed his suitcases and left my beautiful auntie for the other woman who was the subject of gossip about a wig she wore to cover missing hair, and that she was a lazy malkin, a whore, and God knows what else on top of that.

He divorced my auntie, the beauty with the five “Ps”, and married the whore. After the fit of anger and heroism that followed the immediate event, a traumatic and crushing disappointment fell on the belle from her first, only and greatest love. Her ex–husband was still close to her heart. Whenever she could pick up some gossip about his life, she would pass it on gleefully, describing all the things he had to do at home these days which he hadn’t even known existed before. To do the washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking, shopping, and to dance attendance upon his whore. He was now doing what he had no idea about earlier and yet he seemed glad to do it, or at least he didn’t seem to mind. Or it could have only been an interpretation from the outside. She did not ask why. Maybe she did not want to know anyway. She lost some weight due to her suffering and became a beautiful middle–aged woman. By then she had also resigned herself to the knell that told the end of her marriage, and started to look around for another man. Her beauty and also her fate were a fearful sight.

The young daughters, who accompanied their mother in her destiny, started to be interested in anything other than school and learning, even from early childhood. And so, even when their mother had met a good man, he soon showed the white feather. Why should he get involved in someone else’s troubles just because of her feminine beauty? By this time, one of the sisters had become widowed and was often alone, and so they spent every free moment together, playing canasta and talking about life and the fate of common acquaintances. The major part of their chit–chat concerned men, children and housework. Thanks to their ‘tribe–like’ family, there was always something to gossip about, with the problems exceeding the joys in number.

One day, my auntie, the beauty with the five “Ps”, turned up at her sister’s with a piece of blessed news, she was in a serious love affair and would get married. Her sister tried to talk her out of it, as it was clear that it was a kind of a protest to spite her ex, but she got married nevertheless. Her new beloved was a local drunkard; she entered the marriage with a strong belief that her beauty and the five

“Ps” would cure him of alcoholism. She left the house she had built with her own hands and moved to the drunkard’s flat to do the washing, cooking, and cleaning, and to take care of him. She learnt to drink from him too, and because she had moved to a remote village, she no longer met her sister for their regular games of canasta and coffee on Sundays. The family lost sight of their youngest daughter, sister, mother, auntie and beauty with the five “Ps”, having no way of knowing how she lived.

A few years lapsed after the wedding ceremony, when a death notice was delivered, announcing her new husband’s death. He had died of liver cirrhosis, and soon after that, a telephone call followed, informing that the auntie was also in hospital with a heart attack. People who visited my auntie in hospital had to answer whether they knew anything about him or not, if he was still living with the whore. Yes, he was; nobody knew more. The whore did not make friends with anybody and nobody spread gossip about their life.

After her second husband’s death my auntie, the perfect beauty with the five “Ps”, only drank, knitted, put on weight and became a wreck. One day she fell and did not get up again. She was buried side by side with her drunkard, her first husband received a death notice that our dear and beloved...had died suddenly and to the great sorrow of all. The black-framed white sheet of paper did not mention her beauty or the five “Ps” at all.

Beauty, sex, love, communication, expectations...

The case study about an auntie with the 5 Ps (pretty, painstaking, pure, pious, pecuniary) was selected with the goal of drawing attention to the “hausfrau” type of woman; definitely she is not any “home manager” living her life consciously and controlling the situation. To the contrary, the situation was controlling her. It is quite interesting to mention that we did not find any Czech term for “hausfrau” during the round table sessions or lectures. A housewife is seen as a woman who is at home during her maternity leave. The generally used term “housework” does not include the responsibilities associated with the roles of a wife, lover, nurse, educator, care person, teacher... All these responsibilities are borne by every woman in a kind of automatic manner; they are not expressed directly, and so she is left without any chance to be appreciated and rewarded for them. Home has a broad and romantic meaning.

The requirements laid on today’s women pushing them to be slim, beautiful, young, and blond, the marginalization of older women and the ignoring of their experiences leads to completely new phenomena. Our auntie started to drink. In today’s world anorexia and bulimia are spreading, an extreme emphasis is put on physical beauty, the female soul has been asserting itself

with difficulties. The auntie lived under the socialist regime, she kicked up a fuss about her faithless husband and suffered for it. If she lived today, her husband would probably be a millionaire. Who knows whether she would not have changed her mind and given up such a scandal?

We are mere components of the system machinery that was created by the human being—man, being silently assisted and tolerated by women. The system affects each of us, men and women alike, influencing our behavior and actions. Despite a soul not being mentioned, the social values, requirements and expectations are sucked in by female babies together with their mother's milk. Dressed in pink, they are taught that a little girl should not be grungy, but clean, neat and beautiful. Magazines for girls and women navigate towards seducing and pandering to the right man. Can we say, to the best of our knowledge and belief, that most women today fully realize what is going on around them and what they themselves want? Do they have time to ponder over their situation? Is a breakup a tragedy when a relationship does not enrich partners, but to the contrary destroys one or both of them? To what extent is fixation on one partner a personal need, and when is it just the situation when one's own capacity to think and reflect is replaced by consumption of romantic fantasies? What role is played today by the need to "stick" to somebody who is famous, powerful, and rich?

Hard-Working (*1927)

*I preach bad acts not to be done, bad words not to be spoken,
bad thoughts not to be existing.
Buddha*

Another of the sisters was eighteen when she left home. As a child, she grew up in the shadow of her youngest sister's beauty and the spiritual declarations and needs of her third. She enjoyed manual work, and so the burden of most of the housework was left to her. She lived with her parents in a small village, so small that it did not even have a shop. When she grew up, she started work at a farm, the other end of the village, where they had forty cows needing to be milked and fed, and manure to be mucked out. She used to arrive at about five in the morning, not leaving until after six in the evening. For this, she was remunerated by food and some other farm commodities, such as milk, curd cheese, eggs, grain, potatoes and the crop grown on the farm. She was twenty when the farmer's wife died, leaving behind two men, a son and his father, on the farm. They started to look around for a new housewife to take care of the housework and cattle. They did not hesitate for long before turning to the parents of their current servant, and—later on—also

to the servant herself, with the question of whether she would like to stay with them full-time as the farmer's wife and housekeeper. The young women hesitated, although not for long. To be one of four daughters at the end of 1940s did not offer many chances for economic independence and a free future.

The wedding ceremony was held at the local church—a traditional custom—and in the local-government office, which had just started to become fashionable at the time. Life after marriage continued in the same manner, with the only difference being that the young woman no longer returned home to sleep at her parent's house, but stayed on the farm, in her new home. She used to get up early to feed and milk the cows, to cook breakfast, lunch and dinner for her husband, to make their marital bed, and do all the washing. She was young and strong, and enjoyed working, until the day she became ill. She developed rheumatism in both her hands, probably from the excessive drudgery. Her husband did not have any mercy with her, and was dissatisfied that they did not have any descendants; his wife was unable to get pregnant. He was coarse with her, calling her a heifer. His lachrymose wife would walk unhappily about the farm, with her hands gnarled due to the illness, draining the cup of bitterness of a good match with a rich groom down to its bottom.

The story took place in a small village, in the first half of the 20th century, when there was no television so people entertained themselves by watching one another, and everybody knew everybody, and moreover everybody knew everything about everyone. The whole village perceived the crudity of the farmer and the weakness of his wife, for whom they commiserated, in quiet corners, supporting her with advice that she should run away from him, that such a life was unbearable. The most active comforter became her brother-in-law, as he felt guilty for having been involved in the unhappy matchmaking. Whenever he had some spare time, he called in at the farm and helped the woman. In the course of time, they developed a soft spot for each other and started to date secretly, at night, when the entire world fell silent. They looked for every opportunity to be together and dulcify their lives with a pinch of emotions. Their love gave birth to a little girl who was named after the lawful husband, although he already suspected at the time that there was something wrong with his married life and that the child might not be his. Curses and invectives, addressed at his wife, mounted and the wedlock turned into hell. Her little daughter had already learned how to walk and talk, when the woman decided to run away and apply for a divorce. At that time, only a few years had passed since the act had come into force allowing for the provision that in cases of conflict between spouses, it is not always the husband who is exclusively right. However, awareness of that act had not got so far as the little village. She left her whole dowry at the house and, with one suitcase and forty crowns to pay for the train fare, she led her little daughter by the hand, and

moved into the home of her sister—intellectual who had just completed her studies and was now living with her husband—doctor in the region’s capital city, leading the life of city people.

The rheumatism eased off, and she started to work as a crane driver at the Škoda factory, in a three—shift operation. She was young and pretty, and so a man soon appeared who started to court and visit her. It did not take long before they decided upon a common life. They bought their own house in the borderlands for a few crowns. Her new partner was divorced, paying alimony money to maintain his son; but the woman was happy she could run her own household. They acquired everything they needed to live comfortably in their house: a kitchen, a living room, a children’s room; in the barn they bred a cow, pig, sheep, goat, geese, rabbits, guinea pigs, coypus; cats and a dog ran about outside. It was a kind of a family farm that was mostly managed by the daughter from the first marriage. Her mother earned money at the Škoda factory from the beginning, and later on at a glassworks. Then she also worked as an assistant in the local shop and as a waitress in a pub. Her new partner, originally a blacksmith, re—trained to be able to work as an agricultural machinery repairman, commuting to work wherever it had to be done. When they decided to have a baby, the daughter from the first marriage was already a fourteen—year—old lady. A second girl was born and when she was one, her father was burned to death in a car accident during one of his numerous business trips. For his common—law wife and mother of two daughters it was an enormous tragedy and the end of one big dream. At that time, they moved to a state—owned flat in the pub where the mother was working as an innkeeper so as to take care of her little child. From morning till night, she was drawing beer for local drunkards without breaks; her older daughter was at a boarding house, studying secondary school.

After her common—law husband’s death, the woman decided to return to her native village where, after many years, she met her first daughter’s real father, the comforter from the time of her first unhappy marriage. He had become widowed in the meantime and now, when his love was also alone, saw an ideal chance for their common life. He was drawing a picture of their rosy future, how they would live the rest of their lives nicely together, but he was alone in his reveries. The woman he was in love with a long time ago was proud now. She had never forgiven the father of her first daughter for not keeping his word all those years ago. When she had been making up her mind to leave her crude husband, her lover promised that they would leave together and start a life together. His lawful wife and daughters born under wedlock however persuaded him to stay with his family and he obeyed, which his extra—marital lover considered a betrayal.

She kept him from her door, until he gave up his efforts and attempts for a common life. The woman brought up her daughters on her own.

Work, exploitation, love, courage, ability...

The story depicts the destiny common to most women in the past whose livelihood depended on their husbands and their power over their lives. The role of a servant resulting from this, and here also is an example of personal courage, the ability to resist one's fate. She left despite having been criticized by everybody, she was not afraid to start again, empty-handed, and with small child. She was beginning anew, after her partner's tragic death, however this time with two children already. This example of life force and personal courage may serve as a model even today when the material situation is not so dramatic and about one half of marriages end in divorce. The question about the meaning of marriage and the promise of life-long faithfulness remains open.

As regards responsibilities: the opinions expressed by women during the round tables suggest that housework is kept invisible within the society and underappreciated morally as well as financially up to today, despite this work including besides other things: shopping, cooking, cleaning (washing, ironing, window cleaning, dusting, mopping up, waste disposing, dish washing, vacuum cleaning, etc), taking care of plants, pets, seasonal cleaning and minor repairs. Housework is the second job for a woman, which consumes her time and energy that she could devote to her own self-realization. Despite this, a hidden belief has been surviving that a woman is an expert at housework, that she works at home after having come back from her job, while a man can relax. Social and personal pressure on a woman forces her to play all the roles so that the household is able to function according to the generally accepted idea, may get to the borders of manipulation and physical abuse. To organize cooperation, thinking about everything that needs to be done is often much more difficult than to do all this without any help.

Such an overloading of a woman may also manifest in the way the children are brought up, when children adopt the unfair model of work division and the woman, who is drowned in housework, is deprived of the time she could use for herself and the upbringing of her children with energy and patience. Appreciation for her energy and the lots of "invisible" work she has done is lacking. Especially the moral and emotional appreciation.

Beautiful Childbirths and a Loathsome Abortion (1979–1992)

*Those who want to make their lives difficult need only one
of the following—a boat or a wife. Both are difficult to steer.
Platon*

We started to date each other out of pure love. I was sixteen and he twenty. We “got married over a broomstick” when I was twenty and he twenty-four. We got lawfully married when I was twenty-four and he twenty-eight. We were the hippie generation, and so we decided to get married and live together after we had become tired of living in lodging houses and hired flats, and when the construction company I was working for began offering studio apartments. The only condition was being married and signing an employment contract for the term of twelve years. And so, together with our two witnesses, we went to the local-government office and celebrated our wedding during one of the occasional visits paid to us by our mums. Soon, we moved into the seventeen square meters of our studio apartment, that shined with newness and had three windows oriented to the South, on the fifth floor of a prefab house.

I earned my living by working in an office; my husband was working as a warehouse keeper. Together, we used to go to visit our mums, brothers and sisters, or went for an outing from time to time, meeting our friends once a week. I worked close to a film club where I queued for tickets every Monday to see all kinds of films that were on in the 1970s in our country. I was a member of a church choir, studied the history of arts and philosophy in the evenings, reading everything that I could get my hands on. I used to have a lot of time even at work. The only formal condition of the office, where I worked as a clerk responsible for orders, was to come to work at seven in the morning and register oneself as present. My boss did not force me to sit in the office all-day and pretend I was working. His requirement was to solve everything that needed to be solved by nine o’clock, and then I could do whatever I wanted to do. To drink coffee, mill the wind with my colleagues or get up and go to do what I was interested in. I only had to come back before four o’clock to ensure there was nothing unpredictable going on, and then check out in the attendance register and go home. Thanks to this regime, I had a lot of time left to browse through books in second-hand bookshops, to study in the university and municipal libraries, and to queue for books in the bookshops if anything interesting happened to be published. Depending on the circumstances, I called in at a Catholic or Protestant church from time to time to play the piano. Both denominations always lent me the keys without any problem; and, in the Catholic Church, I reciprocated the kindness by preparing candles for mass. As a kind of a hyperbole, I used to say that I was a baptized Catholic, brought up as a heathen, and lived as a practicing ecumenist.

When I was twenty-seven, it was clear that I would become neither a professional pianist, nor a singer. My life was fulfilled neither by my office clerk career nor by the studies of knowledge achieved by mankind. And so motherhood came to mind. I had a strong desire to give birth to a child, take care of the baby and once again acquaint myself with the perception of the world through a child’s

eyes. My husband was thirty-one and he agreed because, as he said, he would not bear up living with me otherwise. However, he gave me his consent, subject to the condition we would have only one child. He came from a family with four children who quarreled all the time and he knew what he was talking about. He'd most prefer to stay without children. At the time, we had been living in the studio apartment for four years, our coexistence slowly turning to routine, our visits to friends always ending with a round of canasta. I became pregnant immediately. My due date was calculated for the beginning of January, based on my menstrual cycle, the movements of the baby and continuous medical checks. Taking into account my hereditary heart disease, I was warned many times that an internist should assist during the baby's delivery, alongside the obstetrician.

I commuted to work in the city center until the end of the eighth month of my pregnancy. I would roll through the streets in a beige self-made maternal dress and a green tweed coat fitted with a gray plush inset from my mother's coat. There was one strange experience that has remained in my mind ever since. My belly was weighting me down as I was passing down Bethlehem Square, wishing everything was behind me and my baby had already been born. At that moment, a hearse passed by. Then I got the message—there was no hurry at all. Not only the one-month remaining before childbirth, but also the rest of one's life, which will lapse faster than you can imagine.

At that time, I used to go to the maternity hospital to undergo medical checks once a month. The underground, comfortless rooms of the Bulovka hospital used to be overcrowded, and there was a limited number of seats, so most mothers would stand and wait for a check-up, sometimes even for up to half a day. I would liven up my time there by watching the others; I had noticed a beautiful, kind, and smart woman, who was a good ten years older than the others. Once, I spoke to her during one of those long periods of waiting, and discovered that we lived in the same housing estate. We agreed to wait for each other after the check-up and walked home together, taking the same way. We also met in the maternity hospital, even though my new friend had been expecting her baby as late as the end of January, her daughter was born three weeks earlier than my own son. I was three weeks more pregnant than my calculated term. They invited me to report at the hospital with all my personnel things for the childbirth to be induced artificially. I shared a room with an older woman with a high risk pregnancy. At one moment, doctors stopped hearing the beat of the baby's heart, and despite the mother's pleas to save her baby by cesarean section, the medical specialists in consultation decided not to meet her pleas as they anticipated that the baby would be most likely handicapped. The child died in the mother and they induced the childbirth artificially. The woman walked along the corridor, groaning for many hours, only to finally give birth to a dead boy with normal birth weight, without any marks of

impairment. The surgery door was open and so I could see the little blue dead body being weighed there. The woman was lying next to me, being given pills and packs in order not to go mad from the milk she was producing which was to be drunk by no-one.

As for me, they examined me and stuck various instruments inside me. It was terrible.

I had never lived through such horrible pain before. Finally, the doctor drained the amniotic fluid and I started to feel the womb contract at long last. It took another ten painful hours before they began to become intensive enough for me to be accepted to the delivery room. There, the little boy came into the world so fast that only the midwife, who cut into the perineum to prevent any greater damage, attended the childbirth; the internist did not even manage to come to check my heart, and the obstetrician only came to sew me up. The baby weighed three kilos and five decagrams, and measured fifty-one centimeters; the umbilical cord was one meter and twenty centimeters long. I was later told that my son could have easily choked himself on such a long cord. There were five of us who shared our hospital room, and, in the corridor, I used to meet the friend I knew from the antenatal medical checks. She went home five days after having delivered her child; I was informed that my baby and I would have to stay in the maternity hospital, as my little son's head was getting larger and the doctors suspected anasarca. The other mums were brought their babies for regular breast-feeding, I often did not find mine on the cart, and then anxiously tried to find out where he was and learnt about all the examinations he had to undergo. I was swallowing down tears, hobbling along corridors to avoid the suffering I felt next to the happy and healthy. Once, when I was in the corridor, the telephone hanging on the wall started to ring. I picked it up, saying, "Maternity hospital, who do you want to talk to?" At the other end of the line I heard a male voice; he introduced himself as the state security service and wanted to talk to a woman of my name. I caught the man unawares with my answer "speaking". He did not have any idea about what things are like at the hospital and that I was just passing by the phone accidentally. He dryly announced to me they had just detained my husband during an examination at the State Security Service, as we had signed a petition asking for capital punishment to be abolished. The state security man was checking if my husband was telling them the truth and he examined me shortly via telephone, wanting to know my version of my husband's explanation.

The medical checks on my little boy lasted ten days, and then we were both released but had to go regularly for examination at the hospital. After a few weeks, the baby proved to be healthy, alive and kicking, and so he was crossed off the neurological register. For me, the happiest period of my life—the maternity—commenced after a dramatic beginning. I had a lot of worries and little milk from

the beginning, and so the baby had to be given additional artificial nourishment. Nevertheless, nothing could have spoiled my happiness from the first smile, the first reaction to a familiar face, the first turn in his crib. I used to go for regular walks and checks at a baby clinic, found new friends with small children with whom I discussed our babies din–dins, pooh–poohs, and the new things they had learned. With great pride, mothers exchanged their experiences, boasting what their beloved babies could do, demonstrating, in their own way, to one another the uniqueness of their respective kiddies.

I gave up singing in the choir and reading books, and concentrated all my energy on my baby, to whom I read books and sang songs to, and with whom I played. From time to time, my mother–in–law or my own mum and sister paid us a visit, however there was not much space for visitors in our seventeen–square–meter studio apartment. In the summer months, my friend used to lend us her romantic log house in the forest, which we repaid by carrying out all the necessary maintenance work.

Not even a whole year had passed by the time my little son had started to walk, and so we stopped having dust baths in the near vicinity of our prefab house and started to set off for longer outings to the surrounding countryside. I perceived the world through a child's eye, rejoicing over every flower, bug or little stone that the toddler discovered. We set up a herbarium together, read folding picture books, books for children, I sang to him, we danced together, and I taught him poems. Besides the mostly joyous days of a healthy child, there were also the periods of infected ears; I experienced every pain felt by my child more intensively than my own. My husband did not meddle with the little baby's upbringing; promoting the theory that the father is to take care of the baby once the child has enough reason. Three years passed by and I had to go back to work in order to work off the rest of the debt for the stabilization apartment. I used nursery school as an excuse and bartered off eight more months with the company thanks to which I was able to stay with my little son longer. However, I had to send my child to nursery school and start working. The job supervised by my former boss had already been taken up by somebody else, and so I had to be employed in another department, the invoicing one, where they were very particular about observing working hours. I used to be at work until the evenings, unless my son was ill. Then I would stay home on sick leave, being nervous that I was not at work where they looked down on the mothers of sick children. When I was at work, I was full of worries about how my son was getting on at nursery school. He did not like it there and used to cry, and I always left him with a heavy heart. The teachers complained that he was naughty, I felt weak and helpless, however, what else could I do when I was out all day long and saw the child only in the mornings, evenings and at weekends?

It crossed my mind that another child might solve the situation. I recalled my childhood, realizing how sad the destiny of a single child is. I'd rather work off

my apartment-related work load debt by bringing up a child than by commuting to work which made no sense to me. I became pregnant without planning anything. I had not been taking contraceptive pills from the moment my doctor forbade me to do so because of the hepatitis I suffered as a child. The only preventative method used was a condom and coitus interruptus. Neither me, nor my husband had a clue when and how this happened. Although I longed for a second child very much, my husband was radically against it. He stated it to me clearly, didn't he? When I did not have my period I went for a medical examination, feeling profound despair because of my contradictory and painful emotions. One of them was my immense longing for a child, which my husband called a matter of hormones; the second was my wish to respect my husband's request. The doctor at the gynecology ambulatory care center did not understand what had been preventing me from having a second child. However, when she understood the contradiction between a mother's instinct and the pressure from my husband, she informed me about the conditions of an abortion, should we decide for it. If your husband does not want to have the baby, he has to donate blood. I learned a lot when I saw how easy it was for my partner to talk about my feelings related to the considered abortion, and what a fuss he was making over the mere mention of a blood donation. He stopped putting pressure on me, and just told me not to count on him as a partner as I had breached my promise, and thus had ceased to be attractive to him as a life partner. Verbally and de facto, he dubbed me a servant. The atmosphere could and should have led to a divorce. However, I could not cope with that. I did not make myself and the world around me out, I was saddled with one small child, and the second in my body was holding me back from making any radical steps. I was crying, suppressing my unhappiness, inside myself. My partner was working in the construction industry and so he asked for our flat to be exchanged. He was offered a double studio apartment of twenty-three square meters at the opposite end of the city. It was larger than the flat we were living in by just six square meters. I found out that the housing association wanted to sell my studio apartment illegally, and so I kicked up a fuss, and finally we ended up owning both the studio apartment and the double studio apartment, two flats, which I immediately exchanged for a four-room flat, which we moved into only a few months before my second child was born. In our new flat, my husband occupied one of the rooms and announced he would not like to be bothered by anybody. There, he smoked, played computer games, paying no attention to the children or family activities. The bedroom, living room and a narrow kitchenette were the spaces we shared; the children's room was at the kids' disposal. I hardly bought anything, lending children's clothes from friends or buying second-hand clothes and shoes for symbolic small change in improvised flea markets that capable mothers organized in the pram depository rooms of their prefab houses.

The second boy was born at eight o'clock in the morning on the last day of the year at Vinohrady Hospital; he weighed three kilograms and fifty decagrams, and was full of life and energy, knowing immediately when and where to suck at my breast which quickly injured my nipples. During my lachrymose pregnancy I was preparing for the new little being's coming to this world quite carelessly. The baby was full of energy, brisk, even able to draw the attention of his sulking father. The child used to have one dummy in his mouth and other two in his hand which he tried to cram into his mouth as well so it was not uncommon to find the little glutton with two dummies forced into his mouth. He was a joyful little boy as well as snippy; his five-year-old liked playing with him and caressing him. I could have been the happiest woman in the world if it had not been for the spoiled relationship with my husband. I found new friends in my new place of residence that had kids of the same age; I was more relaxed with my second child as I understood it was not only me who influenced his future character. I brought up my children together, organizing outings with my friends and their children who lived in our neighborhood, we used to go to children theatres, we exercised, went swimming. The nursery school was beneath our window and my younger son liked going there. When he was three, the twelve-year period of my apartment-related work load debt expired and I accepted a job as a morning cleaner at the nursery school in order to be available for my sons. After lunch I used to go home with the younger one, where we waited together for his brother until he got back from school. The director of the nursery school was the chairwoman of the local communist party; I gave notice there and finished my employment at the beginning of the Velvet Revolution. During the whole period of the totalitarian regime I was informed of the problems in society by rewriting documents issued by Charta 77. I got engaged in establishing a local civic forum and became one of its three spokespersons. When my younger son was nine, I became pregnant for the third time. The marriage was formally functional, from time to time we made love on Sunday evenings, but this could not be called the harmony of souls at all. When I came to the hospital, the waiting room was full of women waiting for abortions. The environment was tidy, much more civilized than at the time of my childbirths, the medical staff was kind and nice. I was the last one to take my turn, I was watching women full of energy coming in to be carried out lifeless by a paramedic who put them on a cart and took them to a hospital room. A young woman was crying on a bed next to me, nobody was talking to anybody; women were suppressing their emotions.

Feelings, commitments, emotions, egos...

Pregnancy and childbearing are absolutely unique and are watershed events for every woman. They can turn into a beautiful, deep experience when

a woman gives birth to a child she wishes to have, in dignified conditions and under circumstances that do not evoke any negative feelings or unseemly memories in her. This was the case under the communist regime when women were totally left at the mercy of experts and lived through various difficult situations during childbirth. For example, the so called “groaning–room”, a room where women were waiting before childbirth, with several women who had just had enemas and one toilet without any screen, a common practice as late as in the 1980s.

Today, woman is entitled to a fully professional and human approach, yet, despite this, the women and organizations that are involved in the promotion of natural childbirth, have been faced with reluctance, questioning, bureaucracy, and resistance. Even the most substantial mission of a woman, which is to give birth to children, has been put under the control of men. The natural biological ability of a healthy woman to give birth to a child is questioned and those women who have been organizing educational campaigns on this topic are labeled daredevils. These are very sensitive topics, and so it is no wonder that many women were not willing to remember childbirth at all, maybe they do not want to return to this inconsistent experience, being glad it is over.

The question is turbulent emotions, higher sensitivity, understanding on the side of a partner and other people in a woman’s surrounding, acceptance of experience from older women, the ability to communicate.

Family Service (1998)

*From me, sonny, you can learn both virtue and how to bear misadventure,
however, to be taught happiness, turn to the others.*
Vergilius

My husband left us in the town where he had decided to stay with my mother and I continued traveling by car with both our sons. We had a long journey ahead of us, two autumn weeks of what was going to be partially a vacation, and partially a business trip. Immediately after we were left alone without my husband and the kids’ father, I realized, with consternation, that the young boys were imitating their father’s behavior, that they were his authentic copy. From the very first moment they were left alone with me, they started criticizing me and fully substituting their absent father. I shuddered to see my older son light a cigarette, and at first I did not know what to do.

Years ago, I chose my husband freely from among the several young men who were around me in the band where I had started and also ended my career as a singer. I was sixteen then and, naturally, I had neither clue nor idea why my heart

drew me to this young man who did not even play an instrument and was merely watching and kibitzing the others. (Years after, one man from our bunch told me how astonished they had been by my choice.) I started dating him and accepting the critical remarks addressed to me about how I sang, looked, and dressed. Later on, we got married, I changed my name and myself as well, and became a wife. My good luck was that my husband was so lazy he was at least unable to feel jealousy; he was not interested in my friends, neither was he interested in what I was doing with my scant free time which I used according to my possibilities and abilities. I was learning from my children, their friends and parents; I did not waste my time.

As I traveled by car with my adult sons imitating their father, I recalled the week spent with my friends at their cottage. The landlord was a very fellowly and silver-tongued man and their son was, as regards the rhetoric gift, his true copy. What a surprise it was when we came there one day and their son was silent and mouse-like. In my mind, I asked myself what could have happened to him? Nothing. His father was at home managing all the talking on his own. A change dawned the moment his father left and his son sat in his father's chair and did not shut up. When his father was present, he held back, knowing his place, his father would not have forgiven him his competitive behavior. As soon as he left, I was waiting only for the son to ask his mum to bring him a cup of coffee. I realized that sons watch and imitate their fathers' behavior, and once they grow up they are going to repeat what they saw at home. The same is true for daughters who imitate their mothers' behavior even if they may criticize them otherwise. As soon as they get out of their mothers' reach, they become their younger copy.

I wanted to have a look at myself through the eyes of other people, but I could not manage it. I helped myself with an analogy, a memory of a few days spent at my sister's. My brother-in-law got up early in the morning to do his regular exercises and then sat at the table, waiting for his wife to prepare breakfast for him. My sister was dancing attendance upon him, paying no attention to her own needs. Breakfast, snack, lunch, special bodybuilder's diet that the larder and fridge was full of. Only after she has served him and did everything he needed before he left for work, did she get dressed and went to her own work hungry, yet with the intention of having something to eat during the day. Seeing that, I recalled the beginnings of my own married life. I used to get up at six in the morning to prepare breakfast and snacks for him; when he came back from work, he used to have dinner ready about which he always commented in a critical tone. As he used to say, "When everything is all right, silence is commonplace. Only when something is too salty or sweet, hot or cold, only then it is necessary to comment on the situation—so as to be rectified". In the course of time, this approach started to irritate me. I did not hear a word of praise, yet had

to be continuously on guard, watching for the direction in which the verbal face would fly in from.

Before our departure abroad, we met at my mum's to say good-bye. We had eaten some sauce with dumplings when my sister and brother-in-law appeared. Mother started to dance attendance upon them, but my brother-in-law said that he was on a bodybuilding diet and had not eaten dumplings for four years and was not going to eat any. My sister and mother became dedicated to offering him many other versions of food that they were willing to prepare for him immediately. Would he like some rice, pasta, bread? Or should they fetch something special for him or have it brought in? I grinned and remembered the joke about the good old days when the lord of all living creatures was sitting at the table eating his dinner, his wife dancing attendance upon him and he asks her who the pigswill is for, hopefully not him? By that time, I was no longer preparing breakfast for my husband, feeling like a fixture, burnt out, without any idea nor interest in cooking, without any creative energy. Tired and resigned, I watched my sister carefully separating egg whites from yolks to prepare the required diet sacrifice for her husband.

The effort to please, behavior models, terror at home...

According to the opinions expressed during the round tables, women do not want to take care of their husbands in addition to their job duties and responsibility to taking care of children—it is an unfair anachronism from the past. Many women perceive the exaggerated emphasis on housework as a cursed heritage they would like to be rid of, and they want to adapt their lives more to their needs.

Today's young women want independent men who are able to participate equally in housework, thus enabling women to get realized outside the home, instead of men who expect a woman to be their personal assistant and servant, willing to be at hand, apologize, and remedy matters at any time... Most women however still encounter and fight against such deeply rooted stereotypes. No excuses based on the role of education will endure today. Modern women realize that a change must begin with them as it is they who bring their sons up. And they have to be brought up in a new manner so as their future partners will not have to be servants to their "lords" any more. Children have to be educated to share work in a family and to respect women. This may give rise to a new generation that will pull down a bit the deep-seated stereotypes that women grew up on.

Busybody (1999)

*Everybody wishes other people, rather than them themselves,
be reproved for their faults.
Quintilianus*

I found the little garden I had been longing for. A slice of nature in the midst of a city; under the totalitarian regime it was truly a treasure which everyone looked upon as if it were the apple of their eye. Citizens who were being oppressed by communists would take refuge in the verdure silence, where they grew their own vegetables, a commodity that was desperately lacking at the socialist market stalls. With the arrival of new freedoms and possibilities, owners had begun to neglect these gardens and even gave them back to the gardening association, and so, my turn finally came on the waiting list. At first, the chairman of the association called me to say that a garden with a shed, greenhouse, and well had become vacant, although its former owner wanted some compensation money. The sum, which is negligible from the western point of view, was existential for me at that time. With a heavy heart I refused, explaining that I did not have the money. After some time, another garden became vacant, with grass, a plum tree, three apple trees, several rose shrubs, a lilac and something I had not heard of. I was delighted with it and did not hesitate a second. I paid the membership fee, which was a few hundred per year, and got down to gardening. Together with the garden, I had inherited a broken spade, hoe and pitchfork and I bought my own new rake, sickle and shrub pliers. I leaned all the tools up against a tree and spent every free moment I could in the garden. I would fetch the water for my roses from a nearby brook, although most of my time was taken up with cutting the grass. I used a sickle to do this and it was endless. My husband had warned me ahead of time not to count on his help since he did not agree with having a garden and neither was he interested in it. My sons followed their father's forewarning. Anyway they were too grown up then to enjoy a good roll in the grass and messing about with soil.

My neighbor-gardeners kept a good eye on my amateurish efforts. One day one man came to visit me whose own garden was dug over as if it was a field, where weeds did not dare to enter, magnanimously offering to mow my lawn because he needed some "verdure" for his compost. He also promised me a box for my gardening tools which I accepted enthusiastically and gave my neighbor the second key to the lock as I was leaving for two weeks. This gave him time to manage my garden to his heart's content and make as much compost as he wanted. I came back after two weeks to see that my neighbor had only mowed about three square meters where probably the best compost was growing. Dandelions were at the end of their blossom and the garden was white with downy seeds. I got down to mowing

frenetically as not to be scolded for spreading weeds to the surrounding plots. In my mind I wondered as to why the neighbor had not kept his word and mowed the grass as he had promised. When he finally appeared, I naturally expected an explanation, however, he just began to grumble that I did not take care of my garden, and that he was not going to mow somebody else's weeds and so on and so forth; I couldn't believe my ears nor eyes. I took back my key, astonished at this changed mood and approach, and continued to mow. When my younger son came looking for me in the garden a minute later, the neighbor again began to moan, complaining that they should take the garden away from me, that I do not take care of it and do not use it as is right and proper.

Winter passed and spring began. I came back to the garden to find that someone had stolen all my tools, including the original timeworn ones. I began to get very upset, remembering my aggressive neighbor, and began to question whether the garden was worth all this aggravation? Luckily at the moment of my anger-fit, there was nobody at hand to whom I could complain and possibly even return the keys. I kept on going to the garden but at a time when I assumed nobody to be around. At dawn or while the moon was shining. I used to carry my sickle and toy rake in a backpack on my back. I did manage to avoid my neighbor, until one time... he began his monologue by claiming that my grass caused snails to creep onto his patch and, all in all, he did not like my garden. I snapped back that he should mind his own business, that I did not like his field either and that nobody was willing to accompany me to the garden because of his aggressiveness. We were snapping at each other for quite a while until I told him to shut up, saying that I was neither interested in what he had to say nor his advice. To basically mind his own business. I was naïve enough to believe that would be the end of it. However, I more or less avoided my garden rather than have it spoiled for me. I went there several times, but when I saw an open gate in my neighbor's garden, I turned right around and went back home. I did not long for kibitzing; neither did I want to meet him. Plums began to brown in the autumn and so I asked my husband to help me pick the crop. It was a hot Sunday afternoon; a woman who was my neighbor across the road answered my greeting and reminded me reproachfully that I did not go to the garden. I replied I did, but at a time when nobody else was there. The neighbor, who felt insulted, snapped back that it was hardly evident, and by saying this she played right into my hands. The reason why I used to go to the garden, I said, was not to make things I did there visible, but to have a rest among the greenery, without anyone around, if possible. An older married couple on a walk amused themselves by listening to us. They were talking sweetly about the lovely gardens, and so I confessed to them that I was an amateur gardener, trying to see what would take root by applying a trial-error method. Smiling, they replied that there were already more than enough busybodies in the

neighborhood, whereupon a neighbor present nearby, who had been following our debate started to shout out that I should return the garden if I did not take care of it. With a smile on my lips, I replied he was not the one to give me advice and judge me, and that I was not interested in his opinion. My husband was standing under the plum tree; surprised by the attacks I had to face and how difficult it was to be a member of the gardening association. As my neighbor was leaving, he greeted me and passed a remark, as if incidentally, that he would not be here for one week, which I took on board and, with gusto, dropped in at my garden every afternoon with the sickle.

One evening, the chairman of the association visited me. He explained in a and polite enough manner that grass needs to be mowed properly, smoothly by a lawn-mower, if possible, and that trees also have to be pruned in a thorough manner. That year, the crop of apples was abundant; branches bending to the earth. While we were talking, the chairman tactfully mentioned that my garden was a thorn in the flesh of the whole association. I immediately knew what was up. Once I rode a horse with my friend to the garden. The weather was dry and the horses grazed on the juicy grass, hence “mowing” it in an instant. However, the rules of the gardening association prohibit domestic animals from entering the colony. And the neighbor was in the garden at the time and reported me for being there on horseback, although being a dry spell nobody would have realized that horses had even been there. Despite this, I had to listen to complaints that the horses could have damaged the road if... And, after all—it was prohibited. The neighbor had reported me and his scolding and criticism had born their fruit. When I was not there, the whole colony listened to his complaints, attacks and gossip; nobody rebuked him, nobody told him to shut up and stop bothering them. They listened passively to him and, as everybody knows, silence suggests consent. I thought to myself how easy it was to invite people to an opinion when it was presented with persistence and not nipped in the bud. I reminded the chairman of the association that there is no single recipe for everything. That it was just a case of human habits. Grass mowed with a mowing machine may look nice, but this kind of maintenance kills all the insects living within, a whole hidden microcosm within. Most of all I finally came to realize that the neighbor had focused on me because I was a woman and the subconscious “I as a man know better than you” had had 100% effect. He also saw I was without the protection of a man and so he had targeted me to attack. Many of the gardens in the neighborhood were overgrown with weeds, not having been touched by human hand all the year round. This was what my neighbor either did not want to see or the gardens belonged to men he did not dare criticize.

Aggressiveness, kibitzing, intolerance, to live and to let live...

From time to time each of us, men or women, come across a busybody who leaves an indelible memory in our lives. Seen from a distance, such a person is funny, but a direct confrontation with him or her may spoil one's life pretty much. Sometimes, they may indirectly force us to give up our favorite activity (gardening), the other time such a person may spoil his or her partner's life for many years.

This is exactly the case when principles (characteristic features) that are neutral in their nature develop to an extreme extent in one person—they become unbearable characteristic features. We are talking here about the male as well as female principle. The male principle includes reason, engineering, technology, science, words, logics, details, usefulness, goals, selfishness, competition, law, property, fighting, hunting, control, power, and others (you may add your own). The female principle includes intuition, inherent aptitudes, irrational matters, emotions, feelings, instinct, love, empathy, motherhood, care, flowers, music, dancing, children, cooperation, assistance, life, and others (again you may add your own). The terms male and female do not mean that the former is associated exclusively with men and the latter with women. But when we think about such a busybody, we see where and how both the principles are not balanced. Then, it may be a disaster. Every imbalance leads to another imbalance.

The women who participated in the round tables discussions also mentioned that the symbiosis of the male and female principle brings along with it benefit for the society as the whole. According to women, men achieve many innovations thanks to their technical curiosity, which leads to the development of technologies that may bring along benefits as well as harms to the society. Men are also able to focus their mind far more than women, however, often without seeing matters in their broader context.

Female Flirtation (1998)

The secret how to keep a good-humored mind lies in the art of not getting upset by foolish trifles and getting enthused by incidental joys, however small they may be.
Smiles

I read a charming article in some newspaper in which its author described an experience at a New Year's Eve celebration. For an expensive entrance fee, he was able to join a party of well-dressed people. There were paired-off couples in the ballroom and he did not have any trouble starting up a conversation. As

he was a fellowly person, he was looking to have a dance. However, he soon noticed that the pairs who were dancing were only the married ones, the same people with the same people all the time; there was no social mixing going on there it seemed. He had paid the entrance fee of a few thousand crowns only to leave for home at the end without having danced at all. He wrote an article about this social experience of his which I later read. I considered it to be the most interesting in the whole newspaper, and almost moving. I decided to write to the author and invite him to a party which would perhaps be more modest, but jollier for sure. It was a fancy–dress ball, which I decided to attend dressed as a cowboy in order to feel free for once in my life. I did not want to sit in a circle dressed in pink, waiting for a dance, a prince who was not to come. For at least one time in my life, I wanted to control the situation as men have done ever since their childhood.

I prepared a pair of jeans, checked shirt, cowboy hat, belt, and borrowed a real, albeit broken weapon, and started to imagine myself rushing into the pub, ordering a glass of whisky and pouring it down my throat, hooting so loudly that everybody in the ballroom would hear me, and then ask the ladies present for a dance. The jeans were tight, showing off my female buttocks lines; I did not care, looking forward to my male opening night. I talked ten more people into coming to the ball and it seemed that the evening would turn out well. In addition to this, I was looking forward to meeting the stranger. On the Saturday I had a nap for a while, after lunch to be prepared and fresh for the evening. After having rested in bed for some time, I realized that I was beginning to menstruate. The discovery completely disconcerted me. I was unable to imagine a menstruating cowboy, pockets full of sanitary towels and tampons, having a cocksure attitude and at the very last moment, I decided to stay at home and not go anywhere. I lay back in bed, relaxed and menstruated. My sons and husband were surprised to see me home; had I lost the courage to disguise myself as a cowboy? When friends called from the party to ask why I was not coming, what was up with me, my husband told them that I had caught flu because he was unable to allow words such as menstruation and abdominal cramps to cross his lips. The cowboy lady slept through the evening instead of the anticipated cowboy spree.

On Monday, I went to work, the “flu” had passed over and my interest focused on the stranger. Nobody had seen him at the fancy–dress ball; however, before I had managed to find out any more details, my phone began to ring. He was calling to apologize for the illness that had prevented him from coming to the ball. He then invited me for lunch in a posh Italian restaurant where they served solely homemade food. Judging by his voice, I fancied a jovial middle–aged man, a bit stout. A slim man was sitting at the table, with curly hair and the look of a playboy and seducer. He was talkative and began his speech by explaining that his character was erotic by nature, however, he had a problematic marriage, and to top

it all, his religion was somehow prevented him. His wife refuses to have sex with him. He thought me divorced, basing his assumption on my habit of going dancing alone. We learnt all the essential information about each other, the stranger paid the bill, I expressed my thanks to him, and we went about our own business. The dialogue remained open with some kind of promise. If there are topics to talk about, if the dialogue is nice and pleasant, why not continue it? I called him and we met again for lunch a week later. He was jolly, talkative, sociable, but my first impression of him began to change gradually. I started to feel pity for him. He was married for the second time and was not happy in either of the marriages. Compared to his, my married life was idyllic, although boring, and at that time it even seemed as if my husband and I had started to somehow get used to each other enough to somehow pass our days together till their end.

I was informed that the stranger's wife had left on holiday, and so I called him on Saturday morning and invited him on an outing. He arrived by car and we decided to go to a beautiful park where the rhododendrons had just started to blossom. Unfortunately, he lost his way in all the flyovers and underpasses fringing the capital city, as did I, and so we missed the turning, ending up in some other park, which was small, and so we quickly left. We went out of the city, passing a pond full of dead fish, with an access road buzzing over our heads. The path ended up in bushes through which we worked our way out to a railway station's yard. I realized this was not an ideal terrain for a rendezvous, and the stranger made this just as plain. All good humor was lost. He gave me a ride home and we departed from each other in a very cool manner. After that, we saw each other only once more; I left him a message that a very interesting painter was exhibiting her work close to the place where he lived. I arrived there on my bike; he passed me with his wife, a beautiful blond. He pretended not to see me, and I did the same.

Freedom, space, volition, paradoxes...

Space belongs to men; man is a conqueror, man controls. The cowboy culture is a metaphor of masculinity, control and conquering. We may also find other metaphors which are closer to our conditions—for example a football pitch. Who governs space governs the world as well.

Even if a woman insists on it, she cannot even play a cowboy because it is her period and she is vulnerable and sensitive. It is impossible for a woman to pretend to be a man. She may have the choice, but nothing more. A man can go and ask a woman to dance, a man can make a choice, a woman, on the contrary, must sit in a corner and wait to see if a man notices her by chance, and if he asks her to dance. Or she can go and ask a man to dance. But what do men think about such an enterprising woman even today? What is the unwritten rule good for determining that man asks (and chooses) woman and woman waits

ingloriously in passivity if he selects her? Woman has a choice to be active—but to what extent?

Men are strong outwardly; they are hardened from their football matches and other games, but women are not trained to bear wounds and kicking. We also often lack self-confidence and courage to go and face rejection.

Man in Love (1992)

Once Cupid has broken into a heart, he shakes it wildly.
Ovidius

One summer, I arranged a family holiday at a company recreational cottage. The end of the summer was perfect; the weather was nice and sunny, an ideal time. Some more families, who had been slowly getting to know one another, shared the cottage. A week was a short time for any close befriending, and, besides, I devoted most of my time to my children. In the evenings all of us sat around a campfire, singing and telling stories. One evening, I noticed my husband had his shirt unbuttoned, holding a kitten on his chest, which he was caressing tenderly. His eyes were wide open, fixed on the fire by which a slim, beautiful blond was sitting in a yoga position. They were staring yearningly into each other's eyes; he was caressing the kitten in a very significant manner. When the fire had burnt out, everybody went to the cottage as it was getting cold. The blond had disappeared elsewhere, and my husband kept dropping hints all the time, asking the people present about her and a noun of a neutral grammatical gender—heart—appeared in his speech several times. It was clear he had fallen in love—and it was not me who was the object of his affection.

It was cloudy in the morning and he refused my invitation for a walk. He also refused to play chess or cards that we were used to playing in the idle moments of married life. He was sitting dreamily on the terrace with me beside him helpless. The blond was pottering around a room, singing a song which was popular in the 1960s that sometimes she thinks that love is so far from her, she cannot eat, she does not sing, her knees shake. She has a feeling that she is like smoke, and would disappear the moment she sets eyes on him, and a spleen would befall her soul. It was clear this game was not for me, that I was redundant there. I went out, therefore, for a walk. When I returned, my husband was just in the middle of his convivial flirting with the blond; my arrival disrupting their cozy dating, and so they fell silent. I sat at the table guiltily and began to read. The next moment, the kids ran in requiring attention. I turned to my husband with a request to take them outside and entertain them there. He got up annoyed and pretended to play with the boys in the sandpit the rest of the time, his head twisted towards the cottage.

The day passed in a charged atmosphere of mutual spying. In the evening, there was a farewell party and one of the cottage staff members started to show great interest in me. He noticed I had been playing gooseberry. He invited me to his room to show me his collection of butterflies. It was the last evening before our departure and was in no mood for that, although I knew I would make my husband and the blond happy with my absence. Of course, I would also make happy the new candidate interested in my humble self. I was however so uneasy thanks to my husband's "gestation" that I simply could not manage to throw the switch so quickly.

In the morning, the holidaymakers were getting back on the bus, where my husband was sat by the window, which enabled him to soak up the blond with long lasting stares, who was staying on at the cottage. The bus started up and got going. With a gesture of the hand full of significance he beckoned his new love good-bye and she did the same. I was relieved. We were returning home, to our well-known stereotype, to life without any sparks, the kitten and the blond, the unknown suitor. To our safe boredom.

Matrimony, love, stereotype, boredom...

Matrimony—a historical anachronism, meaningful tradition, real life-long bond, institution for the delivering of children and the collecting and keeping of property? Are we determined (by culture, history, tradition) to live under one wedlock for the majority of our productive life? Marriage is expected to be a long-term or, in the best case, even life-long union, that spouses will be faithful to each other and will support each other. Everybody who enters a marriage is automatically expected to be ready for it. But—has anybody taught us this? During the course of life, especially during childhood and adolescence, children attend school to learn civics, social sciences, writing, reading and counting, a bit of cooking and sewing, computer skills. Do they also learn how to relate to other people, how to develop, cultivate and maintain good interpersonal relationships, how to acquit themselves credibly in marriage? We have not been trained for living with another person, our partner. Most people jump into a relationship during their adolescence and when they reach their middle age, they start looking back, feeling that something has disappeared and that there is no meaning any more in living together with their partner. What can be done then? Have adolescents ever been informed about the fact that marriage very often burns out, becomes a burden, stereotype that is getting people down and oppressing them? Most of us are probably not prepared for this enough not to be caught unawares by this.

The women participating in the round tables mentioned infidelity. Infidelity is unacceptable in society—but is there any other way how to realize a change,

how to freshen up life between partners, including their erotic life? They also expressed their opinion and personal experience that the society tolerates male infidelity rather than that committed by women, and that they felt their unequal position as regards sex.

Who Governs the World?

The art of how to govern the world is the art of how to organize idolatry.
G. B. Shaw

St. Joan of Arc (2000)

When you start by sacrificing yourself to those you love, you will end up being hated by those you have sacrificed yourself to.
G. B. Shaw

From time to time, we hear of those who refuse to go along with the main-stream, preferring to take their own path, or as the popular saying goes: “They pee against the wind”. There has been no end of dramatized tales of late, concerning St. Joan of Arc. A musical, a television series in two parts, a film in the cinema. Perhaps there has been an anniversary of the heroine, a common provincial girl called the Maid of Orleans, who dedicated her life to the vision and ideal of a unified France and French nation. In the first part of the TV version of the story, my attention was taken by an old nun’s worries of what men could do to this young girl. A few years later, the powerful men of the church burnt her to death as a heretic and sorceress. She could neither read nor write, she was of ordinary origin, wore men’s clothes and heard God’s voice. After St. Joan of Arc died, France became unified and her name was carried through history as one of the few female heroines.

Women are not creative, I often hear. All of them cook, but how many of them are chefs? Many women sing or play an instrument, but how many of them are conductors? I was thinking about this and so one Saturday I decided to turn my attention to my own family in which I am the only woman. Before the male part of the family had even woken up, I had watered the flowers, arranged them, cut off any dry leaves and offshoots. I had washed the dishes, prepared breakfast, had a shower, washed my hair, the bathtub and toilet, sorted out and folded up the washing that I had readied for the evening when I would iron them whilst watching TV. As the men woke up, one after another, they had their breakfast, then one of them started to play the guitar, another went on his computer, and the third

switched on the TV. I cultivated the plants on the balcony, treated my son's wound, prepared an herbal tea for him and started to get lunch ready. In my free moments, I would take up my violin and pull a bow over the hard strings. A guinea pig disturbs me, demanding its food, then a pressure cooker screams and water boils over a pot full of rice. I am later distracted from the bow and strings by a messy blanket on the sofa, newspapers unfolded on the table and the noise of the TV. I give up playing the violin and go to finish lunch. One of the boys then goes shopping, we have lunch, exchange a few words about how things are elsewhere and I go and have a nap for a while. After the siesta, I finished the balcony maintenance and began to write this reflection.

Until the 19th century, women could neither read nor write as these skills were redundant in their societal position. Contact with the world was conducted through their husbands, upon whom they were also economically dependent. The main ambition of every woman was to marry well. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, women started to wear trousers and have a bob haircut, enforcing suffrage for themselves, International Women's Day, the possibility to study and to be more self-sufficient economically and thus freer. In connection to the personal sacrifice of St. Joan of Arc, one is reminded of the personal sacrifice of Czech mothers to their families, children, and husbands in the modern forum with their relationship to employment and a longing for economic independence. Some women are so exhausted, that they suffer from a burn-out syndrome. Their stories are only marginally described, as medical cases, with symptoms related to many other health problems. What would St. Joan of Arc look like today, how would we recognize her and what would she do? How would she unify the miners on strike, rebelling prisoners, the dissatisfied and the unemployed? Who would the enemy be today, with whom would she fight and lead the nation against? Maybe, she would not even be needed, and so would have little choice other than to live the destiny of all women. She would become a mother, devoting her time and life to her household, she would carry shopping bags and cook her family's favorite food depending on family resources and the budget. One acquaintance of mine called this female self-sacrifice a slick killing with a knife and fork. A creative observation. Those who rule pass judgments on those who wash their toilets. With little remark. The author of the analogy about killing with a fork and knife is the medieval mystic Hildegard of Bingen.

Truth, ideals, everyday routine...

Men have always presented a claim for knowledge and truth. Until recently, women did not have access to the world of objective truths and sciences, and whenever an exceptional personality of the female sex appeared in history who dared to meddle with higher matters, a problem arose. Today's woman

has a choice, she can achieve self-fulfillment, she can study, she can be a scientist and propagate truth—or rather she could if she had enough time and energy for that. Some women who wanted to enter social and scientific spheres had to select between their own career and family. Others are so capable that they manage to do both. But what is the price they pay for it? The prevailing opinion expressed during the round tables was that the emancipation of women is not compatible with the burden of responsibilities related to a family, household and the upbringing of children. Despite this, both responsibilities mostly rest with women. Women have enough energy; they would like to participate in public life, to influence society and the environment in which they live through their opinions. But how to do this when the care of their households, the upbringing of children and other responsibilities is so tiring and exhausting?

The Voice of the Masses Is the Voice of God (1998)

The hunger for power is more intense than all passions.
Tacitus

“There is too much information, who is going to make head or tale of it?” said a female manager to whom I had asked for a donation to support the advertising activities of our civic association. The money for advertising should also cover the costs of an article concerning civic activities, to be published in the newspapers, in order to describe factual methods used to manipulate people. In the name of great ideals and the common good, it was at one time the church, then fascism, and yet another time communism that played with mankind. Nowadays, it is the multinational companies that are trying to establish a dictatorship through tempting advertisements with an emphasis on a perpetual gluttony and greed for material possessions. “Well, when even I, a common girl from a little provincial village, can orientate in all this information, then the possibility is open to everybody, especially those who have completed some form of study,” I contradicted her.

“Well... I don’t know—my husband is an eminent, educated expert, but he is unable to fill in a money order, not to mention anything else of a more practical nature,” interposed the manager. “It’s the same problem with all current experts; they are not oriented in normal life; they are helpless; my husband lives on mere salami and biscuits when I am away from home for any longer period of time, like when I go with the kids on holiday,” I told her. “He even has problems making tea but that does not stop him from dispensing smart advice to those around him, claiming that what he eats is not important because he has been unable to find the

fundamental connection between what he eats and his health.” “Then they get a stomach problem, start whining and blaming us,” continued the manager. “Listen, my son has been studying at one of the most expensive (= the best) private secondary schools in the world, where he studies three academic subjects per day, and guess which subjects he has chosen! English, American History, and Mathematics,” I boasted. “Well, he doesn’t have that many, my son has just started his studies at an eight-year private grammar school, we paid fifteen thousand for it, but this sum includes everything. We do not need to buy one exercise book nor textbook, nothing. On the other hand, I have a friend who has her child at a state school and she has already spent fifteen hundred on school aids alone... but the most important thing, how the children and parents are treated, is incomparable. At the private school, they are nice to us, accommodating and even smile at the kids, while in the state schools they just complain that they never have enough money,” the manager said, letting her own experiences be heard. “And just imagine, we have two McDonalds already open in the near vicinity, coming all friendly to the school offering a special offer with a discount when a child celebrates his or her birthday where they can take up to five friends. My son came home to inform us that he would go there but I managed I talked him out of it. He understood that it was not worth his wanting it. So we’ve managed to remove one of the manipulations,” continued the manager.

“Lucky you, I have a little daughter who, whenever we pass a McDonalds, starts to beg me to go there and buy something, as one time she was given tiny toy shoes, then legs, and now she wants a little toy body, hands, head, and clothes. All these things she is given as a reward for buying one hamburger. There is no point in me explaining that it isn’t good for her,” the owner added to our debate. “Kids need good and evil to be absolutely differentiated, exactly and consistently,” I thought to myself but stopped pontificating. The debate became animated and I recalled a scene when once a Czech child on a visit to an American family preferred the thumbed hamburger and coca-cola to freshly baked, home-made bread and freshly squeezed apple juice. Such stupidity and impoliteness offended the hosts, although nothing could be done as the child was accompanied by her mother, a successful notary, and equipped with a top-quality video camera, and all her wishes had to be fulfilled.

Another memory crossed my mind of one of the first campaigns staged when McDonalds was to be opened in Prague. We printed out leaflets with the following inscription: “Fast food, fast cars, fast death.” Together with an English volunteer, we visited the director of the first Czech branch and asked him not to use disposable packages because they cannot be recycled. His response was that he was not to be blamed and that he was only following Czech law. We wanted to put this on record, and this made him tremble, “He was a father, he was not competent

enough to talk to us, and that we had better turn to their press and PR department.” A few years later, I was trying to raise a donation, from one of the newly opened supermarkets, in the form of refreshments for the children celebrating the successfully reconstructed park next to their school. I discovered that the colossus only distributes drinks in disposable packages, while claiming all the while that its operations are environmentally–friendly. The director of the supermarket then ordered mineral water in glass bottles specifically for our event.

At the same time, I found out that a department store in our neighborhood had started to charge an advance on glass mineral water bottles to the amount of ten hellers preparing for their gradual withdrawal from the counters. After only a few years of democracy and market economy, the Czechs’ journey towards a unified Europe is paved with plastic garbage. Politicians have not protected us with a “from cradle to grave” policy stipulating the producer’s responsibility to take care of its product from its origin to its termination; neither have they effected the basic right for a clean and healthy environment. Will there be any legal proceedings to judge the representatives of development since November 1989, who began this irresponsible consumption machinery? Who will call them into account, I ask myself, and imagine the huge number of scientists paid by the multinational companies to massage the media into cooperating with the brainwashing of the general public. The world is going to hell, and so it’s probably a good thing my clever son has chosen American History as one of his compulsory subjects; at least, he will understand the background of the white man’s glory and successful civilization. Indians extinct, black people enslaved, hamburgers in the most out–of–the–way places on the planet, and the invasion of genetic products to all parts of the world. It’s so wonderful that Europe is so old and experienced; the only pity being its harsh historical encounter with communism, fascism, and Catholicism, which availed nothing. It’s as if the heroes from the past were burnt in vain. What is our oldest university in Europe good for when its graduates do not know what is going on? And even if they know, why aren’t they able to communicate this to others in a manner which is comprehensible?

In my mind I was glad to be a common girl from a little provincial village who had not been defiled by an official education, and said good–bye to the owner and the manager who had not been persuaded that a promotional campaign to educate the Czech and Moravian nations was necessary.

Money, philosophy, culture, values...

The world is governed by money (in men’s hands), i.e. the western (Euro–American) civilization and its values focusing on profit and consumption. The complexity of political, economic and power bonds and the prevalence of men in these structures underlies the fact why the women par-

ticipating in the round tables did not express their opinion on the topic “Who Governs the World” very often and the topic did not belong among those that were often discussed unless a separate topic-based discussion was organized directly on the issue in question. The women who gave their opinion on this concurred. The world is driven by a longing for profit, multinational organizations, politicians and media, and all these spheres are unequivocally dominated by men, male values and principles.

This can be solved only by putting an emphasis on and an appeal to women to be interested in what is happening around them and be willing to influence this. The topic “Who Governs the World?” is too remote for women, was another opinion expressed during one of the round table sessions. Women have a feeling that it is just a tangled web of power relationships and lobby groups even on the level of municipal policy. A person who is in the position of a common citizen does not have any chance to penetrate the power structures.

However, a more optimistic opinion also appeared—women have to start with themselves and gain self-confidence. If they fully develop their female potential, the atmosphere in society, which is not suitable for men either, will become more relaxed. The idea that is the nearest to women’s hearts is to participate in the operations and image of their close environment where they live, to carry out hands-on acts with practical results.

Does It Matter for Whom I Vote? (1996)

The buggy is pulling the horse
Latin proverb

Sociological research gives a clear idea about pre-election preferences ascribed to individual political parties, i.e. who will be the most important and powerful in the upcoming four years. As for me, I struggle every four years with a persistent indecisiveness as to whom to give my vote and whether to give it to anybody at all. The reason is that I am afraid my personal problems will not be resolved by any of the political parties as they are not interested in me at all. I am only of interest to them as a vote and as a tax payer, but this, I’d say, is all.

There was a time when I thought I would give my vote to the party that had the highest proportion of women in their list of candidates, because I naively presumed that the policies may be more humane due to the higher number of women participating. However, after I read the response of one of the few women engaged in our political life, to the question of whether she travels around Prague by car, I changed my mind. She said she did travel by car because, in her opinion, the

solution to cars in Prague belongs to exceptional environmental problems based much more on the general will to apply practical alternatives than on an individual's abstinence, adding in the same breath that she had difficulties to breathe in Prague. I saw that this was not the right way to be progress either. I started to suspect that political interest is mostly in power, privilege and financial security, all associated with positions of power. If the only thing they want to do is serve the people and society, as they claim to want, then why don't they work as volunteers, free of charge, in some civic association, or for basic subsistence money? Why, under a democratic regime which is in the hands of the people, do elected democratic leaders reside in palaces and castles? How can I ensure that democracy is the rule of the people and that it matters for whom I vote? What responsibility for public matters do the people who are elected, only for a short time, have when the economy of the country is in deficit to the amount of many billions? Are there any companies that could afford to run their businesses in the same way as the state does?

Czech society has not created a model of exemplary political representation, male or female, and snuffles that its democracy is too young, and that we do not have the necessary experience. I hear and read quite often these and similar excuses. But I have no fun watching adults, mostly men, whitewashing their foolishness, immorality, and stupidity with excuses of a young democracy and arguments to prove that this situation is all right. It is not. Not for me, at least. The ambitious swots seem to me like the one-eyed leading the blind, but what about those who can see with both eyes? Professedly, when they do not use their vote, the power will be seized by God-knows-who, but this is exactly what is not feared. The world today is not governed by those elected. Thanks to the Internet, we can no longer be deprived of freedom of speech and information by anybody is accessible. I calmly concede the freedom of the market and market crudity to the consumers. The situation is much worse concerning our right to breathe clean air, drink clean water and eat healthy food. In this, however, our elected representatives cannot help me much. Or am I mistaken?

Servant or lord? Upbringing, education...

With regards to threats identified under the topic "Who Governs the World", women noticed, besides others, a lack of consideration paid to other people and nature, ill-conceived impacts of one's own activities, hierarchical positions of male values and an aggravating environmental crisis. The feelings of some women are very close to the feelings of desperation or rather to the deliberation of the vainness of their activities and the clashing of limits. The level of political work could be increased only with a larger number of educated women with consistent views of their own.

As soon as elementary school, children should learn about the relationships between people, ethics, morals, tolerance and also respect to life, the living environment and nature—most women see education as one of the problems related to the orientation of human activity. Women mostly agree that any change is now in their hands. They may influence the world also by the manner in which they will bring up their sons and daughters.

The largest social investment should be done in the field of education. The external, usually negative, influence that education is subject to without any control, represents a problem and a threat.

Women's Declaration (1999)

Short governing does not protect people.

Staius

I was sitting at an international conference, listening to the contributions given by the event participants about the persistent organic pollution, DDT, dioxins, and other toxic substances in the environment which affect human health. I did not have time to prepare myself in advance, as I had been doing thousands of other things as every woman does so I felt guilty and improper to be at such an important and significant place where I was the only female representative of my country. Two other Czech colleagues, who had also come to the conference and were engaged in the field at a far more professional level than I, took their traveling allowance and disappeared after two days. I was already trained in the inherent rules of the Palace of Nations, the premises for the conference sessions, which language is to be spoken there, and that it is necessary firstly to thank the floor before taking it, but I was never given the floor. During the break, I talked with a ministerial official and discovered that there were actually two people at the Ministry of Environment who dealt with the topic being discussed as their full-time job, which greatly surprised me. I was in no doubt about my dilettantism, but it was beyond me that there would be professionals at the conference who made their living through it and nobody knows anything of them.

I was collecting ideas, breathing in the atmosphere, establishing new friendships in order not to be a layabout at the expense of the hosting Dutch organization “The European Women for a Common Future”. Delegates in the conference room were called out by the name of their republic, which had delegated them. A professional from the Czech Republic had just finished talking—he informed the floor about the situation in our country and commented on what had been previously read, and was followed by representatives from both England and Mali. A young Russian beauty from among the women present asked to address the

meeting and read the declaration that we had been working on during the previous days to appeal to the seated delegates to accept their liability during negotiations and decision-making. The chairman of the session played with his cuff links as the declaration was read, other delegates were yawning or wriggling in boredom. When she had finished, the chairman noted that it had been a good introduction to Article “D”. I stood up and went to congratulate and thank my Russian colleague for her reading performance. At the same time I advised her to ask to be able to speak again and read the same text once more until the delegates took her into account. The Russian’s eyes twinkled as she was cheered by the idea, however, the other women refused. It was clear to me that it would require an immense effort to push the idea through and the result that could be achieved by this would not even equal it. Another idea which crossed my mind was to get the women present to demonstratively bare their breasts from which their children had sucked pesticide-poisoned milk. My self-censorship and trained self-criticism cast the idea aside. The dry speeches given by the male delegates and negotiators bored me, especially as I was not expecting this exhausting week-long debate to bring about many positive results. I was wondering what would happen after our women’s declaration had been read. Even if it touches the hearts of government officials, even if it persuades politicians, what will be their chances against businesses that respect no limits as regards to its activities, manipulating public opinion through advertisements to achieve their targeted profits? What tools do politicians have at their disposal to implement in practice international treaties? From my life and my own practice I know about their (dis)abilities to put their poetic declamations into practice and organize their thoughts into hands-on and concrete acts, and so I do not have any illusions. I mentioned my doubts at a grandiose reception given for us by the local ambassador. I also confessed my doubts to our fellow Slovaks who complimented the Czech president whose words, they say, always strike home. I nodded and asked what happens after such a strike? I still vividly recall proclamations about truth and love winning over lies and hatred, but I also vividly remember the acts of lying and hatred in the closest vicinity of the author of this poetic mission statement. In my mind I was philosophizing why this was possible, and when I realized I was unable to find an answer, I went into the foyer and poured some black coffee into a white plastic cup at the environmental conference. As the others did.

Power, powerlessness, machinery, absurdity...

Powerlessness, the feeling of desperation, the hegemony of politicians and the impacts of their activities or absence of their activities, the feeling of being a “victim” in the system, e.g. having the form of plastic cups present everywhere, leaving us with no chance to make a choice whether we want to use

them or not, when we think of the fact that plastic substances do not decompose in nature and about where all this waste will be stored, is experienced by most of us without knowing any way out or, if we do have some idea, without knowing the manner in which to implement it. What is to be done about that? To drink water from disposable cups or carry our own cup with us? Every speculation is accompanied by another speculation; every idea has its buts. It is really difficult to start when most of us do not know exactly how and where. Every person is a part of bonds and relationships determining what we can and cannot do, was the voice raised by the women. The closest and most concrete change starts with me myself—it is me who determines my priorities, organizes my time, my life. It is solely me who can begin any change. The feeling of desperation and powerlessness was heard at the round tables, yet, there was also an expressed hope, a way out in the form of a clear expression of one's own will and power to achieve positive changes.

Looking Back at the WTO Meeting in Seattle (1999)

*All's well that ends well.
Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus*

“Seattle is a beautiful city and we do not want anybody here who might destroy it,” said an American citizen during a ceremonial reception given by an American–Japanese community to honor the first night of the film *Snow Falling on Cedar*. “Madam, how can you compare a few broken windows and scratches with the damage done to the beauty of nature, biodiversity and the ingenious cultural wealth of aboriginal people?” I replied and moved on to a gentleman who had asked me if I was ‘open’. I was curious as to why he was asking me that. The man in question was an American businessman proud of his country being the keeper of law and order in the world, indeed saving mankind from starving to death by its genetically modified soya beans and corn. I told him I came from a small country called the Czech Republic where there had never been any shortage of solicitous fathers, be it the Habsburg, German or Russian, and yet I had grown up and no longer needed a father–figure. There are more people like me, Indian women and local farmers who turn down the multinational concerns, as they would all prefer local diversity to global uniformity.

A peaceful meeting of hundreds of people was held at the First Methodist Church, where, in quite an ecumenical manner, the general atheistic, Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu public met together with music and dancing to say, in agreement, “No” to the WTO (World Trade Organization) meeting. From there, we set out on procession, to make a human chain from thousands of people. It was the

eve of the planned negotiations to be held by the economic mammoth. There was not a single reference to the peaceful human chain on American TV. Children did not go to school on Monday and Tuesday; I saw the music teacher from the local grammar school painting a banner on cardboard while traveling on a ferry carrying passengers from Bainbridge Island, where I was staying, to Seattle.

The streets of the city had been buzzing since seven o'clock in the morning. A seventy-year-old woman, in a turtle costume, handed me a leaflet the first sentence of which was that the endangered turtle also rejected the World Trade Organization because it had been pushing the American government since 1998 to accede to their rules for turtle poaching. The meeting of women for which I had come to attend took place in a church located diagonally to the center where the world traders were meeting, so I could watch the perfect, peaceful blockage of the object, the helpless delegates in their suits, who were unable to pass through the hermetic chain of human bodies, and after having paced around in confusion, they returned to their hotel rooms. I was also watching the police, who were in the minority, helplessly monitoring the chanting, dancing and protesting demonstrators. Shortly after noon, the police lost their patience and used the first dose of tear gas. The protesters scattered for a while, went to "our" church to wash themselves, and returned immediately back to the street. After a while, a procession of trade unionists, students and NGO representatives went out onto the streets where music was playing, slogans were chanted, and costumes of all types were seen; huge puppets, banners, chanting, creativity, contemplation, playfulness and wit. Later in the afternoon I saw the first broken shop window. In the evening, when I was on my way home, I heard the rhythmic chanting: "Hey, hey, ho, ho, WTO has to let go!", which sounded more and more menacing, the fragments of glass mounting.

The radio on the ferry I took back home announced that the mayor of the city had declared a state of emergency, implementing a curfew, and sent for the national guard and police from all the neighboring counties. I was staying in a house owned by the captain who had first begun the transfers between the island and the city and the landlady's son was a policeman who was on duty for the whole week, nineteen hours a day, without any food and drink. The next day I saw a policeman on the corner of the street addressing a young man who had climbed up a column to be able to see better, with the words, "Please, come down." When the man had climbed down from his lookout, the policeman thanked him. The negotiations of the WTO participants started, the president of the USA also arrived, the black color of the police uniforms and field uniforms of the national guard were dominating the streets and the TV was full of violence. The jail in the city center started to fill up, with protesters concentrated in front of it. American newspapers and the radio analyzed the situation, writing about what the World Trade Organization is, and a booklet full of alarming information was published overnight. Posters

showed tentacles choking the country, the local people started to ask what had happened to democracy. The market will solve everything claims a liberal economist in the Czech Republic more than ten years ago. However, he does not say how. He does not warn us about the danger that is impending, when money and power concentrate in the hands of the handful in power, who set the rules of the game, gripping the world more and more tightly with the tentacles of their so-called united global economy, where short-term profits are achieved at the expense of the long-term future.

The meeting of women that I had attended in Seattle was about the manipulation of mankind through genetically modified food, the impact of which on health and biological diversity is not the subject of public talks, about supporting local organic agriculture, and about how to avert the threat of this new manipulation of the world, this time done through man's stomach. The meeting concluded with a farewell party held by the organizers in a market place that had been cleared out by the police. The local grannies were singing protest songs they had composed, inspired by the World Trade Organization, and a procession of women holding candles in their hands were marching, despite the curfew and the declared state of emergency, carrying a banner 'Diverse Women For Diversity' and singing, "Peace, peace... we are all cousins, we have to learn how to live together, please, please..." in the direction of the YWCA hotel where most of the participants were staying.

The protesters in jail began a hunger strike the next day, the traders did not agree on anything, and fruit, vegetables and local crafts returned to the marketplace. The life in Seattle slowly returned to its beaten track enriched by a new understanding and I crossed the USA, Atlanta and Frankfurt to return home to Prague.

It was a beautiful, bright day; beneath me I saw mountains, huge plantations, the land from which its aboriginal inhabitants had been chased away by force. After my arrival, Prague, the mother of cities, seemed provincial to me, and despite the sunny weather, the people were passive, dismal, and fatalistic. Where was the promised miracle of a free market democracy which would solve everything?

Governance, the general public, business, manipulation...

One of the women participating in the round table focused on the topic "Who Governs the World", which dealt with international relations and professional, said that nowadays mutual trust among people had been decreasing as well as the trust in politicians and larger social units. No individual person is able to evaluate sufficiently all political activities (at the level of the Czech Republic and on the international level) and respond to them in a qualified manner, as they do not have access to the information they would need to do so. As she furthermore noted: we do not know the developments in the waging of wars or in disarmament. The information is strictly confidential. Who has the right

to information today? What is the standpoint that I, a common citizen without any access to power structures, can adopt then?

Thank God It Tastes Good and It Does Not Cost Much (2000)

*A lot of knowledge produces a lot of grief.
Old Testament*

Some time ago, the Parliament was discussing a bill about the handling of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and the produce from this. It was approved without problem as the deputies did not know anything about the subject. The Ministry of the Environment did organize a special seminar to educate them on it, but the said deputies did not attend, as they were otherwise engaged in other duties. At the beginning of the seminar, the European Union representative informed us of the legal regulations in force, in the areas of biotechnology and biological safety and their implementation in the legislation of the candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The employees of the Ministry of the Environment spoke of the ordeals related to the preparation of the bill, about determining its applicability and the related legal regulations, explaining the legislation process and its impact in practice. After the break, lectures were given on the following topics: “What are genetically modified organisms”, “Bioethical problems, health risks”, “Utilization in agriculture and medicine”, “The possibility to make use of genetically modified plants”. All the lecturers were speaking more or less for GMO, creating the impression that there was nothing to fear. At the same time, each of the men and women participating in the seminar knew well enough that there were hardly any questions or answers to which the professionals could agree on unequivocally. Did the program of lectures really include a whole range of opinions? I had the impression it was not a coincidence. I obtained the new, adapted version of the bill during the break, leaving its evaluation to the deputies who were, after all, being paid to do that.

Soon after, I was making an analysis of a draft bill for the senator, who is an acquaintance of mine, and came to the conclusion that the bill is in tow of a reality that has been changing faster than the legislators can apply. Unfortunately, strategic thinking and planning is not one of the greatest strengths on our political scene. The influence of genetically modified food has not been sufficiently explored and this only supports the power of the multinational corporations over local economy. The current position of human knowledge prevents us from recognizing the impact and repercussions on people’s health, the environment and the maintenance of any biodiversity. I assumed the politicians to have detailed forecasts about the impact of any exporting and importing on the economic situation

of local farmers; and that they could introduce resolutions, for example not to import mutants with the aim of protecting the local or organic agriculture. However, I am afraid that no act is able to prevent any sneaky manipulation or promotional activity which those, who have become rich through experimenting in the name of progress, are trained in perfectly. Finally, it is the customer who makes the decision, as one person with a university education pointed out, showing the true reality by saying, “I don’t mind if the pig talks, the main thing is it tastes good and it does not cost much.”

Science, business, policy, interests...

Scientific inventions are fascinating, and mankind knows more than at any other time before. They know a lot about the outer material world; the knowledge of the inner world, the soul of man, is however still drowning in darkness. Life expectancy has been prolonged, old people’s homes have begun to fill up, the issue related to euthanasia has been opened. Not everybody is longing for a long life. Quantity is controlling quality.

The current state of human knowledge probably knows the effects and impacts of GMO on the health of man and the living environment. Or it may not know it exactly, but anticipates it—one of the causes of trouble will probably be that people do not act bearing in mind the long-term utility and benefit. People think in the horizon of one generation, or at most two or three generations. We are not able to imagine what will happen in 100 or 200 years. And we maybe do not even care at all because, besides not being able to at least imagine this, we are not going to be here, and who knows if our children will be here either... The uncertain future deprives us of any perspective. Maybe it is one of the obstacles preventing the bill on genetically modified organisms from being passed, but also many other bills and measures. It is easier to imagine what is going to happen tomorrow—what we are changing now in a concrete manner will be enforced by legislative means in the horizon of a few years.

Men Against Violence (2000)

Violence is not the opposite of power because power arises from mass cooperation, while not many people are necessary for violence, efficient technology is enough.

H. Arendt

When I announced for the first time that female representatives of various nations, cultures and thought were going to meet in the Czech Republic, concurrently with

the meeting of world bankers, to give evidence on violence towards women, children and Nature, which is a situation obviously backed by the multinationals and powerful financial institutions, a journalist contacted me with the question of whether or not I thought that men with cigars in their mouths were raping innocents? I answered that it was not that simple. The meeting, which I had organized and undertook responsibility for, was about a more astute form of violence, indicating that western society has its own legitimate form of violence. Those who hold government positions create laws which cement the power to suit themselves and their pals. What they make legitimate is considered holy at a given historical time and place.

Development after the revolution confirmed this religion of consumerism. Money has risen to the top of society's priorities and to the forefront in public interest, and there is no coincidence that the representatives of this culture are men. Money making and spending has become a myth, and children are brain-washed with advertisements and mass media forcing them to buy, consume, take out loans, satisfy their immediate ideas and needs fast. Our value on this market is determined by what and how we consume. How we dress, what car we drive, what type of a mobile phone we own... The consumption-oriented culture and the requirement to develop new things all the time causes the pollution of our basic resources, i.e. air, water and soil, in all areas. It is, moreover, these basic resources that women come across regularly when they prepare food for their nearest and dearest. In every culture, women are responsible for the running of households, the upbringing and the clothing of children, and ensuring their basic needs. They have to do this even when men are waging wars and killing in the name of some holy truth which they want to push through or react to.

More surprising, *vis-à-vis* this truth, was a meeting with a man who had just arrived before the bankers to introduce the American movement of men against violence to women. He was riant, friendly and very polite. I asked him whether he would go on Czech TV so that others might see this man in a very different role other than the one which is presented to us on a daily basis. A model of good behavior, blessed by our sexologists. He answered that he would like to, but on the other hand, he would not like to diminish the work that has been and will be done here by others, namely women.

Violence, courtesy, sensitivity...

There may exist a lot of hopelessness, but there is the same amount of hope as well. It depends on the frame of reference. It is true that it was repeated during the round tables that men are those who drive the current based on technology, science and money. "The world is governed by financial capital owned mostly by white heterosexual men." There was however another

opinion expressed that the elite may include exceptionally strong personalities (men and women alike) and individuals with strong morals, who will not abuse their position of power; moving the world in a positive direction. Attention has to be focused on such individuals; they must be searched for and cooperated with. Unfortunately, power is abused very often and strong personalities may easily become manipulators. This applies also to women, who however do not have so many chances to get to power positions. More typical for men is the concentration of power in a narrow circle of people.

The Automobile Is the Present–Day God (2000)

Laziness is the mother of more philosophers than wisdom.
G. B. Shaw

The history of our nation has been accompanied by many symbols. We all still vividly remember the sickle, hammer and the lion with the red star over its head. The star has been replaced by a crown now, but, considering its importance, shouldn't it rather be included in the red book of endangered species than be used as the state symbol for the new millennium? If we are frank, the real symbol and cult of our days is the automobile. It is deified as a proper iconic object, selected with love, the time spent in it and with it exceeds the time that motorists spend with their children and close friends. The automobile has pushed people and children away from the streets, liquidated public space that used to be the common space of a community. The color variations of the sheet metal paint is everywhere as far as the eye can see. Children walk alongside cars on their way home from school, where they sit in classrooms, only to walk back past their parents' parked darlings to their own homes to sit most likely in front of a TV, video or PC, which has become more accessible to children these days than the countryside, trees and a children's playground surrounded by greenery. What about playing in the street? The last time was possibly in the Žižkov municipal district, when Jaroslav Seifert or Olga Havlová were kids, but today?

The sickle and hammer made Na Ticháčku² one of the noisiest and most buzzing places in Prague. Paradoxically, it is still called this today. It is located in front of Nuselský Bridge where two arterial roads join; one is taken by columns of cars going out of the city, and the other one by columns of cars coming in three streams to the city. Eyewitnesses even remember that there used to be a swimming pool at Na Ticháčku where locals would have a swim and sunbathe. The sickle and hammer, however, had little respect for either Ticháček nor the fact that the house

2 Na Ticháčku is a place name derived from the word root *tichý*—quiet.

at the tail of both the arterial roads is a school. Today, there is the first and second grade elementary school, a classroom for dyslectic children and a grammar school. Children go to and from school by means of an underground passage—the subway under the arterial road of Na Ticháčku.

Some time ago, I arranged a meeting at the local school with the EU ambassador's wife, Mrs. Perihan ter Haar. She enjoyed the school dinner, appreciated the aesthetics of the school's interior, and the playground. We wanted to exchange a few more words to each other in front of the school, but there was so much noise from Na Ticháčku that it was impossible. Later on, we arrived at a common plan of how to improve the dismal external surroundings of the school. We thought of trees being planted there. A hired expert passed along the street and stated, in a dry manner, that planting of trees was hardly worth considering because of the underground services. Many hours of searching, negotiating and thinking followed. After having reached an agreement with the authorities, we finally arrived at the idea to place wooden containers with decorative trees and flowers around the school and in this way we will gravely celebrate Earth Day. Children wrote invitation letters to the guests with the slogan: "Who will plant a tree will be given a treat". Besides the invitation letter, the necessary information and applications to the local authority office, the police, and the road administration was also distributed. We got a lot of advice, e.g. that it would be better to install the containers with trees at night or at the weekend. As they said, the money would not be enough to cover the cost of traffic signs. We had to ask the city for a subsidy. We ought to call this man from this police station, not that one. The traffic signs aren't deployed by this company, but that company. The biggest problem was that Earth Day fell on a Friday, which is also the day of the Automobile God and its master who must go out to get some fresh spring air in "Ticháček". I prayed that we would not to end up as we did two years before, when our children colleagues were having to repeatedly ask drivers not to park on D Day in the places where they wanted to hoe the trees, plant flowers and carry out basic maintenance. Despite repeated appeals and information boards, only three cars altogether acquiesced. The following year we did not leave anything up to chance. From winter we had been submitting applications for all the necessary permits. Despite this, the street was full of cars on D Day. Gods were parking by the No Stopping signs and their worshipers were rude to the organizers, the police, journalists and the children as they if they were being bothered.

Faith can move mountains, as an old Czech saying goes. It is certain that faith in speed, power, comfort, and the cult symbol of the Automobile God has moved Ticháček back to the old times. Quiet and tranquility have become precious commodities and one of the most endangered necessities in life.

Automobile, concrete, oil lobbies are in perfect control...

The women participating in the round tables did not express their concrete opinions with regards motoring. The reason may be they know how tiny is the possibility to do anything in this matter which would bring about visible results. One of the women, who lives in a city, noted that she is not so much afraid her child would be endangered by some disease as she is afraid that her kid might be run over by a car driven by an irresponsible driver.

We can see the results of this irresponsibility on a daily basis. A large number of people are hurt seriously in the streets, and even on pedestrian crossings; and the number has been growing. Big lorries are free to go through cities and highways for 24 hours a day. The freight haulage contributes significantly to the deaths not only of other drivers, but also cyclists. Human lives pay for technology development in the form of motoring. This is protected by money behind this field and the developing market of automobiles. A car has become a sweetheart.

Motoring endangers lives; and silence together with space has become a human need which is endangered.

The Right to Information 1999

*It is better to ask twice or three times than make a mistake once.
Latin saying*

Since the last year of the old century, the Right to Information Act has been in force in our republic. It is possible to ask, we are entitled to know. Whatever we consider important; and whatever those who are in power here would like to hush up for any reason. It is a huge advantage and places the power in the hands of the small, who are seemingly powerless. It is true that we need to know, or at least anticipate something, in order to know what to pursue. Furthermore, we also have to know how, in what manner and to whom we should ask. It is even possible to find out everything about which we eat and what is being prepared for us on the tables of our future. Perhaps genetically modified organisms will be marked; it is at least being considered in the bill. Maybe they will be cheap, the genetically forced and enlarged products, seductive to the eye as well as purse. It is, however, also possible to imagine the vision seen in *The Trifid's Day* and avoid it, paying more for organically grown vegetables and animals bred by our farmers in an environmentally friendly manner. Despite the Right to Information Act, we can hardly get to know what is the potential production and employment rate in the Czech agricultural sector and to what extent our self-sufficiency with regards to food may be endangered by research and its application in practice. Who is going

to inform us as to whether we do in fact live in a nation that is exclusively the nation of middlemen and resellers? Information leaked, for example, about legislators preparing large-scale tax reliefs for investors who plan investments which exceed ten million crowns. Does it mean that supermarkets builders are supported in the small Czech basin, while small Czech entrepreneurs will be only able to polish the handles of their doors for a regular monthly obol? Another question is how is the right to influence derived from the right to know, nevertheless...

At a conference held in Vienna about the plans of scientists into DNA research, financed by some multinational companies, I found myself provoked to misinform. During the reception, a representative of a significant multinational concern questioned me on how to introduce genetically modified food into the Czech market without any emotional reaction, and how to manipulate the Czech general public into liking the taste of chocolate made with genetic soya. I replied that the Czechs would be demonstrating on the streets on recognizing the manipulation. They would begin to defend themselves. I was consciously lying. I know from a friend, who comes regularly to visit our country from the West, that it is clear from first sight that we are a nation manipulated by advertisements. Even the untrained eye can soon see this in our clothes, our cars, what we buy, what we say, and what we believe... At the conference mentioned above, I asked to speak during the discussion, following a speech given by a representative of another multinational company, who was talking about the advantages of genetic modification, and about the saturation of mankind with food and other similar consumer-market factors. I expressed my concern about manipulation, about the fact that our nation, in the heart of Europe, has always found itself in the center of the great manipulators' protective interest, be it theoreticians of a superior race or social justice. With our servile respect to money and our limited ability to differentiate, due to an emphasis placed on informative and analytical education, will we not just become a wedge opening the doors of the European Union into the arena of genetically modified organisms? Why is such pressure exerted when the matter concerned is alleged to be good? Does not a good thing promote itself on its own?

When I was young I ordered my father out of my flat when he came unexpectedly to visit me with bags full of presents and a full wallet. I did not care about the presents or money; I would have welcomed such a visit but on condition that it had been announced before, as my freedom and personal free time were instinctively more important to me. I told him to announce his visit next time and let himself be invited instead of intruding into my private space all of a sudden. He did not talk to me for several years before he got the message. It is a similar case with the multinational companies in our country. Who invited them? Have they not

happened to just come along without being invited, counting on our young democratic experience with little sense of freedom, national space and time? The most aggressive ones have occupied historical buildings in city centers, lucrative spaces in the suburbs, and are now selling our children a puppet leg together with a hamburger making them long for a hand, head and body. One hamburger after another, and coca-cola that goes with it—healthy nutrition and freedom of choice, where have you gone? The right to information in a consumer society is a necessary thing. However, are the current Homo consumers, man dubbed a consumer, aware that the basis of knowledge lies especially in finding out who has been playing manipulative power games with you?

Manipulation, control, domination...

The subject of manipulation is apparent also in this case study. We do not really realize when we are manipulated as manipulation is a part of our lives. We live daily through it in common interpersonal relationships. Manipulators are people who generally know how to be successful with others. They know how to get under another person's skin, find the weak point and work on it. A manipulator is skilled in evoking guilty feelings, persuading us that it was wrong to think something about something (to have our own opinion) or to know something at all. Because it is the manipulator who is, after all, right. The principle of this manipulation is based on evoking guilty feelings in us for our opinions and actions that are in fact natural and to which we are entitled. Perhaps each of us can find such a person in our nearest environment.

At the level of policy and power structures, manipulation is artful and furtive. For example, it hides behind something pleasant and useful, something that has been advertised as good and of use to us. But the biggest manipulation is any intentional failure to provide information and any attempt to keep people in the dark. The ownership of information itself and the manner of its handling, the appropriation of what all people are entitled to, may become manipulation as well. And it is the same today as it was in the Middle Ages or at any other time. The right to information is one of the basic requirements of a democratic society. Do we really have at our disposal all the information that we need?

As was mentioned in one of the previous comments, the women participating in the discussions expressed their discontent due to a lack of this right with regards to important issues.

The Wall of Truth and Hatred (1999)

I have never considered any hatred caused by rightful acts to be hatred, but glory.
Cicero

The municipal council of one city, approved by an overwhelming majority of votes, to construct a wall in a street with the symbolic name ‘Matiční’ (Fellowship), the purpose of which was to separate the Roma people from the non-Roma inhabitants. The whole case got as far as Parliament. On the one hand, democracy, with its powers and liabilities granted to the people, on the other hand, international conventions about human rights. The wall was built only to be destroyed immediately afterwards, causing an international scandal. The problem was only seemingly complicated. The representative of human rights was against the construction of the wall and also against most of the people living in the neighborhood. Even the then president liked to talk about human rights. I often thought, when I heard him, that it is easy for him to theorize from a villa in a residential quarter, but what about trying to live in a block of flats with neighbors he had not chosen?

Unfortunately, truth and love lost to lies and hatred. Apparently, also because words and actions do not go hand in hand. I was watching this disproportion directly from the interior of the president’s office, shortly after the revolution. I saw the psychological barrier growing after the velvet revolution in the Castle, between the old structures and those which came to the Castle as new structures. The old ones had one staircase reserved for them, the new ones had another one at their disposal. The old civil servants greeted themselves with a taunting: “Hi, you old structure,” making bitter fun of truth and love. The psychological barriers and walls were growing fast, yet invisibly. The hungry wall that Charles IV built is obvious and straightforward. When we go against it with our head first, we know what is in store for us. But what about the psychological walls and fences surrounding us everywhere else? Those between parents, grandparents, children, neighbors, employees, and employers? Between politicians and voters, the right wing parties and left wing parties, the green and the other, men and women... Fences between gardens; even the Czech graves are small plots enclosed with a high or low kerb marking the territory of the corpse correspond to its property status when it was alive. A crossbar has even appeared in the parks where my children used to play. Today, a sign puts you off. No entry, private property, and a menacingly barking dog. Children are reserved a space in the form of a bituminous sidewalk behind a stonewall. Why and according to whose right? It is not my children who are affected by this any more, as they have already enjoyed the park, but other children who can see one hectare of greenery behind a wall, which gapes

with emptiness. Will they send dogs to chase them away when they go there to play hide-and-seek as they did a few meters away when my son and I were collecting dead nettles on the meadow, which became private property shortly afterwards?

Fences appear everywhere today. Around newly reconstructed parts of parks, around flowerbeds, they must also be around new trees. Their function is to protect against dogs whose excrements destroy the delicate greenery, against cigarette smokers who drop the fag ends of their drug everywhere turning the newly brought in rhytidome into an ashtray. They are protection against vandals or light-fingered thieves. The places without fences are endangered by the omnipresent car which could be parked there.

However, let's return to the Matiční street. It would probably be right to think about an act prohibiting any fences and ordering the demolition of the existing ones. This is the logic of natural right (*ius naturale*) according to Ulpianus (about 200 AD), according to which all people have the same right to land, air and each other. The Earth and all the people living on it are in fact "*communitas omnium possessio*", the common property of all. An old piece of news, isn't it? How will the *Homo sapiens* of the 21st century stand up to such value theories?

Barriers, powers, democracy...

The right to land for everyone is really an excellent idea when we imagine ourselves walking in the countryside or anywhere else, being able to take whichever path we choose, following our noses, as the saying goes, meeting people without any limits in a free space. Only in some areas of our republic, which have remained undiscovered by modern civilization, is this so.

The longing to govern space is as strong as the longing for freedom. Maybe we can well imagine the freedom of space for ourselves, but to imagine our space being free and open to others is much more difficult. The problem today lies rather in the possibility to buy for money that which is inestimable. Money today means the possibility to buy space and freedom. However, money is only a tool in people's hands—the tool of characteristic features of the human being, the longing to control and dominate.

The women participating in the round tables expressed their opinions on the topic of "Home" in Prague: they perceived the urban environment as depersonalized, anonymous, overtechnicalized, based on the principle of demarcation into what is mine and yours, and also dirty and polluted compared to the current cult of a clean and beautiful body. The right to space will be probably one of the most endangered in the future. When we are driving through the Czech countryside, it is impossible to overlook the

extending industrial and commercial zones. It seems that the freedom of space has no chance to survive under the values of the current society. Today, it is the freedom of money and market.

Please, Preserve our Mothers' Heritage for Us... (2000)

Woman, who gives birth to a child and breastfeeds it, knows clearly that her work is much more serious than any engagement of man, who may for example sit in the Provincial Diet of Russia, at a court, or the Senate.

L. N. Tolstoj

You can maybe remember the exhibition entitled “And After Us—Just a Flood?” that was then held at the National Agricultural Museum. The minister of environment opened the exhibition, with the minister of culture present and probably other stars from our political and public life. Crowds of people attended the opening; I decided to go and see two of the accompanying programs. Upon entering the presentation room, my attention was drawn by the panel presenting an overview of the important days connected to the environment and ecology. The following commemorative days were included: Consumers' Rights Day, Spring Day, Water Day, Meteorological Day, Birds' Day, Day of Health, Day of the Preservation of Monuments and Historical Buildings, Earth Day, Day of Laboratory Animals, Day of Bird Singing, Day Without Tobacco, Opening of Water Springs, Children' Day, Environmental Day, Day of Flowers, Day of Architecture, Day of Population, Day for Nuclear Weapons Prohibition, Day of Animals, Day of Greeting, Human Rights Day, Day of Biodiversity. I searched for Women's Day in vain; I was looking for Mother's Day in vain.

I was greeted by the minister, “Hi, how are you doing, suffragette?” I replied, “Badly. The list of commemorative days does not even include Women's Day and Mother's Day!” Who took away something as important as femininity and motherhood from ecology and why? Is the attitude in society so arrogant?

Recently, a friend of mine gave me the book *Women in the 19th Century*, which describes the efforts made by our grand-mothers to achieve an equal position for women within society, as well as in education, spirituality, the right to vote and to be voted for. How much energy had been spent before our grannies even achieved a touch of justice! After the long period of a totalitarian regime, we were finally able to talk about the proper meaning of Women's Day and discuss what the day commemorates for us and what is its correct meaning. However, instead it was removed from the calendar! I am merely asking whether everything in our society is in such harmony that feminine qualities, merit, service and sacrifices do not also need to be remembered? Meanwhile,

these commemorative days are back on the calendar and all that is left to be done is to fill the form with some content.

In a society, which considers sexuality and gender taboo subjects, it is very difficult to define aloud the female and male role. For every one of us, it is a bit shocking that we are a “woman” or a “man”. The words themselves are submerged in the grapevine of words overheard at school about “how it is done” and “what it is like”. Also and maybe because of that, it is very difficult for us women, to publicly declare our own female role. It is still only the role of the “mother”, “wife”, “wage-earner”; but what is really important—the woman as a thinking and feeling human being, the woman as somebody who gives life and love, is rarely discussed. Without solidarity among women, it is impossible to talk about the equality of chance at all. “Let’s help this noble idea by thinking about ourselves and also about other women as great human beings deserving respect, love, and understanding,” are the words spoken during one of the round tables of the Quo Vadis, Femina? Project.

Economically Self-Sufficient

*Even the best falcon can catch nothing when it is not allowed to soar.
Japanese proverb*

Upsilon Discriminated (1998)

*When you see things anywhere that are better, truer and more useful, why
would you not like to exchange them for those that are yours
but are not so valuable?
Comenius*

We were sitting on a patio on logs that we had rolled in with our own hands, talking and solving some work-related issues. My colleague was getting ready to write down the minutes of the meeting, when she realized that it is in fact difficult to use language that describes women-only situations. In Czech, it is grammatically correct to use iota in the past participle form of verbs with a subject in plural when it is not specified whether the subject is male or female (“seděli jsme na špalcích a povídali jsme si”), which only signifies that people or men are sitting on the logs. However, it was three women who were sitting there and, if we used the upsilon letter “y” in the past participle as required for female subjects in plural,

it would be necessary to explain and substantiate this. When we write “seděli jsme na špalcích a povídali jsme si” with the iota letter “i” in the past participle form of the verbs, we do not need any substantiation. It will be automatically assumed that men were sitting on the logs. At that moment I realized the linguistic discrimination affecting the female gender in grammar. It is the rule in Czech grammar that the past participle of the verb with an unexpressed subject is written with “i”, but why is it so? Why do we have to write “i” when there are only men, and when a woman appears among them, nothing happens with a written sentence (and probably in the described reality neither)? At the moment that women only are sitting on the logs and one man appears, the sentence will have to be written with “i” (“seděli na špalcích”) but the reality would probably look very different.

These linguistic puns remind me of an experience I had with some English lessons, which had been offered by an energetic American woman under one condition, that the course was only for women. The women present protested (“se ohrazovaly”— to be written with “y”) that they would not discriminate men, and wanted—in a motherly manner—their young male colleagues to be also given a chance to learn English. The teacher gave up and a young man called Péťa came to learn among the ten women. We had been studying for a while when the teacher notified us of the fact that Péťa had become the focus of attention, exclusively dominating all talk during the lesson. The ten adult women had been watching him with an expression of tender love in their eyes, laughing and admiring his jokes. The teacher, using samples from advertisement posters and slogans as her teaching materials, had, in a feminist manner, managed to find a sexist undertone everywhere. She taught the meaning of symbols and subliminal perception which advertising agencies use very successfully. It was hard work to find anything else except a car, yogurt or radio in the advertisements promoting a car, yogurt or radio, but after some time I learned to read this language. When I then saw a poster with a headless female body inviting people to get to know the beauties of the world, I knew what it was all about. The female body is an object for men, their toy; her head is useless in the male world, or even sometimes inconvenient. Only the female body is on demand; yet it has to be young, beautiful, flexible and slim. Like a piece of meat on a butcher’s counter! I felt offended by this. What were my life-long experience and wisdom good for? But I did not know what to do about it. However, when I saw that the advertisement had disappeared, which promoted “Kozlík”³ beer by means of a poster showing pushed-forward female breasts, I was very pleased. Perhaps, after all, the world is heading towards a brighter tomorrow? Regarding English, Péťa of the male gender stopped attending the

3 *Kozlík*—Billy-goat; also a hint at the Czech colloquial and rude expression (*kozy*) describing female breasts (*tits*).

English lessons after being rebuked by the English teacher for occupying the time of the other students—the ten women. They were not getting a chance to have the floor because of his elocution. The English lessons stopped soon after Péťa had left the course. The women slowly dropped away one by one, as they no longer enjoyed English taught only to them, without the sexy presence of the opposite gender. They preferred to make dinner for their dear husbands and stay in their family community than educate themselves in English in a single–sex group.

Sociological and physiological studies may show that women and men use different behavior patterns to achieve success in life (“to survive”), however these patterns may not be described as being of a higher or poorer “quality”. Despite the fact that the same level of IQ has been determined during tests for men and women alike, those who are governing our country are men, agreed the women participating in the Quo Vadis, Femina? project.

Women should concentrate on improving their knowledge about how society is run, and concentrate their energy on education (a life–long education, to be more specific) and they should be ready to accept an appeal to take over any social responsibility whenever they arise.

The discussion on “i” and “y” may be the cherry on the cake of our economic and intellectual emancipation, similarly as e.g. the utilization of the expression “miss” (see the legal modifications in neighboring Germany).

The Nameless at the President’s Office (1990–1992)

*In a free state there must be freedom of speech and freedom of thought.
Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus*

They called me at home offering me a job in the President’s personal secretariat office. It was two months after the Velvet Revolution and I was a housewife at that time. At the beginning of November, I stopped the cleaning job I had in the kindergarten school where I was sending my younger son so that he would get used to a collective of children, as required at the time of communism, and where I wanted to be together with him. Mr. President’s friends called me explaining they were overburdened with work and correspondence. Thousands of people are writing to the President, calling him, visiting him, and his closest cooperators could not manage to respond and communicate with all. I hesitated for a while. It was the end of January, the two days of the mid–year holiday were coming near that I had been originally planning to spend time with my sons in the country. Finally, I changed my plans because my curiosity and the temptation were too strong. I seated my children in a train headed towards their grannies and went to the riverbank where my future

boss, the personal secretary of Mr. President, and President's theatre agent welcomed me. They had found my name in the directory of trustworthy cooperators published under the totalitarian regime and invited me for a meeting, as they needed help with the office work immediately. I estimated my new job to last two months but finally I stayed there for two years. The room on the riverbank, that was my first workplace, was heaped with unopened letters making my heart of a clerk rejoice. After all, this is the place where I can realize myself and be useful! I began to work, having previously stated that one condition would be that I needed to be home by 1:00 p.m. to pick up my younger son from kindergarten. I did not want to leave my son solely at the mercy of collectivism for the sake of service, be it the service of the President himself. I started opening the letters, sorting them out and thinking about some better way to organize the work in the office. There was one mechanical writing machine, white envelopes and sheets of paper, probably some leftovers from communist organization, which had its seat on the first floor of the house on the riverbank. It was the 1st February and I did not have a single matter settled that should have been settled when an employment contract is concluded. I opened an ordinary notepad, ruled columns in it and wrote down their headings: ordinal number, date, content, executed, when, and how. All the letters that were delivered to the President's address after I had taken the job began to be processed and registered in perfect order. Out of my revolutionary enthusiasm, I was opening all the backlogs, carefully reading letters and postcards. Where people complained about injustice caused by the communist regime, I rendered the correspondence to the Office of the Public Prosecution and the institutions responsible for such disputable matters. Well, they were not very efficient in their work at first, as the shock caused by the revolution and fear of reprisals paralyzed the functioning of the state and its institutions and authorities. I was gaping, surprised, at adults like at the level of children in kindergarten, with their teacher (the leading role of the Communist Party) having been taken away from them all of a sudden, and the kids opening the garden gate (the state border) surrounding the kindergarten school (Czechoslovakia). The children (citizens) were running here and there, afraid to go out through the open gate, and so they were only desperately stretching their naked and powerless hands towards this new hope represented by a President who was declaring that love and truth would win over lies and hatred. Without any support? As I have already mentioned, the institutions to which I was sending the complaints were not functioning well, but I was not able to find a more suitable solution. My personal capacity was sufficient enough for common secretary's work. Fortunately, the vast majority of direct correspondence delivered to the office on the riverbank comprised of congratulations and thank-you letters. I stored these types of letters in archive boxes. From February, when I began my new job, I started to reply to all the letters, be them

only a mere expression of thanks. I assigned a serial number to all the letters under which they were archived, and typed replies to them on the writing machine. It was up to me what and how I should reply. I was keeping the records, drawing up replies, archiving, and the boss was undersigning his name under my literary works. It crossed my mind from time to time that it would be polite to write who had processed the replies, however I was ashamed to ask for fear of making myself visible and considered as ambitious. I calmed myself down with my own explanation that this would probably not be too aesthetic in presidential letters, and let things flow in their free patriarchal manner.

During the months that followed, the personal secretariat office was given its first computer as a gift that did not have Czech installed in it and so I had to add all wedges and acutes manually during the turbulent post-revolution times, but I immediately appreciated the advantage and merit of this technique in comparison with a common writing machine. Later on, when a handyman from outside the office created the Czech alphabet, my boss, the personal secretary of President, adjusted the program for the registering of delivered mail in the way which enabled the transfer of addresses, wherever it was necessary, by a mere click. Since then, I have never come across as good a program as this, having problems getting used to worse ones later on. From the hundreds of letters which I replied to, I still remember a despairing letter of a mother whose daughter had fallen into religious sectarianism. The reply was on headed letter paper with the President's own signature printed in green with a red heart, signed by the personal secretary, drawn up by me. I wrote that the President cannot do anything about that, advising her to leave it up to the course of time, perhaps her daughter would sober up, and if not, there are worse escapes from reality, e.g. through drugs. I also recall a letter written by an American boy who had fallen in love with a Czech girl. She had ignored him and so he had turned to the head of the Czechoslovak State with his request for help. I was drawing up a reply to this letter together with my English teacher and we were having good fun. I was learning English, he was learning Czech, and so we were wording presidential letters without any inhibitions. Out of the number of the letters this one got stuck in my memory. The reason being that it became the first source of my conflict with the President's personal secretary who came to the office one day, shouting out with flying colors what the American author of the amorous letter had written him in reply to his letter. I was taken aback, and stopped him in his stride, saying that it was me and the English teacher who had written the letter, so why does he say then that the author replied to him? At that time I began to realize I had been providing my know-how, ideas and organizational talent for the poor wage of a clerk, and doubts began to niggle me as to whether it was not a waste of my energy and creativity here in the anonymity of this office. No professional growth, no personal growth either; I was

sentenced to life-long stereotype secretarial routine. I decided to leave just when two years from the time I had begun had lapsed. The wave of post-revolution excitement was just beginning to die down at that time, and people gradually stopped writing; the eighty letters a day suddenly shrank to eight ones and I started to become bored. A wall full of shelves with boxes stored on them, containing small literary works. Original replies to original letters. Nobody will ever read from them that I was their author. The personal secretary was signed under my ideas. Later on, when I saw that everybody was protecting their copyright covering every stupid text I remembered the armies of anonymous women in history whose thoughts men had appropriated and utilized for profit. Later on, the personal secretary and my ex-boss published a collection of children's letters addressed to the President, which I had set aside and sorted out, otherwise they would have been lost in the thousands of other letters. I was not mentioned in the book, not to mention any thanks, and so I congratulated myself on leaving in time. I felt I was nobody for the President and his people, however it was important that truth and love wanted to win over lies and hatred. Maybe this triviality was one of many possible reasons causing the failure of this otherwise beautiful vision.

Women who commence employment after a long time on maternity leave are usually full of energy and enthusiasm. They are often looking forward to the every day of their new work, the life in a collective of people after the long days of relative isolation in a family. This phenomenon is depicted by the previous story. Nowadays, the Copyright Act is probably not breached so often as it used to be in the story. Nevertheless, there are of course many people among us who have no scruples to "adorn themselves with borrowed plumes". In no case should we make their "work" (the stealing of thoughts) easier; on the contrary, we should defend our rights in an informed—and brave—manner.

Assistant to a Deputy (1993)

The house is not to respect the landlord, but the landlord is to respect the house.
Cicero

At just the right time, I received a call from a friend of mine who offered me the position of an assistant. He was working at the biggest post-communist insurance institution as a deputy to the general manager, which was a high and important position. He promised me a salary which was twice as high as the one I had at the personal secretariat office of Mr. President, some beneficial staff shares, etc. And so, after hesitating and being wheedled to, I left the presidential "castle"

for the insurance “palace”. It was a huge institution, with two deputies working under the general manager and also ten directors of various departments with tens of assistants and secretaries circulating around them. Bring, pass, copy—this was the role they were playing and I started to play it with them. My new boss spoke three languages, he was hard working and did everything on his own, despite the fact that, besides me, there was a skilled secretary and a department comprising of about one hundred people at his disposal in the secretariat. There were more than enough people to do work commanded by the director. The main task of the boss, as of all bosses generally, was to sensitively organize and manage the work of his subordinate workers. However, how can a chaotic person who is not able to make order in his own head, not least on his working table, manage other people? There was an incredible mess in his office; it was heaped and filled up with sheets of paper everywhere. The first thing I started to do was the structuring and systematic sorting of documents, the cleaning. However, the effect was not significant. As soon as the boss returned from some business trip and walked through the office, everything was as it used to be before. After one month after beginning the job, I found out that the salary I had been promised had not been handled yet, that the new boss had not found time to tell me clearly what he expected from me, why he wanted to work just with me. I started to require some regime, a system of work; I proposed regular working meetings or some other way of communication, which would be as regular as possible. Not only with me, but especially with other people who did not have any idea about what was going on in the institution from which they were taking home their regular monthly salary. I was not successful with my proposal to introduce some system. Instead, I was ordered to do my boss’s personal family errands, concerning funerals, shopping, and children. Another three months lapsed without him telling me what he needed from me.

In the relatively free working regime I have revealed the (non-)functioning of the colossal institution, an employee of which I had become. It seemed to me that the ten directors were having regular arguments during their meetings where secretaries serve them with cups of coffee and take minutes of the meetings. However, what was going on during the meetings remained a big secret and enigma for the army of clerks around. Under the totalitarian regime, I was employed as a cleaner and I stayed at home as a housewife to enjoy my relative freedom. In the free state, I paradoxically appeared in an institution with a totalitarian management. The horizontal communication here was not interconnected vertically, the communication flows were not functional and nobody was interested in how long such a style of communication could survive. Towards the end of the three months probationary period, I decided to visit my boss in his cottage in the country, and during our journey by a car I shared with him my observations about the

institution that was employing both of us, providing him with ideas and proposals how to improve the running of the institution. One of my innovative proposals was that he has a secretary to carry out all the "bring, pass, copy" work, and so he does not have to sit in the secretariat office. I offered to function as a communication mediator among the individual departments, which the boss was managing with his chaotic mind; I offered to organize regular meetings, ensure regular flow of information about what was going on in the company and whichever results concerned us all.

The boss understood knew exactly what I was talking about, but his decision was a clear "no". Not in this way. An expert analysis of the situation would have to be carried out. And so they invited an expert from abroad who wrote down on paper for one hundred and ninety thousand crowns of the then currency, what I had recommended free of charge half a year before. He advised that the communication flows must be open horizontally as well as vertically, the organization must be flexible in its decision making in all directions. It is obvious that nothing from the drawn up study was used. The boys in the management of the institution continued having their meetings, which were not even understood by them and so there was nothing to pass on. Or they had understood very well that information means power and control and they did not want to give it up voluntarily. Perhaps in the interest of the company? The beginning of the 1990s was the time of gold-miners and the rule that whatever are at home counts, started to be truer than ever before. I understood that the boss was lacking courage to do something in his department different from those in other departments. In a free country I had arrived in an organization with totalitarian behavior, something which I had been trying to avoid as much as possible under the communist regime.

My relationship with my boss was getting near to a conflict. I was in the organization for ninth months when I decided to end my employment, which had reached the symbolic length of a pregnancy. I informed my decision to an office that had been tidied up. However, it was not my work. The general manager could not bear the mess either and so he had issued an internal directive that there would be no mess on tables and floors. And so the deputy was tidying up his office pursuant to a written order from the director. Security cameras had just been installed in the offices of directors, which the deputy was watching anxiously all day, being afraid of being watched just at the moment when I was telling him my last good-bye. I left the institution and as I was told later on he followed me in a short time. This job accelerated my decision that it is much better to be my own little boss than a big slave. I did not want to torture myself any more in a position subjected to male limitations and vanity.

That knowledgeability means power; was known by those who were managing the above described institution. Therefore, the order and vertical and

horizontal flows of information recommended by common sense as well as scientific analysis were not important. Many companies are managed in a similar autocratic manner. It is natural that the woman in the previous story took the issues related to the company management to heart in a very personal manner, with the engagement that is characteristic of her. In a situation when we have not enough capacities to change the current state it is definitely better to “watch it from a distance”—or to leave.

Not Only Love Will Find the Way (1999)

*It is impossible to see ourselves, only the image of ourselves
in something that is outside us.
Shakespeare*

Some time ago, four clever women were invited to participate in a panel discussion about ecofeminism organized as a part of the Environmental Day in Olomouc. A young man of famous status went there together with them. His role was to provide his image as an attraction for the female audience, the main target group of such events. Women would not go to see something listed to other women, but who could resist seeing a famous man? A very good marketing and psychological trick. At the time announced as the beginning of the event, the audience was seated, well ordered, in their chairs, and so were the speakers behind the panel. The famous man, despite being the youngest of all, was long in coming. Finally he arrived as the last and most significant guest. During the discussion, the term's ecofeminism and feminism were explained; the panelists present were clarifying what these terms mean to them. The moderator asked short, sharp questions about harassment— what, when, where, how, why and under what weather conditions? A young man from the plenum reacted by recalling an experience of his which finally made him realize that women are equal beings. He had met a rich woman, a foreigner, who had her own laptop and a mountain bike. Later on, he emerged to be a friend of the famous man sitting with us behind the panel, who was really very attractive. When the discussion was over, we went to have dinner together. I was sitting cornerways opposite him and we, from time to time, smiled at each other with appreciation. I got the impression that we had a mutual affection and left for home the next day with his business card in my pocket and optimistic hopes for the future. Chance or fortune would have it that I met him at a tram stop in the early afternoon a few days later. His eyes were sleepy as if he had just got up. I shared with him information about some follow-up event and he implored me to allow him to come. I nodded in joy. A few minutes later I began to think about what I could, for heaven's sake, do with him there. I was only

allowed to share my room with another woman; and to think up clever evasions to find out how, when and where to meet him...?

The follow-up meeting was attended only by women, the discussion was very wordy and it was kept up in many foreign languages, which required a lot of concentration and fitness of the body as well. To sit on a chair for so many hours, listening to speeches, which would impact reality only after several generations, was a big sacrifice for me personally, not to mention getting somebody else into this situation. And a man to top it all; he would show up like a white raven there.

However, on my return, I called him and he invited me to visit him at his home. He lived alone in a large flat, which was furnished beautifully, and with taste, tidy and well-cleaned. A tiny little room by the kitchen, which was decorated in oriental style and conceived as a meditative space, attracted my attention. We talked about yoga, Buddhism, the East and its wisdom for a while. After that he confessed that he was on a spiritual path. He had left behind the profane glory and went on search for himself. I somehow hesitated to believe in what he said because every road leads somewhere and is not its purpose unto itself. What is the goal of his path? He himself? When my new acquaintance gave me his book that he had written about himself and where he depicted himself as a great seducer, my arousal and interest began to grow. I did not find him revolting because of his sexual behavior or rough and detailed descriptions of how he had been seducing women during his sinful life, on the contrary, everything indicated that I seemed to have been seized by a motherly forgiveness and understanding for the sins of his youth. I started to write and sometimes call him, however he was busy with his spiritual path, and so, after several repeated visits to his flat, I let my motherly instincts have some time off. Once in the evening, we were on the phone and the famous man invited me to get in a car and come to have a cup of tea with him. I am to blame for missing this historical opportunity. I do not have a car and I felt more inclined to wash my hair and be alone at that moment. Later on, he turned to me with a request to have his new literary work put through a critical analysis. I was pleased and flattered at the same time. I spent the whole weekend on his literary work, sometimes falling asleep. Nevertheless, when I had finished reading, I wrote detailed comments on my PC. My notes covered five pages, which I printed out, put to an envelope with a first-class stamp, and posted it immediately so as to not cause any delay. When I called the master of the pen to ask him what he thought of my notes, he was busy. He was either rushing to a copy center, publisher, or a graphics artist; he was fully engaged in giving birth to his literary baby.

After some time, I received an invitation letter to participate in the baptism of the writer's new book. It was held in the city center and guests attended it in the masses. The accompanying cultural program of musicians, during the author's reading, was given in a grandiose manner. Well, I was a bit surprised that only men

presented themselves on the stage, but why not? Among the people in the audience I met an old acquaintance from my youth with his girl friend, and when they started to play rock and roll at the end of the cultural evening, we began to dance. We were really good at it, roistering as in the time of our youth. Young people stood around, watching our brisk dancing with pleasure. When I had regained my wind, I caught a glimpse of the writer who had appeared on the dancing floor. I watched him dance for a while. He was dancing with a beautiful girl, whom he left standing in the middle of the dancing floor after a while, and left. The beauty moved away to lean against a wall and waited for him to come back. He did come back, however, with a new girl, not paying any attention to the cast-off beauty. At that moment I decided to act. I got up during a break to ask him for a dance. Within a short time, I realized that he did not know at all how to move and react when dancing in a pair. He was dancing with himself, twisting his body exhibitionistically, and caring for nothing or nobody around him. I tried to get in tune with him for a while, but soon lost interest as the effort was without any effect at all, and so I turned my back on him, joining other women who were moving in a circle to the rhythm of the music.

I saw he was on a path, at the end of which, he would be standing alone. Nothing more, nothing less. After the dance, I went to the corridor to browse through the baptism book. It contained an epilogue, which very much resembled my comments; the short stories were arranged in the sequence I had recommended, and even the pictures had been added in accordance with my recommendation. By the end of the night, I had had a perfect dance several times with the old acquaintance of mine and then left to catch the last underground connection. At home, forgotten in my bag, was the carnation I had originally wanted to give to the writer, with a broken stalk. I sat at the table and wrote a card of thanks for being invited to the baptism of the book, indicating delicately that I would like to know if he had used my critical notes on the manuscript at all. I did not receive an answer. However, one evening, I tuned into a radio station and overheard a well-known voice reading one episode of the stories from the book that I knew, and soon after I glimpsed it in the window of a library around the corner. In my mind, I remembered our first meeting and the question I had asked myself then, “*Quo Vadis, Domine?*”

Egocentrism of ‘successful individuals’ is prevailing in our society. It could be deservedly called a sociological phenomenon. These people use neither the words thank you nor please. They consider the lightness of their life as commonplace. The self-centeredness of scientists, absolutely lacking any gratitude, humility and awareness of the mutual interconnectedness of the whole society, was substantiated by the experiences of one of the participants in the round tables of the *Quo Vadis, Femina?* project. It is little wonder that

a similar approach towards them and society is presented also by politicians and people in the highest spheres of the society. Each of those who have achieved the top levels of their power, knowledge and performance should repeat to themselves every single day: “We have been born to govern this country in the best way possible, and to hand it over to our descendents in the very best condition possible.”

Longing for a Touch (1999)

*Rare pleasures have better taste.
Juvenalist*

He sat down next to me in the large meeting room of a conference hall where a complicated issue related to restrictions on pesticide utilization was being solved. He was approximately my age, had a headset on his ears switched on number one, papers and instructions in English laid down on the table in front of him. He was writing his notes with a pencil and was looking very concentrated. His shoes were handmade, cleaned perfectly. He was stroking the armrest of his chair and I suddenly felt like touching and caressing him. What would he be likely to say if I did so? How would the people sitting around us see it? Serious and extensive male talks had been delivered from the pulpit, exhibitionists were asking for the floor to finally inform the plenum that they had not had time to prepare for the meeting. Somebody had just finished speaking about something I did not understand at all, in poor English and for an extremely long time. I was just about to raise my hand in a provocative manner to thank the floor and, with a serious expression, ask the chairman if I could go to the toilet, when my thoughts were interrupted by the departure of the man whom I had wanted to caress a moment before. Somebody had called him away. In my mind I said a fond farewell and continued looking around. The vacant seat next to me was taken by a beautiful, dusky woman. I had known about her for some time, knowing that before she had been living in Italy, was born in the Philippines and had lived in New York for many years. A cosmopolitan crossing of the world. We made friends while protesting together against the manner in which the meeting of the female working group had been managed. We were taken by surprise that women were only given time as late as the last quarter of the two-day conference, and when they wanted to meet together, the only time available for them was at half past seven in the morning or after eight at night. Just as it is back home, I thought to myself. I can do whatever I want after I have cooked, cleaned the flat and made beds. Yes, I can even caress somebody.

This story is a loose continuation of the previous one. Scientific conferences are no exception to the fact that men govern the world. In our country, the number of women with secondary education is higher than the number of men having the same level of schooling. The number of men with university education is only slightly higher than the number of similarly educated women. This is quite a good result of the emancipation of women as only about one hundred years has passed since the time when women could start at least to think about going to university. Despite this, women should accelerate their efforts because—according to the available data—the number of female postgraduate students is lower than that of male students by tens of percent. There are very few female university teachers; women are prevented from this demanding career not only by the competition on the side of their male colleagues, but also by their maternal duties. These are still carried out more by women than by men.

However, there remains a question to be answered: “Is there any meaning in such a career pursuit?” The figures from Germany are alarming—about one half of female scientists there do not have children. Could this approach to life be called a destruction of genetic potential? Similar problems await men who decide to work in top scientific positions. Responsibilities towards their family hinder their career which is much more difficult than the career of their childless colleagues. Why not slacken the pace in this “competitive fight” quoted so often these days? Why not enable talented people to live a dignified life in all areas, i.e. not only the professional one, but also the one lived in the middle of a family circle?

Work as a Drug and Nobody Is to Be Blamed (2000)

*Let's pray for a healthy mind staying in a healthy body.
Juvenalis*

Some time ago I was walking through an orchard behind our housing estate and caught sight of three men laying concrete panels on a lawn. I asked them why they were doing that, and for what would it be any good. They replied that they did not know, but that they had been ordered to do so. Their answer provoked me to ask question No. 2—if they had asked themselves why they were doing what they were doing.

On the bank holiday of 28th October, two foreigners were digging a trench for a telephone cable, while chopping in two pieces the roots of the trees the planting of which I had organized here some time before. My question was why they were destroying the work of other people, why they did not lead the cable under the kerb, the road, or the other pavement where no living plants were growing. “Boss,

boss, evening..." I received as an answer in a foreign language. It is not so long ago that a network of supermarkets changed the returnable glass bottles for plastic ones in their distribution of mineral water. The head of the local supermarket explained to me that he was not to be blamed for that, that he had not agreed with the change, he himself did not buy water in pet bottles, and asked me to call in his superior manager and address my claims to him. So I did call in the superior manager, expressed my concerns and was informed that he could do nothing either because... The fairy tale about the hen and cock was in full swing. In the fairy tale, the goal of the hen's efforts was to save the cock's life. What is the goal of the efforts developed by current men and women? What is the benefit, meaning and goal of the current workaholics, and what is the role played by women and mothers in this circular flow? Where are the good landlords and landladies if we take into account that the state budget deficit achieved the level of several billion crowns at the beginning of the new millennium?

At this time, a conference was held by the German Embassy on the topic "Equal Chances for Women in Professions?" A sociologist acquainted us with the data implying that the sensitivity of women regarding equality in the professional life was very poor in Czech lands. The research resulted with the fact that men felt privileged in comparison with women. The Czech society is characterized by a strong mutual solidarity and support among men that is pushed forward especially in employee–employer relationships and in the policy sector. On the contrary, women within the employment system refuse the support of other women, sometimes even boycotting it, unwilling to even talk about it. There used to be a travel guide in a bookstore, which sold books in foreign languages, which contained information presenting us as a country dominated by men, where women are friendly, attractive and have an average intelligence, while men are experts on absolutely everything. Perhaps it is here where an answer to the question is to be found as to why advertisements search for men in managerial positions and women for the positions of secretaries. Even in their positions as secretaries, these modern–day slaves have been trying to assert themselves through their jobs, and to find their independence and autonomy. This could be expressed in the form of economic self–sufficiency gained by means of their jobs despite the fact that people with a university education increasingly prefer a male boss with a salary exceeding many times the salary of his secretary. The social paradigm is made stronger by the fact that every mother with average intelligence who has children is a director of a small institution called the household, where she deals with family accounting and economy, organizes work distribution and liabilities, and cooperates with a plethora of people (husband, children, schools, shops). In her everyday life, she must use her feminine feelings, intuition, awareness and modesty to manage the household, often with minimum resources, and to naturally see the

whole forest, not only specializing exclusively in the individual trees within. She must master the skills she needs for managerial work, which is hardly true for any of the famous ex-directors of Poldi Kladno, Chemapol, Škoda, ČKD, Česká spořitelna or Komerční bank. These men have collected thousands of crowns as remuneration for their non-mastery, and left with the silent assistance of their anonymous secretaries, accountants and other obedient executors of male power.

Years ago, I learned from a Buddhist thinker that a human being should be primarily of use. The goal should not be the maximum amount of money brought home every month, but socially satisfactory results from the efforts, which may produce finances as remuneration to the necessary amount. I met a British University professor at his school with his wife, a nurse, who had left their professions to become fully engaged in the development of exchange services. Their principle was based on a group of people who had agreed to exchange various skills, services, or products, as the case may be, beginning with babysitting, cat feeding, plumbing services, car repairing, and ending with cooking, baking or foreign language teaching. On the one hand, this system makes the agreement of demand and supply easier, and on the other hand, it also allows for the pay back being any of the provided services by counter services. People need neither to feel as debtors nor to be socially frustrated.

The question of equal opportunities evokes the question of whether or not it is not a mutual chase between the male and female gender. Men are running away from their families to work to earn money for their car, then they drive their car to get to work and so they pollute the environment, take up space and throw the society into a vicious circle of problems which they have to solve after, be it underground garages in the center of a historical city or poor strategic planning on a national level, doing all these things until they drop dead due to a heart attack or brain stroke. Only then do they stop the troubles. Nevertheless, this life-style is still more adventurous, simple and entertaining than conversations with a wife about whom, when, where, what and how, at home with the children, cooking and cleaning. Women imitate men in this chase because they have also realized that to be dressed up and pretty-pretty outside their homes and to make coffee for a stranger is more pleasant than to spend hours and days of her life unvalued, with crying kids and an unappreciative partner.

In this disharmonic Czech society with a fractional percentage of women in managerial positions, existed a paradoxical situation when a woman was the general manager of the association of the armaments industry. It is true that no woman, be she as enlightened as may be, would turn the multinational chain of fast food outlets into civilized cafes serving healthy food, as it is also true that no female management would turn a multinational company into a local institution engaged in sustainable organic farming. A director of a multinational supermarket would hardly ever enforce the distribution of national products with local musts

in returnable bottles instead of tetra pack juices. Homo sapiens of the 20th century who do not think about the reasons and effects of his or her activities are surprised, in the course of time, that the result of his or her work, or any other work, were the gas chambers, fascist concentration camps or Stalinist gulags. The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is accompanied by an environmental crisis, global warming globalized economy and concentrated power in the hands of multinational monopolies. It brings along with it new questions that need to be pondered, despite the fact that the rails have already been laid down and the trains are dashing along them at dizzying speeds. Inside these wagons a dispute is warring about who will be the engine driver and for how much and when, after all, will a woman hold this position. Can a woman change the direction of the route without causing the train to derail? Why is she trying to catch up with men, to achieve an equal position at work under these conditions when work has the character of a drug addiction to top it all? Why are we all trying to escape from our common and communal responsibility? Why are we helping to cut the branch which we are all sitting on together with our children and other living creatures? Is it an advantage of the present time that it brings along with it a challenge to think about the necessity of new rails, and whether rails are indeed more important than joy and happiness in life. If we happen to come to the conclusion that no, what substitute can we offer for the drug called “work—the mother of progress”?

Escaping from social responsibility is a characteristic feature of this time in which we can, in its emphasized form, see in our country. Long years of a lack of freedom, the absence of our own aristocracy, emigration of exceptional individuals or mass emigration of the best during different periods of time, are the sad characteristics of our homeland. The result of such historical development is passivity, xenophobia, low self-confidence, and the environment hammering down gifted individuals and impaired possibility to change exceptional ideas to act. We all can act against this lack of freedom every day, agreed the participants in the round tables.

The Priest Who Turned Out to Be a Lover (1998)

Friendship can exist only among good people.
Cicero

I received an invitation from an important international organization to participate in a conference in Vienna. The leading world scientists were to be presenting their

skills, knowledge and research results here in front of the business sector representatives and journalists. It was few days before Christmas. I did not feel like traveling at all, having thousands of other problems and duties pending and so I was trying hard to find an English-speaking substitute for me, but both my friends who first promised to go revoked their promise at the last moment. The dilemma of whether to go or not was finally resolved by the organizer's offer to cover all the costs and the fact that Vienna was within a stone's throw meant that I would be back in three days. I got on the train followed by a young man shuffling right behind me who gave me an elephant made of plastic and a card explaining that he was a deaf-mute and kindly asked for fifty crowns as a donation to support him. Without any hesitation or doubting whether or not it was a hoax, I pulled out the money, returned the card, and fixed the elephant to my key ring as the train pulled away. I was broody, trying to remember what I had promised to do and had not yet done, and so I started to scribble on some cards I carry with me in order to settle all arrears. In a while I had finished my notes, had calmed down and began to concentrate on the journey. Two gentlemen got in the compartment at Břeclav; one of them wore a dog collar and the other had the beard of an old Jew, with a lot of luggage and a wife looking up at him as if to a holy picture. Despite the carriage and compartment being empty, the catholic priest sat right next to me and began to talk to me. I did not feel like talking to anybody as my marriage had been going through yet another crisis, and I was dreaming of the ideal partner. However, the priest was witty and full of cheer, and so I left my preoccupied mind and heartache and began to react to insistent questioning. I told him where I was going and why and he told me, in return, that he spoke five languages and that the meaning of his name, translated into Czech, was lover.

We got off the train together with an elderly married couple who had begun a conversation with us on the platform. The man pulled out some leaflets about the end of the world and the coming of the Kingdom of God and started to promote the mission of the Grail. It was cold, and I was beginning to get bored and wanted to go to the hotel. My body was desperate for a walk, as it needed a stretch after the long train journey. I also wanted to spare some money for the city transport. Lover promised to show me the way and carried my luggage for me. He escorted me to the hotel where we parted. The same evening they called me from reception to say that I had a visitor there. My new acquaintance was waiting for me with a season ticket for the local public transport that he imposed on me with the explanation that I should not go anywhere by foot as it was not safe to walk alone in the city. He had also brought me a book about healthy life styles written by the medieval mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, translated into Czech. When he left, I started to browse through the book. It contained medieval recommendations about the relationship between man and nature and the influence of the environment on man, about

nutrition and a selection of suitable and healthy food. This gripping book was complemented with information from modern science about the relationship between individual types of food and various pains. It included information about the soul and its influence on the body; it was apparent at first sight that it was a wise book, and much relevant to current times.

In the morning, Lover was waiting again for me at the reception to accompany me to the conference building, promising to get in touch in the evening. I was shocked: I had never been endowed with so much attention before, not even from the people closest to me! I registered at the conference and sat down in an upholstered seat that was attuned to the buttocks of big shots of all forms and sizes possible. I browsed through the agenda, eagerly awaiting the upcoming events. A discoverer of an enzyme and Nobel Prize Winner presented his findings; scientists were taking turns with other scientists, an authority on another authority. I learnt about genetically modified organisms, the transplanting of organs from animal to man and the other way round, about the wonders that scientists are capable of these days. They will feed the world, eliminate pests, or even dispose of any waste produced.

I thought of Hildegard and of the world being so developed that it perhaps does not matter at all what else *Homo sapiens* will do with it. They have already eliminated pests to the extent that we may be found one day searching the sky in vain for a single singing bird, as birds will have nothing to feed on. Mankind is multiplying, senior homes are overcrowded, and the natural world has been devastated—what is there left to come up with?

The lectures given by the scientists and representatives of multinational companies, that targeted the journalists and the general public, were enlivened by slides in color shown by means of a device controlled by a computer; the speeches were cocksure, pioneering and aggressive. The presentation given by the opposition arose just the opposite impression. Its representative was talking as if that there was enough food to feed today's obese mankind, and it was not necessary to grow one species in a monstrous way in order to push out all the other ones, thus making nations dependant on several big multinational companies. Unfortunately, the speaker only gave her presentation orally, without any slide shows, handouts to be taken home and studied during some quiet moments.

Lover came in the evening and invited me for dinner during which we agreed on me staying for one more day, which we would spend together. A discussion had been held on the last day of the conference in which I addressed the question of whether *Homo sapiens* are also able to anticipate the consequences of these discoveries, of whether there have already not been enough fads and mistakes made up to this present day. Is it not the greatest manipulation of mankind today that people are not controlled through ideologies, but by access to healthy food, clean

water and nature? A representative of a multinational company replied that he had not understood, which could of course be true, but most likely not. He demagogically philosophized that things are not always black or white... I left the meeting room disgusted and got my teeth into Hildegard. Lover called me from the reception as we had agreed. I told him right off on the telephone that I would not stay in his flat overnight and that I wanted to return to the hotel immediately after dinner. It was obvious that I had hurt him. He could not understand how I could prefer an estranged hotel room to his flat. He was struggling to reconcile my explanation that I liked my comfort and privacy, sensing distrust in my behavior. However, after I had seen his flat, I was glad I had not accepted his invitation. The flat was full of the mess typical of bachelors; the room was awash with things. He offered me a cup of ginger tea which he put down in a space made only by pushing aside various junk on top of the table—about one square decimeter or so of space. Although I found that somewhat distasteful, I was still unable to understand Lover's unselfishness. Why was he behaving in this way? What could he want from me?

This is the care I usually provide for others, my family, friends, colleagues at work, but to be looked after in such a selfless manner myself? He accompanied me back to the hotel before midnight, about a good full three-quarter of an hour away from where he lived to call me early in the morning once more from reception. He took me for a walk around a city covered with snow and invited me for lunch. We went to the botanical gardens together and finally he saw me to the railway station. He had bought me a seat reservation and I left for home with a bunch of roses, the book by Hildegard, and a grill that I had incidentally mentioned that I had to buy on my return. Then he started to flood me with letters and postcards with roses. After some time, he came to visit me in our flat with a huge bunch of roses. He visited me at home several more times, once with a lacerating pain in his heart. I went with him to the doctors and she discovered that he had just had a heart attack. Lover—the priest—refused to go to hospital because he had come to consecrate a park. Saying that he was in God's hand, he continued as planned. Since then our contact has gradually become less frequent. It has now been two years since I heard from him. I am left with the memory of a good man who still exists.

The contrast of this good personal example (the priest called Lover) and the cool estrangement of the thinking of the people who control industry and research sectors (genetic research in this case) penetrates the previous paragraphs. Industrial giants striving to achieve the only thing—as high profit as possible—abuse would-be philanthropic visions (the saturation of the mankind).

At the time when Gandhi was promoting the meaningfulness of handicraft for the soul and body of every man, criticizing the mass influx of industry

in India, most of those who were in power at this time considered his ideas to be the ravings of an eccentric celebrity. In the light of today's knowledge about the remaining level of supplies of key energy resources and raw mineral materials (this information was still available a few years ago) the genius of Gandhi's ideas, which have been forgotten since his time, is now emerging. In several hundred years, or only several decades, in many parts of the world, people will start returning to handiwork not because of eccentricity, but out of need. From this remote perspective, the rush and haste of the modern world surrounding us today is seen as a mere folly of an immature mankind.

Work and Sex (1998)

*Control your passion; when it is not under control, it controls.
Horatius*

Towards the end of summer, I accepted my sister's invitation to go with her to attend a meeting of nursery school teachers and headmistresses in Marienthal, a beautiful town in Germany. We were offered to stay in a convent of Cistercian nuns who managed a huge homestead, taking care of vast lands and employing the local people. On our arrival, we met one another and became acquainted with all the women participating in the meeting; passing finally on to a knot of men standing there, one of whom was conspicuously good-looking. It was I who approached this group first and he regarded me with interest. However, when he saw my younger sister, his mouth widened in astonishment. But my sister did not respond to him, neither was she able to make herself understood in any of the languages he spoke. Out of necessity, he began a conversation with me, and things went on as they had before. He explained to me that he was single, living in south Germany with a girlfriend, but they had decided not to have children, as they both wanted to dedicate their lives to creative work. He had come to the meeting with the intention of documenting the experiences of the teachers present and to publish a book about their work. He was making a lot of notes, listening carefully to everything that was said. When my turn came to give my contribution to the discussion about modern people's dependence on the temptations and the pacifiers of our culture of consumption, he disappeared.

I completed my reflection on a patriarchy that has modeled its God, the father in heaven, in a way to force women, children and men to worship and deify it. Since then, more than two thousand years have gone by and I am now trying to distinguish the core of the crisis of our current society. A number of philosophers have tried to do the same; however, in my opinion, they have become bogged down with details, ending up with abstract analyses that do not reflect the wholeness

of concrete life. Another isolated construction of current times is science, which has been (de) forming mankind for more than two hundred years. It has been worshipped in the same way as heavenly Gods. I am able to understand the pluses and advantages of religion and science, as well as philosophy. However, it would be more interesting to balance the pluses and minuses on scales. For example, miracle drugs that can save lives on the one hand, whilst on the other, man has arrogantly, albeit courageously, begun to equate himself with God, and is now destroying all other expressions of life because of his greed, devastating not only nature but everything related to it.

Then, I presented man as part of nature and one of its many living creatures. I emphasized the fact that man should respect and revere the laws of nature and honor its secrets. The merciless and acquisitive male reason however has taken the fate of the planet into his own hands and as a result the beauty and harmony of mother nature is slowly disappearing; and paradoxically man does not even understand, at the very least himself, despite all the knowledge and wisdom developed by science. The result is a gap between peoples, men and women, people who do not trust one another, compete with one another and are afraid of one another. They do not devote their time and care to the children who are devoted to them. As requital, children do not respect nor esteem their parents who often spend the rest of their days in the ghettos of senior homes. The desire to fill up the stomach has become another in the range of religions in the history of mankind. And super-standard needs have become existential ones—the car, the house, overeating, fashion, and cosmetics.

The lecture was followed with great attention. One of the reasons was perhaps that the listeners were mostly women who, despite not being able to identify their situation, felt I was hitting the nail on the head. I concluded my lecture by stating that it would be necessary to change the interminable religion of the consumption society. For the sake of all, it would be essential to return to worshipping the woman and her values, to respect Mother Earth and her resources, and return to the mystery and enigmas of the harmony of life, respecting all other creatures. Soft sex and mutual trust will occupy the male ego and debilitate its energies so that men will not invest in fighting for power, glory, possession and money. The energy will be changed into love, sex, dancing, cooperation and sport.

The speech was followed by a break and dinner. The good looking had already come back from his regular afternoon jog which kept him fit and healthy. Muscles were playing on his sun-tanned body and he was full of energy. I expressed my regret that he had not come to my presentation but he said that the whole program was too exhausting for him. However, I clearly felt his interest in me had continued. The next day, we went on a common trip around the environmentally friendly nursery schools. For most of the time, he and I were sitting next to each other, making jokes in a playful way. After we came back, we had a shower and it looked

like we might spend the evening together. We had poured ourselves wine when choking smoke started suddenly to stream from the fireplace. The good looking passed his glass to me to hold, as he needed to go out to breathe some fresh air. Soon, it was impossible to breathe at all in the room and so I went outside as well. He was not there. He was not inside the building either. He had evaporated just like smoke; the glass of wine was the only thing he had left behind. I stood there and drank. From one glass for a while, and then from the other. Alone with all my philosophy that the redemption of mankind lies in sex.

Passivity typical for women in establishing relationships between partners clearly emerges from the previous micro study. We do not know what we want and then we are surprised by the course of events as the protagonist of the previous story was. She was probably transmitting ambiguous signals that the desirable colleague was not able to decode. Who knows what would have happened if she had gone outside to breathe fresh air with him and acted in a more decisive manner?

I would like to get to know the results of a sociological research on the topic “Was it you or your partner who acted in a more decisive way in the first phases of your relationship?” Perhaps, we would be surprised how active women are in this respect, despite the conventional order “Sit in the corner, lass” that is still prevailing.

The statistics show we should be definitely more active in the final phases of relationships. Home violence and the number of its victims is alarming as it was emphasized during the discussions held within the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project.

Socially Dependent

*Let each of our number know their own way to go.
Propertius*

Opening to the World (1995)

*Out of all stupid people, the most unbearable is a much-traveled simpleton,
bringing stupidity of other nations home to add to that of his own.
Humboldt*

A few years have passed since the famous velvet revolution when the then Czechoslovakia opened itself to the world by cutting the barbed wires. The new reality

touched all of us. Either indirectly through crowds of tourists flooding our castles, chateaus, streets and shops, or directly when we got in personal touch—willy–nilly—with foreigners. The more capable of us took the bull by the horns, starting to communicate, travel and trade. The more passive, who did not have any motivation to learn foreign languages under the totalitarian regime, appeared in the position of not very far–seeing idiots all of a sudden, hiding their face in shame upon every accidental contact with the new reality. I belonged among the latter category. During communism, I intentionally boycotted the communist educational system, having an idealized wish not to go nuts and not to deceive myself. Unknowingly, or perhaps thanks to the inspiring books, like Immanuel Kant, that I was reading in the deathly, steady times of the totalitarian regime, who knew or calculated everything thanks to his reason without having to leave his native Königsberg. I also imagined that I would be able to make everything up, and be enclosed in the inner world of my imagination and concepts.

The revolution elevated me from the position of a cleaner to the personal secretariat office of the head of the state of the free republic. I was browsing through letters written by my Czech fellow citizens, although those written by foreigners were also imposed upon me, no matter how much I resisted and fought back. In horror, I was opening letters with an exotic appearance, not being sure whether to read them in the top down or bottom up direction. It was a grim time. Bank contacts were coinciding with addresses, and when somebody was calling me on the phone I began to panic so much that I was unable to distinguish between name and greeting. The circumstances forced me to open an English textbook and, in my 40s, I plunged headlong into studying this global language. At the time, an English teacher, a nice and modest man, who knocked down all my inhibitions with his kind nature and similar handicap (he did not speak Czech), visited the President's personal secretariat office and our communication, supported by facial gestures and movements of hand and leg, began. Soon I began to understand the American, or rather believed I did, and so I added my name to the international environmental movement called the Earthlinks Foundation. Thanks to this, the frequency of my contacts with foreigners began to grow. The enthusiasm I put into meeting new faces let me take a look inside the complexity of human nature and the mysteries of the human soul, something that I could not learn from any book.

Another American teacher, a woman this time, came to Prague with a dream and vision of President Havel as a knight on a white horse, with a white helmet on his head and armour, making a way through the consumption decay which the whole civilization has found itself. The whole world has been calling for a new way, a new solution, she argued, determined to follow and support the President, flying the flag of idealism, cutting his way through the thornbush and brambles of the market jungle to a paradise where man will be brothers and creatures as well.

A nineteen-year-old volunteer from Germany came to stay with us for three days to acclimatize a bit, and she stayed here for three months. The student, who spoke German, English, Spanish and French, began to learn Czech. A girl with artistic and musical talents, who chose discomfort and self-denial instead of the comfortable career paved with gold, as destined for a baby from an upper crust family of a German professor, in order to acquaint herself with everything that life has to offer. Dressed in second-hand clothes, she refused to go hiking and skiing because she did not want to devastate nature, which had already been devastated enough; she had a bath once a week to save water, whilst pouring into a cup, the minimum amount necessary, when brushing her teeth.

Soon after the November revolution, a friend of mine living in my neighborhood began to ask me frequently about the level of my English, and if I was able and willing to accept and host some Americans in my flat from time to time. I could not imagine such an adventure at all. After a lot of mental suffering I gave in to the arguments of the president of the Friendship Force, an organization existing in Prague at the time, and overcame my inhibitions and my husband's resistance, allowing a married couple from North Carolina to move into our flat for one week. With them, we had a chance to learn for the first time that, despite the huge language barrier peppered with a strong southern accent, it was possible to communicate and establish a friendship through an atmosphere, a feeling, something indefinable. For that matter, the idea of the organization lay in the fact that you got to know new people whom you had never met before in close and personal contact and familiar surroundings. Later on, we had many similar American visitors to our home until a reversal situation came up. As a reward for our hospitality, we were invited to the country which will remain inaccessible to most people from our country because of distance, price, language and other barriers. The journey was covered and our American friends mediated the stay; it was easier than I thought it would be for us to travel the whole, long way. If the whole globe I had been able to get to know until then was in my head, then, all of a sudden, I could feel and know in person the sphere bearing us on her surface with great hospitality was not so much bigger. In a mere eight hours, we were on the continent at the other end of the world, a little tired and sleepy from jet lag, but ready to accept or, as the case may be, criticize the country and its inhabitants whose life had been the symbol of paradise for many of us.

The first of our hosts was a Methodist and a Democrat, the second was a Mason, the third a Presbyterian and independent. All of them were helpful, friendly and tolerant—their life-styles resembled life in the country; it was quiet and legible. Our wild and fixed ideas of conflict, AIDS and drugs began to taper. Of course, I was interested in everything questionable, but the people in the south of the USA were gentle, balanced and peaceful and it was strange and unpleasant

for them to look for problems at any cost. They did not want to be reminded of the Indians and their civilization, which they had destroyed in order to enjoy the huge lands in such a generous manner. The areas which we were driving through and saw were intact, the forests were healthy, and the grass was green—at least at first sight. It was nearly incomprehensible for those who know or suspect that this country has been participating in the devastation of the globe to the highest degree, nevertheless, thanks to the amazing areas and space, it is not visible. Big fridges and comfortable houses fitted with air-conditioning systems have been imperceptibly emitting elements into the air that erode the protective layer of the Earth without an individual necessarily knowing about it.

The American twelve-lane highways, a dream for many of our drivers, unelaborated network of railways and public transport and the big space create preconditions for the construction of more and more new highways. Advertisements promoting new cars are omnipresent. It does not force anybody to think about the current life-style or to doubt it for a moment. The American society has put an emphasis on experience; their system of education is based on it. Thanks to the money that everybody can make if they want, most imaginable things are available to them, unlike us, who were imprisoned in the cell called the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic for forty years where we stayed lonely and isolated with our reason and ideas. We did not have anything we had not dreamed up or made up. However, we had an ideal opportunity to become what man should be, not what he can collect, gather, and possess, i.e. have. The comfort and availability of everything spoil a large number of younger Americans; the only thing they need is enough money and the world lies prostrate at their feet. In Winston Salem, I got acquainted with the history of the family owning the mammoth tobacco concern Camel. Its founder, the grandfather, was a harsh, yet kind man who was respected by the city inhabitants. On Saturdays, he used to go to the local hospital to visit the ill people and spent time among the people in his factory that worked for him. His son was one of the members of the joint stock Company established as a part of the tobacco concern, his grandsons are gilded youth, spoiled individuals who have everything and are gluttoned, bored by the world and life. Perhaps only drugs and fast cars may lead them out from the boredom of the affluence they are living in.

The openness and friendliness of our hosts was very nice. I returned home after three weeks full of excitement from meeting new friends. But as soon as I was on the plane, I was confronted by my fellow traveler, an Indian, who had studied in the state of Georgia and has been teaching at the local university for twenty years. “What illusion have I been fostering?” he wondered and told me that he had not been able to find a friend in the USA for the whole twenty years. The friendly relationships at the university were superficial, just in the “how are you, how are you?” style, without any deeper and real interest. A saying crossed my mind that

goes like “You are always paid back in your own coin”, but I decided to keep it to myself. The new experiences were dragging me into increasingly complex tangles of opinions and characters, and so I was not able to find the thread connecting all the new things I had learned. Despite all my efforts, I found out only that every single head of the five billion heads is a universe of its own. Is there any chance for a small single universe to understand another one?

The friendliness and helpfulness that characterized all the meetings of the Quo Vadis, Femina project was a very pleasant surprise for many participants in the round tables. Those who have not experienced the constructive atmosphere of the discussions which were usually attended by about twenty women with various life stories, education, origin and position, would not believe it was possible. The women were able to listen to one another, try to understand the different opinions of the other participants and to respect them to a considerable degree. Despite the considerable differences, opinions concerning various issues often coincided and the women were also able to achieve a consensus with regards to relevant current and timeless issues concerning the whole society.

Conqueror of Powers (1999)

How happy and sainted are those who cannot be fallen out by a worthless feud: they are chained by their faithful love so much that they will be separated only when the day of their death comes.

Horatius

I met her as a student of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and, later on, at the Pedagogical Faculty in Prague. While studying, she was working in the office next door where she translated and distributed foreign films dealing with environmental issues that she sent out to interested parties all over the country and abroad as well. She was young, beautiful, clever, hard working and skilled. In the evenings, she also studied English, German and all sort of things. A budding woman. At one of the courses she attended, she fell in love with an English teacher, and he fell in love with her. She was learning English very swimmingly and her love affair was also developing auspiciously. They rented a flat together, which they furnished as a nest of their love as it was no problem for a Czech–American couple to pay the rent, which was extravagant as early as in the 1990s.

I had not seen her for some time until once...I was going with my little son by early morning train to Pilsen and we met the English teacher in front of the railway station going hand in hand with a young girl. We greeted each other and my

son asked me loudly if he was the English teacher we used to know and who was the girl he was going hand in hand with when he was our acquaintance's partner, wasn't he? He embarrassed me with his questions and so I rebuked him to be quiet and not to stir up a hornet's nest.

The student was working, studying, in love and in the third month of pregnancy when I asked her carefully how things were going and what about the English teacher. Did she know he was with another girl in another city last week? She did and started to cry. She confessed he had told her that he was no longer interested in her, did not love her any more and wanted to split up. Unmercifully and immediately. On the occasion of being told about the breakup, she managed to tell him that he would be a father. Surprisingly, he was pleased by the news as he wanted the baby but did not want its mother. I saw the student many times later as we were sharing a common office. She used to pass my office all in tears, crying and unhappy. She confessed to me while her growing belly was shaking with sorrow. She was still living with the English teacher in their rented flat, sleeping together on one broad mattress. He with his back turned to her, she swallowing her tears. He even brought his new girl friend, who he was planning to marry, several times to their common flat. The student was preparing her Czech tea, the teacher with his girl-friend his tea in the rented flat and they were arguing what and how much had each of them consumed, who would pay for what, and who would take possession of what after they split up. The father assisted during the childbirth and the student was secretly hoping that the act of the birth of a new life would soften him up and he would love her again as a woman and the mother of their child. She was mistaken. The birth of his son did not soften up the father. He found a new flat to live in, moved away and soon married his new girl friend. He was horse-trading with the student for every piece of furniture, the washing machine, etc., wanting an exact half of everything. Even the child. He refused to pay alimony to maintain his son, yet was demanding half of the baby's time for himself. Since his birth, the boy grew up in a Czech-American environment, speaking both the languages, Czech as well as English. He was handsome and charming. So was his mother. She missed her son a lot when she had to let him go to his father's for half of every week, half a holiday or half a year. Out of tedium, she started to plan further studies, further work in order to forget the English teacher. Why should he keep occupying her young mind? She did not stop longing for a man of her dreams, an everlasting and faithful love that she knew from romantic literature. Many of her friends were her lovers, none of them, however, seemed to be the everlasting love, not least marriage. She traveled and studied abroad until she met the right man one-day. He was the ideal of the handsome man and the student's heart rejoiced. The hearts rejoiced together, but it was impossible to follow the story of this love alongside my own everyday concerns and joys.

After some time, an invitation to a wedding ceremony was delivered. It was to be held in a distant part of Germany. With my friends, we arrived there late and the ceremony as well as the banquet was over. Soon after our arrival, we heard the tones of Strauss's waltzes and the Czech student and her German husband set off for their journey on the beautiful blue Danube. The little Czech–German baby was sleeping in its cradle in a caravan which became the student's new home, and the Czech–American child was playing on a meadow. As we were leaving, she waved at us cheerfully, calling if we had noticed how she had been conquering the world powers. The next story was going to be with a Chinese or Russian man!

Economic independence for every individual consumer is the spirit of modern times. The households of singles, people without a stable partner, and the high divorce rate are said to pull on the economy. The question is, however, what such an economic growth is good for when it is based on disability to find mutual respect, understanding and tolerance on both the sides of a partnership. What is full saturation of our material needs good for when the economic growth is based on the loss of humanity in us?

The possibility of independent life is hammering down the ability to feel respect for the needs of other people, it supports dull competition and the plundering of various resources. The way out of this situation of a diminishing humanity, which the Quo Vadis, Femina? project helps to find, is a clear declaration of a deep personal responsibility by each of us not only for the course of our own life, but also our personal responsibility in the creation of our social climate.

Harassment (2000)

*To emphasize pretentiously that one is ready for defense
is a sign of a secret wish to be attacked.*

Brecht

Until recently, I had not been able to understand the meaning of the imported word harassment, which was adopted in the Czech language as harašment, and explained in dictionaries as something that bothers or besets us. My perception of this word was cleared up a little after I had visited Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. I arrived there by plane to attend a conference about biodiversity. It was seven o'clock in the morning and as soon as I had checked in, a mob of men swooped on me forcing their taxi services upon me with such intensity that I was only able to resist for a while. My original intention was to have a look around the airport and to find an acquaintance of an acquaintance of mine who had been

working there. However, the taxi drivers were so importunate that I was longing to disappear quickly. At the moment that I spotted a taxi marked as an airport service, I asked for the price in a hurry and got in with the only goal in my mind—to get away from the place. Envious looks of the other taxi drivers followed the driver who managed to give a lift to the white customer.

I checked into the hotel where I was to stay and decided to go out for a tour around the city before my colleagues came. A woman from the South African Republic joined me, who suffered from a visible health problem as she was moving with considerable difficulty. I was trying to talk her out of the walk, but she took no notice of my warnings and so we approached the city center at a snail speed. The woman began to tell me her story about how she was assaulted when she was young, raped and injured so much that one of her legs remained lame and she has to drag it behind her for the rest of her life. We plodded down to the city center together where I wanted to look around a marketplace with local hand-made goods, and to visit a Czech who had been married happily in Nairobi for many years. She was the only one of the eleven Czech women who had fallen in love with the Kenyan students studying in Prague years ago, married one and followed him to his native country. Ten of them returned home in the course of time; just this one stayed. I knew her name, profession and the approximate place where she was employed which I had marked on a copied map. Soon, a young man dressed in jeans tagged along beside us, willingly taking up the role of our escort. First, he led us to his little stall to show us what we could buy there and then he started to look for the Czech woman with us. I knew she worked as an assistant to a dentist and so he took us to an optician's assuming that the doctors would know each other. The optician pulled out a card with a number, which he started to dial up immediately. The woman we had been looking for was his customer and so the searching became a question of just a few minutes. To say good-bye, I offered one dollar to the young man, who, however, refused, saying he would rather invite us to come shopping at his stall. At the Czech's, we hastily drank a cup of coffee, as is the habit in our country. She was just leaving with her husband to the funeral of his brother who had been killed. When we were leaving, I greeted her husband in Czech at the exit, exchanged twenty dollars with him for the Kenyan currency and, together with the woman from the South African Republic, set on our slow way back to the hotel. While we were walking, I was telling her what I knew about the Czech women who had fallen in love with her black colleague during their studies, married him and went back with him to Africa. They had come to a culture that did not esteem women; their husbands soon brought home several other women who looked down their noses at the white women. Later on, the white women, left without any money, dependant upon their husbands, who had lost interest in them once back in Africa, were trying

to get back home through various humanitarian organizations at a breakneck speed. Today they hold positions in various African associations where they remember their younger days spent in this corner of the world.

In the street, we met the young man dressed in jeans again. He took us to another shop, this time on the third floor of a skyscraper of Western-like appearance. The goods were luxurious; the category completely different from the originally planned key ring or beads that I wanted to buy as souvenirs from the trip. When I asked about the prices I received an answer that I should always agree with Samuel, as the two men who had tagged along behind me, accompanying me around the shop, had persuaded me. So I started to fill up my basket with an African drum, a beer horn, small sculptures cut from wood, beads, and a bracelet and asked how much all these things would be. Samuel wrote down the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand Kenyan shillings on a piece of paper. I laughed and advised him that he had better turn around. Then I wrote down the sum I was willing to pay. It was one thousand five hundred shillings. Disappointed Samuel started to take out the goods that I had roughly undervalued from the basket and so I brought home ten African animals cut from wood and used as napkin holders, the beads and bracelet for one thousand five hundred shillings and an additional twenty dollars. I offered Samuel and his disappointed brothers chewing gums and they went to see us off ceremonially, yet disappointedly. They do not differentiate among white women. They do not care if I am a Czech or an American. We have more money than they do—and that's important. On our way back to the hotel, we were talking about famous athletes from Kenya and famous hockey players from the Czech Republic. If Samuel had not been accompanying us, we would have been walking until today. Streets in Kenya are full of cars, there are no zebra crossings, not to mention traffic lights; drivers are exclusively men who are very aggressive. If our guide did not stop them, they would not let a woman, especially a white one, cross a street.

Colleagues from India, the South African Republic, Kenya, Germany, Tunisia, Uganda, and Great Britain had already been waiting for us at the hotel. There were three men, the hotel owner, a local publisher and a journalist sitting around a table. We introduced ourselves and had a polite conversation; I handed out promotional materials about my work in English and we met again the next day during the opening of the conference. This time I met the men alone. The hotel owner offered me a guided tour around Nairobi, from a to z, free of charge, the journalist was given a contact to Prague Post by me to be able to write and send them an authentic reportage about the conference of women in Nairobi. The well-built publisher accompanied me, sitting next to me during the whole of the negotiations held about biodiversity, and telling me, during every single break, that he would like to cooperate with me. The first day he pointed out to the workaholics that the

“Western” culture had been importing to the “South”. The next day, we all were invited by the most famous African ecofeminist activist, Ms Wangari Matthai, to plant a symbolic tree of freedom in the Uhuru park that she had established. After the dancing and singing that opened the event, we went to the place where we together planted a neem tree which has curative effects, being paid a lot of attention by the local television, journalists and children.

After the ceremony, I hauled off from the gathering for a while. At that very moment, the publisher approached me. The handsome man leant towards me with a surprising question whether he would be allowed to kiss and touch me. While asking me, he touched my breasts at their most sensitive spots and said how graceful I was and that things like this make up a part of business, don't they? Surprised by his spontaneity and rawness, I stuttered something about how fast he was and that we called it harassment back in my country. He did not know what harassment I was talking about. 'He only wants to touch me, that's all. What's wrong about it when he likes me?' He got on our bus and went with us to the hotel where a grandiose traditional African lunch had been prepared for us in the garden to show us that they were skillful and able to survive without imported hamburgers. I was sitting at the table together with Wangari Matthai and her friend and asked her about her personal and family life. When she was young, Wangari had studied in the USA and Germany, and then she had decided to return to Kenya where she established the Green Belt Movement, a famous organization. Together with the local women, they planted trees while educating and spreading information about birth rate reduction, education and the upbringing of children, health protection, and AIDS prevention. Local politicians hate her. She is a mother of three children; her husband appreciates her energy and supports her. Her friend sitting with her at the table was also a mother of three children; their father packed his bags one day and left for the USA. Nobody heard anything from him. Nobody talks about the responsibility of African men in the upbringing of their children or alimony in these parts of the world. After the lunch, the publisher sneaked into my company to tell me again that he liked me and to ask me when we would be alone together. He was caressing my breasts while the Australian woman living in the South African Republic at that time, was watching us with a smile on her face.

The conference sessions dealt with the responsibility of local women to maintain local culture, protecting freedoms that have been endangered by rich multinational corporations that exploit natural resources and pay nothing to take out patents on them later and sell them for a lot of money. During the discussions, it was mentioned that the risk of losing freedom is much higher today than it was at any time in the past. Everything can be bought for a global dollar; and when you do not have this dollar, and neither have you clean water, clean air and access to land where you might grow healthy basic food, you become dependent and lose your freedom.

The comely publisher threw me in confusion by his affectionate behavior, and so, to be on the safe side, I went to consult my companion from the first day who knew local manners. I wanted to ask her what I was to think about his proposals. The woman was working in the area of AIDS prevention; she gave a scarf with the portrait of the president Mandela and explained to me that half of the population was HIV positive not only because men refused to use condoms but also because women did not refuse to have sex with such men. AIDS is a disease of desperation, stress and hopelessness. White colonialists and missionaries deprived the African people of their roots, tradition, and beliefs and enforced their ideas about life upon them, and so false values of materialistic society may be encountered here today as anywhere else in the world. In response to my question if women determine conditions as regards to their relationship with men or if they themselves choose a man as their partner, she only shook her head in a negative gesture. She has been bringing up three children alone; she got rid of her husband, as he was just another hungry mouth to feed.

On the final day, a ceremonially opened negotiation at the UNEP (United Nation Environmental Program) was held, where a convention on biodiversity was discussed and approved. There are beautiful gardens and splendid houses in the residential district of Nairobi. This was where I saw the publisher for the last time. He was dressed in a silken orange shirt under which his handsome, muscular body was shaped. I waved at him from a distance, registering the polished shoes of the negotiators of more than one hundred and seventy various nations, and set out for the airport. This time I decided to go by public transport together with the common people. A young girl, a student, to whom I turned for directions, advised me not to believe anybody in Kenya, and so I kept an eye on my passport and air-ticket in the crowded bus that was slowly sliding through impassable streets full of cars. While I was looking at a woman with a faggot on her back, a vessel full of water on her head and three little kids scuttering beside her, a pickpocket snatched my purse with my Czech documents, money, stamps and photographs.

At the airport I wanted to buy water and so I was paying with the one hundred dollar banknote I hid as a nest-egg for a rainy day. They bothered me for a while with comments that the banknote was old and invalid, but when they saw I was in a crisis, they charged me three dollars for a bottle of water, i.e. more than in the USA.

It is important to respect cultural differences between individual countries and continents, but not at all costs. We found the participant in the international conference about women's rights, who allows the local tycoon to grope her, rather sad. Was her behavior a shot in the eye with respect to other European women who will arrive at these places after her? Has each of our

acts, our activity or passivity, the same importance? This is a question for everybody. A question that the participants in the round table sessions would answer with their resolute ‘yes’.

Crime Committed on a Public Holiday (1998)

The greatest good is to live in accordance with nature.
Cicero

I went out of our house and wandered my way to a shoe repair shop to collect my newly soled shoes, not suspecting anything wrong. I wanted to wear them for the celebration of the public holiday of the Czech Republic’s independence to be held at Prague Castle the following day. Look what is going on here, my husband, who was walking on my left-hand side, alerted me and dragged me to the other side of the street to show me a freshly dug out, half-meter deep furrow. It was carefully filled up near two young acacias; however, a few meters away, it had uncovered the roots of an old acacia and another two little trees that had been healthy until being chopped into pieces. The furrow was situated just a few centimeters from the trunks and my husband started to fret, “How is this possible, such arrogance, in a society where trees have no protective zone, contrary to the telephone, water mains, gas piping, electric power distribution conduits, subway and other achievements of our modern civilization?” I went up to the two men who were carrying out the destruction work and asked them why they were digging immediately next to the trees, if there was not enough space on the empty pavement on the other side; there is only a dead bituminous road in the middle; do they have to cut the roots of the new trees when it took nearly two years to plant them and it was very expensive? Will they be also rampaging here tomorrow, on a public holiday? The men kept answering in one or two syllable words “boss, boss, evening...” and so I started to threaten them with the police and I forced my husband to go with me to the municipal police station instead of the shoe repair shop. The superintendent accepted us immediately, called a patrol and issued a command for them to go and investigate what was going on there, and to film the surroundings of the trees. I informed him of the fact that the workers were working unbelievably fast and covering up the marks of their crime even faster. They were covering up the surroundings of the trees immediately and so it gave the impression that the cables were pulled through an elegant tunnel, but I had seen with my own eyes the white stumps of roots cut in two and sticking out of the ground.

We continued at the municipal office of the city district. We took the paternoster elevator to the fourth floor to inform the deputy mayor who was in charge of environmental issues about what was going on in his district. He was not there and so we left a message for him with his secretary, with a reminder note that, for five

years, we have been drawing attention to the fact that trees in the Czech Republic had no protective zone when underground services were installed. This is contrary to the technical achievements of civilization, although it is a source of oxygen, without which there would be no life.

At home, I phoned a press agency and realized that we had not even managed to buy bread, let alone something more festive to celebrate the public holiday, for dinner because of the trees. In the morning of the 28th October, I was awoken by a noise made by machines. Extraction works were going on under the windows of our prefab flat. A furrow, similar to the one that was destroying the young trees in the city center one day before, was filled with bitumen for a change. The terrible noise bothered us the whole day, and so I went out to a nearby orchard where trees muffled the noise made by the machines and the road traffic.

The celebration of the national holiday of the Czech Republic held at Prague Castle in the evening was grandiose. Media stars of the political and art world were promenading on the first floor. There were three and a half thousand people present, as one of the then ministers with an ephemeral life disclosed to me. Tables were groaning with pork delicacies; beer and wine were flowing in streams. I was full up with dumplings and scrambled eggs that I had eaten at home, and so I was walking back and forth, considering whether to bother some of the famous, beautiful and smiling people with trees and oxygen. After a moment of contemplation I came to the conclusion that it was inappropriate to spoil the celebrations by talking about trees, and so I looked shifty around the food and drinks, conversing in a kind and noncommittal manner. I missed the music, dancing or anything else that would distract attention from the exclusive consumption resulting in fifty percent of Czechs, who do not worship anything but money, food and possessions, being overweight. I did not say a word about the cut roots of the trees to anybody. My feet, in uncomfortable shoes, were hurting and I remembered the ones that I had not had time to pick up from the repair shop. On the day following the celebration I went to work in the morning and thought of the clerks in other parts of the city who had had some over-mature trees cut down, while planning to plant new ones as a substitution as soon as they could raise some money. However, a telephone cable is faster and so no trees will grow in the street for the foreseeable future. In the street in the center, the furrows around the trees were covered up with soil very carefully the day after the national holiday. Even including the borders around the trees that we had arranged with young offenders from a psychiatric reformatory for delinquent juveniles in spring. I wondered why nobody had been informed about the cables to be installed there, why they had let us toil with the aesthetic arrangements around the trees that would be destroyed immediately afterwards. My husband, who was there with me, gave me the following answer: "Why don't you cut it out when your work is good only for dogs to crap on."

After ten o'clock in the morning, which was the time when the press conference I had summoned was about to start, I realized my husband was right as nobody from the media sector arrived. Well, who would be interested in young, destroyed trees anyway? By coincidence, the Lublaňská Street is the place of residence for Mr. Čech, an editor of the Czech TV, Mr. Němec from the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection, and also Mr. Pětivoký, Mr. Novotný and many others whose names I do not know. If the trees begin to be scorched and the turn comes to those who know in advance that it is useless to exert any effort, then I state that the trees were hurt by men, the breadwinners of their families, who were just doing their job.

Resignation in the creation of a common space is one of the sad characteristics of cities, including Prague. High criminality has been emerging as the reverse side of prosperity. It is partially caused by anonymity and disability of local government authorities to emphasize order and orderly public space. Untidy places that belong to all and nobody at the same time are directly provoking asocial behavior of those who have lost any moral scruples. We may find such places e.g. in the Žižkov municipal district. Here, in no man's land, pupils of the local basic schools gather early in the morning as they do not want to fulfill their school duties, and they drink and smoke here while nobody accidentally passing by has the power to save these children from the bad ways they are getting in. No personal example would help here. It would be better if the local authority representatives improved their work and chose suitable priorities when preparing budgets.

The gender budget, which is known in the Czech Republic more in its theoretical version, emphasizes that budgets should be drawn up by taking into account the needs and wishes of women and men in a balanced equilibrium. The poor representation of women in political life also means that common funds are usually spent in order to entertain men (the glaring football), while the usual needs of women and children (safety in the streets, good public lighting, public transport) are neglected.

Bombardment and Women (2000)

Those who believe in themselves have found the best support.

K. H. Borovský

According to opinion polls, the major part of the population does not consider bombardment to be the best way to solve crises in the world. At the time when Kosovo was bombarded, somebody asked if there were any way to solve the situation in

a more suitable way and what would be necessary for it to be achieved. The question was asked at the time of a big fire. And the solution resembled the one usually used when a fire is being extinguished. Fire is an element that cannot be considered in a cool manner at the moment when it has spread most extensively. Fire engines are put into operation, sand begins to be poured, and trenches dug out... Mankind have introduced and established rut stereotypes for the extinguishing of human emotional fires. The question is whether stereotype solutions are the ideal solutions.

‘Honored be those who are able to defend themselves, who are able to give their lives to life,’ is the inscription in the park in front of the radio station in Pilsen. This slogan, which has rarely been taken into account in our nation, implies that our personal responsibility is to stand up for and successfully defend our rights to freedom, which we neither do on a national nor personal level. Some time ago I met a friend of mine. She had two black eyes as her husband had just beaten her up. I became indignant and wanted to call the police, a doctor, and a photographer. The friend stopped me saying ‘no, under no circumstances, as it would only worsen her situation.’ And so I began to talk about the violence committed to her with our mutual friends. They responded by warning me not to get involved in somebody else’s private life, and that I had better let it be. If she does not want to defend herself, she is probably satisfied with the situation. At the same time, we are all well aware of the fact that a violent person goes as far as he or she is allowed. What do we know about the self-defense of the Kosovo inhabitants? I recalled the military drill of Israeli women and their courage to defend their nation. The stereotyped behavior according to which men are considered to be strong and aggressive conquerors, committing ninety-five percent of all offences, even during peaceful periods of history, proves wrong cultural habits at the turn of this millennium, the era that calls itself progressive, scientific and I do not know what else.

The centers of aggressivity and eroticism are located side by side in the brain, influencing one other. How many people are sexually satisfied in a culture where, for centuries, the brain has been washed with threats and warnings against sinful thoughts and lust, together with the myths of the Immaculate Conception, exalted suffering and denial of the bodily delights? Unvented sexual energy influences the centers of aggressivity, and so the male population is raging. Who is it vented on? Very often on those who are weaker, i.e. women, children, and the elderly people. When a man has a sexually satisfactory partner, he behaves in a way completely different to when he is sexually frustrated and vents his energy—perhaps not just in a war, but in workaholism, automobilism, alcoholism and other substitutional addictions.

In its antemortem spasms, the patriarchal culture puts the emphasis on wealth, possession of money and assets, regardless of how it has been obtained. Material

goods are in the hands of men by more than ninety percent. Women do the vitally important work found in the upbringing of children and ensuring operations within a family. Women receive one tenth of the remunerations received by men for work that is included in the gross national product, and own one hundredth of the possessions owned by men. Taking into account our common future, it is necessary to change these traditional habits where all the weight of emotional and household liabilities is loaded on the woman who then does not have enough energy to be a good sexual partner. Besides their assets, men have an unlimited amount of time, space and finances at their disposal. Thanks to this they also exuberate in a considerable ration of energy that becomes socially dangerous as they mature. Unfortunately, their dominance, material wealth and security leads to admiration on the side of the weaker sex, instead of condemnation. Paradoxically, the crowds of those who admired the greatest loonies in history comprised of women who saw the right men in the greatest boors called leaders.

In the polls, which map the opinions of people with respect to the accession of our republic to NATO, I missed an interest in the opinions of women, and mothers whose sons and men are potential targets. Nobody asked us about anything. How is such a disdain for those who give life and take a lot of trouble to enable it to mature possible? Propagandistic agitations of politicians supported by pop-music stars give evidence about the level of education and abilities to think independently. One of the main players involved in our accession to NATO disavowed, in the final phase of the negotiation process, from any possible effects that such an alliance may bring. Politicians do not have any philosophical education of a more general nature that is necessary to think through the effects of their own acts. Being men, they also have a certain handicap when perceiving the context; with a four-year horizon, that they are hardly able to set the rules of the game in advance, and so we are only then surprised what their ambitions and activities bring to society.

Every year, about eight hundred billion dollars are spent globally on armaments, while eighty billion dollars would be enough to ensure clean water, food, health care, elimination of illiteracy, education, stabilization of populations, shelter, clean and renewable energy, the prevention of land erosion and acid rain, and the stabilization of the ozone layer and forest destruction all the world over.

The above mentioned facts are an alarming appeal especially for women and mothers to engage further in public matters, and not accept the given schemes of passivity and subordination, because this development is evidence of the growing aggressivity against humankind and spirit, the human mind and body. Violence has been flaring all over the world against various animal as well as vegetal life. We can start to introduce changes immediately by getting men in our surroundings involved in female everyday and vitally important chores. To stop admiring

the male infantile hobbies demonstrated in the form of violent computer games, a rush for dollars or a lust for more powerful cars. It would be good for general welfare if women stopped imitating the strongish behavior of men, and offered the world a better side of life, spiritual and erotic love, mutual courtesy, kindness, a sense of beauty and aesthetics for the environment, not only that in the closest vicinity, but also the home in its broader sense. Our home is the earth that does not need to be destroyed by bombs.

There is almost nothing to be added to the previous study. Nearly all the participants in the round tables agreed on the thesis that violence begets only violence, nearly all of them were against the radars to be located on our territory. The games played by those in power, i.e. men, to achieve benefits from the prospering armaments industry, were denounced as immoral. An example of Costa Rica in Central America was recalled, which dissolved its army fifty years ago and invested the money into education, further education and health care. The women also stated that the funds expended on armaments (called spectacularly a defense) by our country had been thrown out of the window when we remember the failing defense against aggressors in the last century.

David and Goliath (1960–2000)

*Everybody has enough strength to do harm.
Seneca jr.*

When my classmates were fighting at school, the issue of truth and what was right were left to one side. Up to even today, it is not clear if the fights were aimed at something or if it was merely a sport of its own kind, a way to vent energy. When my sons fight today, of course there is always some “he did it to me, I will do it to him, he started it, he was provoking me.” When I intervene in such disputes from the position of the woman who gave birth to them, be it with the intention to settle the dispute and reestablish the peace or with slaps and pontificating, aimed at stopping their quarrel, the turmoil of battle calms down for a while, only to have its sequel as soon as the door to their room is closed. I do not understand the conflicts of my sons; they seem petty to me and I do not enjoy them. The age difference between them is five years, the younger one has had a physical disadvantage (or advantage) since the beginning, given with the age difference. However, since his birth, his character was one of a fighter. What he was not able to manage by strength or directly, he managed to achieve by using original psychological trickery. First, he enforced his rights by crying and raging, later on he trained himself

so much that when it comes to the crunch his older brother is not up to him. Side by side with him, he is too direct, naive in a black and white manner, and after all he is the older brother who is supposed to be more reasonable and retreat.

I grew up at the time of the Cuban crisis. We used to play soldiers as children. I remember that as little girls, we would splash in the evening summer dew with little, white girl's shoes on representing triumphant Cuba, throwing greenswards at the defeated American empire represented by Kája, who lived in the neighborhood, and his friends. Our heads were filled up with a goulash of heroes from Czuk and Gek, Meresjev, Kája Mařík, Julius Fučík, and Erben's fairy tales and myths from the Chodsko region, with its inhabitants depicted as guardians of the border with Germany, to stories about Czech national spirits like Divá Bára and Psohlavci, and singing songs about red scarves burning in the sun. Was it then that the childish war of the Czech Amazons or the quarrel between Davids (both male and female) and Goliath began? Neither. We were only playing in a way that was perhaps not uncommon for girls, but maybe we were really enjoying ourselves when I visualize the meadow, the white shoes and the boys running away.

Some time ago, my older son was watching a programme on TV about a live peace bridge made by people leading from somewhere to somewhere, and when he switched over to another programme, there was a serious and boring debate about American isolationism. I went to bed with a memory in my head of an interview with a radio reporter. We had been talking about war and we came across an idea that the decisive person, the then president of the most powerful world power, might be solving his sexual problems passing it off as humanitarian aid. He got into one woman's bad books, and another one made a good deal from him. His brain centers of aggressiveness and eroticism were maybe also moving back and forth.

But let us get back to the title. What is David's chance in his dispute with Goliath today or at any other time or place? What are the chances of local entrepreneurs with regards the global market? Maybe a moral one, but it is physical strength and big money that decides after all. Regardless of truth, love, rights or justice. In its final phase, the WW II was a dispute between Goliaths. In the case of Vietnam, the Middle East, Kosovo, Chechnya, the intervention of Goliath in the lives and disputes of David was always very mysterious. Where is the justice here? Is it just a coincidence that oil can be found in some places and ideological purity in others, and yet in another area there are interestingly intact territories? I mentioned the human bridges to the reporter and we started to ask ourselves questions one after another. How is it possible that games, which have global effects, are played by history-makers taking their turns during the course of time? They have one thing in common. The absolute majority of the players are male. The centers of sexuality are obviously unappeased and so it is legitimate that a turn towards

aggressiveness is coming. And so women still have enough work to do to remedy any damage caused by that and clean up the mess.

Again, the topic of the cause of wars, and the suffering, which arises from them, is discussed here. Those who suffer in wars without any possibility of being protected are women and children.

How would history look if the victorious and lost battles and acts of great generals depicted in history textbooks were replaced by descriptions of the suffering of women and children or the bravery demonstrated by common women securing food during hard war periods? Maybe more men would understand how irresponsible are the people in power—politicians and armament tycoons have been playing with them; they would finally understand why the medium (which also belongs to the powerful) is full of violence and cruelty. Are we to be so hardened and not wonder at anything when “the mother country calls”?

Green City (1998)

The loan that has to be paid back, this is lost money.
J. Tuwim

The fourth Pan-European conference of the ministers of the environment and NGOs was held in Aarhus, Denmark, on the topic “The Living Environment for Europe”. The tradition of these spectacular meetings of hundreds of European activists at governmental and non-governmental level was established by the Czechoslovak federal minister of the environment, who has tragically died, when he organized the first conference of this format in Dobříš. Meetings in Luzern, Sofia and in Denmark followed this. After experience gained in Sofia, where I was a delegate of the NGOs as well as the governmental ministry of the environment, I was not much inclined to go to Aarhus. From Sophia, I arrived terribly tired because I had been sitting on spectacularly governmental as well as modestly non-governmental chairs for one long week, half-poisoned by caffeine that was served in disposable plastic cups without any scruples. The theory that was about the protection of the environment was in practice devastating. A huge advertisement promoting cigarettes was alight on a dominant high-rise in the center of the city.

And so I showed no interest in traveling to Aarhus. However, a few days after the deadline, one of the leading organizers called me and tried to persuade me to come, that we have not seen each other for a long time, and so on. I let myself be convinced by the old well-tried friendly, “And when are we to see each other

again if not now?" How many opportunities for a personal meeting are open in today's hurry-scurry life?

Immediately after that, another organizer wrote that they were waiting for me to come, which moved me, and I made up my mind definitely. After having landed at the airport in Copenhagen I took an express bus to the railway station. Red and orange poppies, blue cornflowers, white & yellow marguerites were in bloom along the road. It was hard to believe that I was in a big city. I changed to a train at an elegant railway station in the city center and used the sophisticated tunnel transportation to get to Aarhus through quite a dull and featureless countryside. Two young, beautiful, blue-eyed, blond Dane women and one elegant, middle-aged lady broidering a mat were sitting next to me on the train. When I arrived at the destination, there were red and pink geraniums planted in stone flowerpots in front of the railway station in Aarhus, which I recognized later on as a unifying element in all possible corners of the city. Aarhus is a seaside city with two hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants. The railway station is in the center of the city and so it took just a few minutes to walk to the school and the Scandinavian Center where the meetings were held. This however did not apply to the hotel where I was staying and the distance of which I did not correctly estimate. I was plodding up a long-drawn-out hill for nearly one hour, with a backpack on my back and a heavy briefcase full of papers. Despite this I decided, once I had managed to cover the distance with the luggage, that to walk to the seminars every morning and afternoon would at least be good for my health.

On Saturday evening, a welcome reception was given. The Danes prepared various kinds of home-made cheese, cherries, peppers, and beer—all of these from local resources. I met my friend from Slovenia there and we embraced each other joyfully. At the hotel, I shared my room with a single, romantic middle-aged beauty from Macedonia. The walls of the hotel were decorated with two tapestries depicting two men courting dressed up ladies. On the Sunday morning I had an excellent breakfast at the hotel and then I set out for my walk through the green city. The time it took me was just forty minutes to get to the city center, to the school where the meeting was to be opened in the theatre hall. It was introduced by a woman from Switzerland, one of the main campaigners against the accession of Switzerland to the European Union. From an earlier time, I knew that she was an excellent and convincing speaker and that she would not miss any chance to fight for the rights that she considers important. A yurt had been built in front of the school by the people from Kazakhstan who had come to the conference to draw attention to the catastrophic situation in the Aral Sea. They had brought a complete exhibition with them, including traditional Kazakh food, tea in a samovar, and hand made products. We all sat in the yurt where a young man was playing an immensely fast melody on a two-string musical instrument. This is the way they imitate

horse galloping at home, he said. In the afternoon, I went for an organized trip to the city surroundings by bus No.6, accompanied by Russians, a Turk, an American, a Dane and Aleš from the Czech Republic. We arrived at the meeting point late. The official guide was no longer waiting for us and so the Danish journalist present took up the role. He was leading us through a beautiful track along a brook where I was surprised by the cleanliness of the wood and the whole environment.

On a meadow by the sea, he showed us a shepherd's hut dating back to a time two and a half thousand years BC. He let us rest for a while and, later in the afternoon, we returned to the school where a debate about the future of environmental forums similar to this continued. A gathering of such a great number of people costs a lot of money which is spent on accommodation, food, travel expenses as well as organizational background. The debate continued about membership fees, if they are to be paid or not, finally coming to the conclusion that rather not. It was difficult to discuss anything in a hall with about one hundred people. Several individuals kept dominating the discussion, including one male Czech ego. It was raining on Tuesday morning. I was passing a vast botanical garden to join a debate about human values later on. The discussion concerned the title of the work group, proposals were dry, contributions to the discussion long and non-constructive. After two hours, the negotiations were interrupted because the decision making process was too fast for the organizer. For me, on the contrary, it was too slow, and so I asked to make a contribution that one of the values I consider the most important is time which people, including the green ones, waste so rashly. Then I added the need also of a sense of humor. The negotiations and decisions were terribly wordy and slow, according to my taste. The organizer interpreted my comments to him in a way which resulted in him refusing my proposal of a working group title *Life for Tomorrow*, and the acceptance of the title *Human Value for Sustainable Development*, although the American present tried to explain in vain that the word "value" lacks meaning in Anglo-Saxon countries. We know the importance of the Anglo-Saxon "non-value" from our own experience. The organizer was arguing using the Czech and Slovak soppiness containing our desire for the good old days when "values" meant something.

In the afternoon, I participated in simulative games for sustainable life developed by a Russian professor. We had met each other at a scientific conference near the Balaton Lake years ago. He was a friend of somebody who was my friend too, a nice man. There were fifteen of us in the group; the professor was presenting his games; I knew some of them, others were his patent. In one of the games about untouched nature, the players were given a task to built human dwellings of a sustainable nature. I objected that the game is not based on reality as there is no untouched nature today; what about trying to solve the situation around the Aral Sea instead? The professor answered that I was taking the games too seriously,

however my comment drew the attention of a Hungarian journalist of English origin. She invited me for a cup of coffee and interviewed me for the Hungarian magazine entitled *Business Woman with a Green Heart*. A round table was held on the following day on the premises that was one big dancing floor. We were talking about the right for information; but in my opinion, the discussion was too technical, although I understood that it was important to have an access to information, it was not clear to me how it would be used by those who are interested in ecology? A pair of eyes and a nose is enough to detect that a factory in the neighborhood is releasing yellow smoke into the air. To force the factory to change such a situation, one needs a sizeable gang of rebels who will be willing to put pressure on the factory. It was not clear to me where to find such a gang in the current situation of civic passivity. I myself am not such a redeemer ready to solve everything, and so, after two hours, I went to another meeting of a working group that was dealing with the financing of NGOs. The foundations that had been sponsoring activists in Central and East Europe announced that they would not be sending any more money. In other, simpler, words—they stop feeding us with fish and start teaching us how to fish. I threw in a few motivations how to diversify financial resources and what to tell sponsors so as they trust the greens, and then went on an excursion to a power station which produces biogas and to visit a model ecological village. Being a practical woman, I was fascinated by the production of electricity from waste, the tidiness of the factory as well as the beautiful premises, simplicity of operations managed by two computers and two people. Only the smell of faeces was spoiling the idyllic atmosphere, which included a decorative fresco on the outside wall of the factory.

The ecological village was built in natural, in-white wood, in a form of a small row of houses. There was a community center building in the middle of the village where inhabitants would meet during various celebrations and festivals. They till their fields together observing the principles of ecological farming. They had dry toilets, built without permission, as it would be a problem to get one. They were separating waste and whenever possible did not buy packed goods. At the time, Denmark was a rarity to its own. Thanks to its enlightened minister of environment, no drinks packed in disposable containers were allowed to be sold in shops; everything was packed only in recyclable containers. I did not see any cans or polythene anywhere.

It was Midsummer's Eve; fires were burning, people were dancing round dances on the beach; I was in ecstasy. Various age categories, yet with older ones prevailing, of amateur dancers, men and women, all enjoying life, nobody cared about the mistakes they were making during complicated figures. On the beach, I found sculptures cut out from dry trees. Their branches were gradually transforming into hands, with a heart in the middle of them. The next day I went to the

Scandinavian Center where a conference for ministers was being held. I waited for the Danish minister to hand him a petition written by Czech children protesting against whale fishing on the Faroe Islands. The friendly and nice man promised to hand the petition over to the competent and autonomous government of the islands that answered the Czech children, explaining the traditions of the islands. I met a Czech senator there and we started to negotiate our cooperation in the field of women rights. However, this has never been implemented due to lack of time.

By way of conclusion, they organized a guided tour of Aarhus for us. We visited a beautiful open-air museum in the vicinity of the botanical garden; I saw other wooden sculptures at various places in the city, interesting Christian churches with pagan Viking ships. The Catholic Church was called the Ladies Church; a sculpture symbolizing the combat between paganism and Christianity had been installed at a dominant location in the city. The city gave a balanced impression; it provided enough space for people and cyclists; there were not many cars in tree-lined streets; parks were within easy reach. After the end of the official excursion, I finally had a look round the city from the gallery of an observatory tower. The official conference was concluded by speeches dealing with the participation of the general public in public matters. The debate was comprehensive; all of those who participated in the discussion spoke a language that interpreted ecology and environment as something that exists outside of us, that is not a part of us. Because I did not manage to concentrate the whole morning, I did not feel competent to ask to address the meeting. Nevertheless, this was done by an ambitious young man on behalf of the whole group representing the Czech Republic at the conference. He designated himself to sit behind the table reserved for the chairmanship of the event. He chose a place which was lit by spotlight, next to the main moderator. One Swiss and one Slovenian woman who were organizing the conference stayed offstage. They had done a lot of hard work without any need to be in the spotlight, and the ambitious man pushed them aside easily. People were turning to me with the question about the young man's identity and role; he was fuming with ambitions; I did not know what to answer. The places behind the table were designed for the main organizers; everybody felt that somebody improper had squeezed in there.

A thought crossed my mind that this was also a part of ecology, although only a few people understand it as mutual relationships, courtesy, etc. The mayor of the city invited us to participate in the final dinner and dancing. Self-service tables were full of salmon, caviar, seafood; vegetarians had to abstain a lot, even if they seemed not to have any problems with fish. At the very last moment, I got acquainted with an American journalist who looked as a merman. He had come to Europe to forget about an unhappy love. He was sitting with me and my Macedonian roommate at a table during breakfast on the last day, and he hired a taxi for

all of us to take us to the city center. It seemed to me that he had fallen in love with the romantic beauty, and I wished all the best to them, both of them were lonely, kind and sensitive people. I also spent a long time saying good-bye to those who had invited me, and also with Aarhus, the green city. After lunch, I got on a train to Copenhagen from where I flew back home, to Prague, to share my experiences.

Our country has done a lot of significant work with regards to environmental protection. Those who still remember the smog in Prague, streets full of cars emitting fumes, and the journalist Velek who dared to criticize the environmental crimes of the past regime are grateful for the current situation. The modern legislation protecting the cleanliness of air, water, and soil have come to effect. However, during the last twenty years, new “protection” topics have emerged—global warming, the ozone layer, the cutting down of rain forests, the reduction of biodiversity. Most of these new topics concern us only marginally. None of the problems are visible. Yet, they do concern us. How to protect the planet when I live in a city and everything that I have been using has to be brought from far away places? Perhaps by just not being drawn into the traditional patterns of consumption and by leading a modest life.

Possible Actions: a Way out from the Hell of Consumerism

Once Socrates saw a crowd of curious onlookers gathering around a horse that belonged to Nikios, hearing them to talk about its excellent qualities. Socrates approached its groom and asked him if the horse had a lot of money. The groom looked at him as if he considered Socrates to be mad, saying, ‘Where would the horse get the money from?’ And Socrates said that he felt better hearing that even a poor horse can be good if it has good qualities naturally.
Xenofon

Citizen, Rebel, Reformer, Advocate of Change (1999)

After someone has entered a sauna, they will be sweating.
Finnish saying

I have participated in a great many seminars and courses in the course of my work in the ecological movement. One of the most useful was a seminar on how to learn

to assess one's own ideas and then how to implement them in projects and how to measure the effectiveness of the efforts involved. The terminology used by the trainers differentiated between two terms: activity and output. When referring to practical examples, applied in practice, it becomes evident that very often, many activities are indicated—however, there is no output whatsoever.

How to tell an activity apart from an output? For instance, an association organizes different excursions to various countries, which requires a lot of energy: the organization of the trip is an activity. It is hard to grasp the output, as it is difficult to measure. At the seminar, we were taught that it is necessary to focus our projects on the purpose of each activity: the attainment of a specific change or a practical output.

We found it very difficult to differentiate between activities and refer to specific and measurable outputs. At the same time, non-governmental non-profit organizations ought to strive, for example, to change society's present attitude to environmental issues in particular. The terms activity and output (the Czech term which translates into English as "result") have been taken from the American method Log Frame on the basis of which prominent and successful institutions, banks and enterprises draft their projects. Some time ago, this method cost me a fortune — I bought it in order to define a team strategy for an organization, which I managed in the first half of the 1990s. From the very first moment we faced difficulties, when attempting to define the objective of our activities and find answers to questions such as where we were headed and what we wanted. A simple answer that we want a permanently sustainable life is very vague; and even if we succeeded in answering the question "why", we may easily be at a loss when trying to find answers to questions such as "how", "when" and "where". These questions can bring anyone back to earth and into specific situations in which the person concerned ought to plan, step by step and in a specific time dimension, how to attain the aim or change. I had worked for the aforementioned organization for five years and although I had tried my best to define the time horizon of any foreseen change, I did not always manage to achieve satisfactory results.

A partial explanation lies in the nature of the people involved in the ecological movement. Generally speaking, these people are visionaries recruited from those who ask a variety of questions such as "where", "what" and "why". Answers to the questions "how", "when", "where", "who" and "how much" are too sordid to dwell on seriously. In the 1990s, the Czech Republic was flooded by consumerism and is now ruled by multinational enterprises. However, this fact can be explained by the dominance of leading personalities, who can apply their vision for a specific business and their pragmatic goals, by answering the questions "how", "when", "where", "who" and "how much". The leading personalities have succeeded in catching this boat, so to speak, by actively managing the society according

to their visions and needs. They live in specific dimensions of time and space and practical tasks. However visionary they may sound, answers to the questions “what” and “why” are an echo of, and reaction to, the situation which came about so quickly after the Velvet Revolution, so much so that the local people who, although taken by surprise, did not even blink. That is a fact. We are unfamiliar with the word pro–active; there is re–action, when we run after a situation instead of determining its direction and development. An open question remains: how to change the situation, how to be the one who determines the direction and sets up the models of behavior, not just those who come to terms with the situation as it is which has already been modeled by the ones more capable.

Fortunately, various instructions how to do this indeed exist, and something has happened, even though it seems that more could have been done. Theoretical models, such as Bill Moyer’s strategy of social movement has always been available. The author is American and the strategy describes different social movements — something that, at first glance, may appear impossible to grasp.

Four roles of active male and female citizens are defined: the citizen, the rebel, the advocate of change and the reformer. To put it simply, they presume an immense personal flexibility and a considerable degree of tolerance. In order to gain the mainstream public and make them a part of attainment of the goal, it is necessary for us to regard responsibility for one’s own life as the key in the first place; only then can we be responsible for our community. According to the theory, citizens agree with society’s fundamental values. There cannot be only passive theoreticians; they have to become rebels if circumstances and politics abuse social values. Protest alone does not suffice, which is the major misunderstanding by the anarchist movement. It is also necessary to advocate change by means of education and gaining the general public in order to oppose current politics and to search for positive and constructive solutions. There is also a need for reformers, working in official government and policy–making structures, in order to incorporate these solutions into legislation, the government’s policy and allow for the general acceptance of these solutions.

Perhaps it is not necessary to define one’s own role—nevertheless, it is good to know that these roles exist and each of them has its place and use. Those who play chess can easily imagine the victory of the person who knows the rules of the game and the possibilities of the individual pieces. Victory then depends only on the person’s experience and ability to reason strategically and make clever, tactical steps. Mutual generosity, openness and desire would be an immense asset for the Czech ecological movement. In order to refrain from verbal gestures only, it is necessary to sit down at roundtables and openly rely on every person’s right to openness, information and sincerity in knowing who goes where and why. What, where, when and how do they intend to implement these schemes? Provided

communication within the structure called the ecological movement is clear and open, comprehensibility in relation to the outer world will not keep us back for long. After all, permanent sustainable development relies on permanently sustainable communication. Yet, it is impossible to rely on the fact that the solution lies at a verbal level.

The participants of the discussion forums organized within the scope of the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project agreed upon the occurrence of powerlessness in relation to those who are in power. Voluntary modesty was pronounced by the participants in response to the age of consumer dictate. One of the participants described her experience of a non-consumerist family life, which is hard, but at the same time rewarding as it gives her a feeling of independence.

To Be or To Have? (1998)

*There is one great book without mistakes, flaws, and the great,
sacred book is called the book of nature.
B. Jablonský*

The objective of one of the many encounters, which I have organized, was an effort to show ways out of problems we were born into and have to face on an everyday basis. We pondered on how to practically approach the situation in our country which, since the Velvet revolution, has followed the path of dull materialism, of a society which seeks satisfaction and happiness in wealth and money. Possessions depend entirely on money and power. He, who has money, has power as well; and he who has power, tends to have money and wealth. Such a state is described by the verb “to have”. When discussing other options, we may gradually find our way to the word “to be”. The shift from the possessive “have” to the existential “be” is related to a tremendous human activity which, however, belongs to human beings and which keeps them healthy, sane and happy. It is far healthier to sing at the top of one’s amateur voice than to be a consumer who passively watches on television the most beautiful act of professional singing possible.

Sanity is the prerequisite of a sane society—the use of one’s own voice is an inseparable part of a sane human being. It suffices to remember the thousands of years of the Orient’s traditions, which make use of sonic mantras in order to relax the mind and to abandon dependency on its preoccupations. In this part of the world, people are not used to chanting or reciting mantras—traditionally, they sang songs.

My son took his violin and accompanied me with his music teacher to the aforementioned meeting. They played three Czech folk songs in front of a Czech

and international audience. First, my son and his music teacher played the tune—consequently, the others were invited to sing along. The selection of songs was symbolic, they were chosen for the purpose of the meeting. The first folk song was called “Oh, the town of Velvary, where are my thalers” (“Ó Velvary, kde jsou mé tovary”). Our predecessors composed it to speak of a society in which everyone seeks money. The second song followed a similar style by expressing a dependency on donors and parents—at the same time being a figurative description of the barter trade. It was the song “My dad, my mum, sell something so that you can buy me something else” (“Táto můj, mámo má, prodejte něco, abyste mi něco jiného mohli koupit”). The third song began with the singer being nostalgic: s/he has not heard a bird sing for a long time — instead, s/he sees a sad sky. In the lyrics, the singer openly declares his/her love for nature. I can tell you that, originally, it was a German song which was subsequently taken over and has now become a west Bohemian folk song “Green Groves”. Beyond the seemingly incoherent first and the second verses, there is a hidden, and profound folk wisdom. In the first verse, the expression of a love of nature is at stake and in the second, which begins with “I was given a scarf”, is an explicit erotic undertone. I would like to point out that our society lacks healthy eroticism, even though it could play a very significant role in finding a solution to the crisis of the current consumerist society.

The encounter was called “Alternatives to the consumerist lifestyle” and we attempted to find ways out of a society focused on the possessive “have” of things, cars, husbands, wives, friends, in the direction of a society in which we “will” all love each other, cooperate and seek happiness. How easy but at the same time so difficult! Such advice may resemble black humor in a world in which one third of the human population consumes two thirds of the world’s natural resources and spreads this covetousness globally throughout the world to coerce the others to do the same. Today’s global environment is pushed to exploit our natural resources more and more, to technical innovations, market economy and huge gains of the most covetous kind. Monetary and psychological emphasis on consumer values, where the price of a human being is derived from his/her possessions, plunges mankind headlong into a blind alley. The real development lies in finding permanently sustainable solutions. If the consumer monoculture does not stop, we cannot hope that further social abysses and economical degradation will not occur. To remove the technological uniformity, active support of ecological and cultural diversity is needed, as well as the support of the use of local resources, knowledge and the skills of people from any given location. Agricultural self-sufficiency must play a key role in ecology. The principle of free trade needs a critical review, not with the aim to support and protect, but rather with the aim for a reasonable use of the natural resources from all over the world. At present, wide ranges of

products are being transported across the continents, from milk and apples to furniture, which could be produced or grown at the location of consumption. This would support and revive local economy; also, unrenewable sources of energy would be saved, such as crude oil. We saw this at the aforementioned meeting. We also said that economy is not everything. How much do we eat and how many consumer goods do we consumer when we are in love, for instance?

Here, it is appropriate to repeat the fact which tends to be omitted by environmentalists: energetic, natural resources, on which the whole consumerist “merry-go-round” survives, and the subsequent destruction of the environment, will last for several tens, or rather hundreds of years. Would it not be appropriate to start, at least experimentally, to renew independent country communities in Europe?

Remembering My Mother (1986)

A meal composed of cabbage is better where there is love than a meal composed of a beef ox where there is hatred.
Solomon

The author of the quote is no longer alive. The story has been taken from the Memories deposited at the Museum of National Literature, and is written in the language of the time in order to give us an idea of the reasoning and affections that differ from todays. He was born in the twelfth century, during the period of Advent, as the fourth child, the second living—his two elder sisters had died soon after birth. Three more boys were born after him—they were brought up by their mother in a tender and, at the same time, tough manner to become integrated persons beneficial to their nation, as he liked to put it. She caressed them by merely looking at them and she knew how to tell them off in the same way. She praised them while glancing at them and was often astonished when she turned her head. At an early age she exerted much energy to teach her son to pronounce “k”. He kept changing the sound to “t”, he would say, “torn” instead of “corn”. Eventually, while they were approaching a field one-day, he said “con” and soon after that, while they were walking the same path, he pronounced the word “corn” clearly. Both of them were flooded with such joy! As children, they would accompany their mother everywhere, to the fields and the meadows—like a hen and chickens. Mother constantly keeping an eye on them, teaching them, explaining things to them, urging, warning and reminding them to do things. This kind of education was repeated every day in order that the children got used to it, entering their nature and their blood. One of the most important observations was work. In

work, she said, you could find personal satisfaction, peace, joy, fulfillment, security, material security, and family happiness. As for her, she could plough, sow, beat and sharpen the scythe with a grindstone in a way that no one else from the family could imitate. She reaped two rows while the reapers scythed just one—the same rule applied to potato digging. The children could dig one row whereas she could dig two. The same applied to hoeing.

Every day, the elder siblings would look after the younger ones, the stronger after the weaker, the cleverer after the less intelligent, the more gifted after the less talented. This constituted a minor aspect of raising them to work, to be conscientious, responsible and skilled. For the purpose of bringing up infants, these features were needed all the more. Mother needed a guarantee that the elder children would see to their duties seriously, responsibly, and honestly, and that there would be no injuries, blunders or accidents. Mother was fully aware of all this and every evening, each of the children would report on the results of their conduct, work and school activities. For mother spent most of the time on her own with the children, as father was at war—and later on, he was away, also, abroad on business.

Work—today almost an impolite word, at least in our country. Those who have easily gained their fortune and livelihood — by means of a victory, speculation, or marriage—tend to be adored. And those who like to work and, to make matters worse, are not ashamed of it, appear to be somewhat off their head. It is possible to perceive such a state of societal consciousness as decadent. The idea that hundreds of visitors will pour in to see an exhibition with a title such as “History of Work”, as they used to visit similarly designed exhibitions in the 19th century, is ridiculous. However, the laughter is sad. What has become of us?

Let Us Make Love (1998)

Those who are ruled by Eros of pure love have their eyes kinder, voice sweeter and their moves are moderate and full of noble peace.
Xenophon

The man to whom her heart belonged came to pick her up and take her home. He helped her pack and as they were leaving the hotel room, she asked him shyly if they could kiss to celebrate being on first-name terms. He embraced her and kissed her with his lips pursed. She gathered all her courage and asked him a question in the middle of an empty room with a large bed: “And where are we going to make love?” He answered immediately that he disliked pressure being put on him, especially when it came to these issues. He collected the rest of the luggage

and rushed to the car. The answer, as well as the rush hurt her—nonetheless, she got over the bitter disappointment and followed him quietly. She could see that he was watching her, making glad eyes at her, expecting of a reaction of some kind. She casually conversed with him, with ease. The many years of self-control and the suppression of feelings, emotions, desires and wishes left a trace on her. All things considered, she had known since childhood that she should not ask stupid questions—and that was already some time ago. While he was driving, she learnt everything about his job, duties, sports activities, family events and celebrations. Reminiscence of all kinds to which she reacted in the same, neutral manner. While he was speaking, she also learnt that the man was shy, which she had not anticipated—in other situations, it was hard to discern. This came to her as quite a surprise since she had the impression that he acted confidently. He drove her home and said good-bye to her. He spoke nicely to her, suggesting that they had had a good time and that he would like to see her again. After that, she saw him many times. They never kissed again though and they never spoke of making love. Two adults of the opposite sex who had the same feelings for each other—however, strong educational, cultural, traditional, proprietary and responsible blocks in the relationship with their own partners closed the possibility of rejoicing in human warmth and intimate contact.

Once, they met at his birthday party. She did not bring him a present, she only brought a magazine in her bag which she had bought from a homeless person at the railway station. For the sheer hell of it, she took it out and gave it to him wittily. Before that, she had opened the magazine and looked for any topics related to parties. Right on the first page, there was a public survey entitled “What is sex to you?” The answers were very different. She took advantage of the opportunity and asked all the people present the same question—their replies were as varied as those of the respondents in the magazine were. Her beloved man said that sex was the same to him as the Prague Spring. Too big and official an event to be able to treat himself to it even once a year.

She thought that life with him would resemble those of worn out managers who drive luxury cars to play squash, who have no time to walk and cannot even afford to be considered social cases—the only thing they need is to have a quick and effective sweat. They spend an hour playing squash, have a shower and go back to work. What kind of lovers can these managers be?

Relationships among lovers were also one of the subjects which the participants of the round tables touched upon in their discussions, even though only marginally, as dictated by our cultural customs. However, it is possible to make a general conclusion based on a number of brief outputs: women of all ages voiced their disappointment at the way they are approached by their

loved ones, they agreed on the lack of willingness to reach an agreement, to communicate about the body and its beautiful aspects. Ignorance, dilettantism and erotic selfishness are characteristic of Czech men whom the participants in the project have encountered.

There is No Such Thing as an Identical Touch (1999)

No civilized man ever regrets pleasure, an uncivilized man does not even know what pleasure is.

O. Wilde

One day, after seeing her little son off at the airport and wishing him a safe flight across the ocean, she started her weekday as usual. She got home late in the evening, but not just ordinarily. On her way back home, she had popped in her friend's for an aromatherapy massage—it was not the first time her friend had massaged her with her sensitive hands. Every time she left, she almost flew. In the course of the massage, she remembered her mother's massages, the aim of which was to chase illness out of the child's ill body, which is why her mother was so rough with her while massaging her. She shrieked with pain and never asked for a massage of her own free will. Her mother-in-law's massages were more compassionate; but under the influence of past experiences from childhood, she believed them not to be so efficient. The best touch she had ever experienced had been that of an American masseur from Atlanta who weighted one hundred kilos and whom she had put up in her household. She knew all of the important bits on the human body and her strong hands could feel them even if she was dressed. Half an hour of blissful touch made one do without drugs.

Every now and then she allowed her girlfriends, who liked to play round with the idea of earning their living by becoming professional masseurs, to massage her—despite being pleasant, the massages were not systematic and it was hard for them to agree on the date. When she met the aromatherapist and learnt of her art of massage accompanied by beautiful scents, she did not refuse the offer. She left feeling relieved, forgiven, her eyes swimming in an unconscious pool, as if she was floating with lightness resembling a decent tipsiness. At home, she was kinder to her family, she was helpful and her family could not believe their eyes. Who has their mother changed into, what a unique event has taken place? It was hard to believe what the hands of the masseur managed to do with the help of her hands and fragrant essences!

She remembered that it had been some time since the last massage and realized that it would be good to go for a massage and have someone touch her. A desperate young man who had told her a story of unhappy love reminded her of the

delight of being touched. He fell in love with a girl who decided to go on a course to look for the child within. A cook was there who knew the art of massage, along with other arts. The girl went round to his place, he massaged her and made love to her. The experience was so immense that she resolved to leave her boyfriend for the masseur. Such power the masseur's hands possessed!

Not everyone's hands are so sensitive and have such a magic power. Once she longed for a massage but the aromatherapist was too busy. This is why she decided to try a cosmetic center—there, a handsome young man massaged her adroitly and efficiently. Yet, she could feel the effects of the massage for the whole of the following week, as if she had been beaten and left her in a terrible humor. Only then did she realize there is no such thing as an identical massage. The act of undressing one's body and leaving it to someone else's disposal presumes/implies trusts. Many a time, she had paid for her hot-headed gullibility. But how to tell quality without trying it? Having learnt from her own experience, she knows now how useless and dull the mere physical form of a massage is, which conceives the person as a skeleton wrapped in muscles, fat, and skin. An object for cosmetic saloons, a face, which is necessary to manipulate according to the instructions found in fashion magazines, a dummy shaped into a fashion Barbie doll.

Once again and humbly, she made an appointment with the aromatherapist to taste her each and every touch, each of her giving. She saw how beautiful the lady was when she came and how exhausted she was when she left. How much energy she exerts to invest into her customers who leave refreshed, able to face up to the too many new tasks which they take on but often cannot bear and which the masseur, by means of her hands, lifts off their shoulders patiently and lovingly. She helps them sensitively, as a woman can help a woman, familiar with the cultural pressures and societal expectations.

Central European cultural customs teach all of us from early childhood that everything relating to the body is sordid; it is not polite to speak of the body and its needs, even of the need for physical touch. It is necessary to say that this is to the detriment of the issue. Today's neurotics grew up in a generation of children born during the years of the ideological and enforced construction of the communist regime when the productivity of work was the imperative of the period. The babies who were fed from bottles, with definite doses and at precise times, and if they cried, they were not hushed and caressed based of the order of "specialists" but left in their beds to "cry it off", grew up to become fat, hating Czech females who have dragged their unfulfilled need of love since childhood all their life. That is one of the many consequences of the refusal to listen to the natural needs of the body which may have begun... possibly with one's denial on the grounds of the church's orders?

Make Love Not War (1998)

To love, just love, is a blind alley. A person has a far higher responsibility than to love only.

A. Saint-Exupéry

Once upon a time, a middle-aged man arrived at the door of an office and inquired whether information was available on a meeting of hippies called the Rainbow and if she had the time to learn something about them? She knew nothing and had no time. After a series of morning visits, she had to make several appointments. She was only allowed to pop out to buy a roll in a nearby bakery. The visitor did not hesitate a second and offered to accompany her—in the meantime, he told her who he was and what was on his mind. There was much to say, Henri the Fiddler—a violinist, who traveled the whole world with his head full of tunes of almost all the songs of the world, had come to the Czech Republic to meet the hippies in the Šumava Highlands. Based on a number of recommendations by mutual friends, he had stopped there to invite her. The zest with which he was describing the Rainbow gathering was contagious. Many hundreds of people were to come and he was to give a performance to entertain them. His mission was communication among people and he did his best to improve it. Other participants in the Rainbow gathering played musical instruments too, they sang; others voluntarily looked after food supplies and meals for everyone. She wanted to hear him play so he invited her to attend the gathering—he would play the violin for her for the two days.

They said goodbye and all the violinist left her with was an invitation and a map on which the place of the meeting was highlighted. Before going there, she thought she would travel to the ecological days in Telč so she decided to attend the two events. In the meantime, the evening news on TV broadcast information about an illegal and scandalous meeting of weird people camping right at the place she had been invited to. Her colleague, too, attempted to persuade her not to go there—she claimed that it was some kind of a new age sect meeting and who knows what group sex would await her there. She had reached the age when she thought nothing endangered her either physically or mentally. All the same, she began to hesitate and left Telč peacefully to go back to her family in Prague. Other news shots captured the unauthorized gathering of the harmless, mysterious group of people who had gathered in Šumava. The policemen in the news shot looked as if at a loss and argued that there was absolutely no reason for them to intervene against the Rainbow people. The camera also caught a glimpse of a violinist playing a passage of Dvořák's Humoresque. It was The Humoresque, performed by the vagrant American, which made her decide. After another short stay in south

Moravia she decided to hitchhike with a friend of hers. In the course of the journey, she conducted a private survey by asking the locals what they thought of the massive meeting of hippies. People were disconcerted and appalled at the way the uninvited visitors dressed—allegedly they had sat on the ground in front of the local shop. They had brought excitement to the otherwise calm life of the villages on the Czech border where people had long kept themselves to themselves and thus were protected from the outside world.

They arrived at the spot late at night, after a series of unsuccessful attempts to hitchhike. Tens of small fires were burning in a forest clearing. Around them, people were assembled to beat drums, play the guitar, flute, violin; they danced, sang and enjoyed themselves. Her friend and she passed through the campsite, inspected the strange dwellings and after a while, they spread their sleeping bags under the nearest spruces to get ready to sleep. At night, it was cold outside so they got up very early to warm up a little in the morning sun. Other people were sleeping near them; she caught a sight of a violin leaning against a tree. For a moment, she wondered if the violin belonged to the violinist and if it was possible to find him amongst all the people? While she was pondering these thoughts she suddenly heard the sweet sound of the violin. They followed the sound and discovered it in a square surrounded by Indian tee-pees. He was wearing a rainbow headband, holding the violin and playing it beautifully; precisely as one ought to play a musical instrument in a land where, not long ago, every second person used to be a musician. They greeted him and reminded him of who they were. His joy at meeting them was boundless. He confessed to her that he had invited many people all of whom promised to come; however, hardly ever did they have time to keep their promise. Within two weeks of his stay, he was well known in the camp. People called him by the Czech name Jindra the violinist and he started to lead improvised music workshops. He assembled all the musicians present and they played for the sake of joy. For the Saturday, which was spent in the camp, Henri the Fiddler and young musicians from Peterborough prepared a cultural programme. All of them met up in the forest and the quartet, consisting of two violins, a flute and a guitar, performed extracts of prominent works of Renaissance and Baroque music. The Russians made Russian tea and a Russian cook served Italian risotto with Czech mushrooms and Indian spices.

Henri the violinist wanted to introduce her to everyone he knew and to show her everything that was there to be seen, from the information center to the library, tea room, kitchen and an open-air church. In a few hours, tens of friends surrounded them, they listened to a lot of beautiful music and tasted good food and delicious teas. The atmosphere was filled with sun, joy, love and understanding. There were three-month-old infants as well as seventy-year-old women. People were dressed, half-dressed and naked. No one organized anyone, the people present

behaved themselves well, which was their nature, the camp was clean, hygiene was not a problem, the people were awake, sleeping, exercising, dancing, playing. See-saws were available for children. There was an aluminium oven in the kitchen, along with a fireplace. Volunteers prepared and served meals, which were accompanied and made more pleasant by the musicians' performance.

"Make love not war" was the hippies' slogan which she came across casually when she was a child. In the middle of her life, she tasted what it felt like for half a day. It was delicious; yet it was high time to leave and they had to say goodbye. On the way out of the camp, everyone was carrying assorted litter to a designated place. She, too, took a few cartons but someone offered to dispose of the litter for her.

In the scope of her work, she had decided a long time ago to include reflections on the causes and consequences of problems which mankind and civilization have brought about. Different people seek different approaches, methods and ways of resolving the ecological crisis. They appeal to morals, intelligence; they speak of connections and to raise awareness in sundry manners. Their grounds are both logical and rational. The Rainbow people outlined another possible approach which touches human emotions and opens human hearts by enjoying life, with love, singing, music, reciprocity and without preaching. Supreme law—the law of nature and universe, respects the slogan "make love not war".

Again, it is possible to mention Czech xenophobia, the fear of everything new which is common in small Czech towns and in the country. The locals were afraid of the strange visitors whom they isolated without even attempting to make use of their nature in order to revive their routines. Those who have had the chance to experience the spiritual atmosphere of cultural events are favorably inclined to understand mankind in its diversity. A community which is open, has no fears and can accept new impulses with the use of its own critical thinking, is always in an advantageous position in comparison with the thoroughly xenophobic society. This openness and ability to listen and criticize is usually borne by enlightened individuals. Civil society is weakened in those places where there is, for various reasons, a lack of such individuals.

The Rose of the Orient (1999)

Memories are the only paradise from which we can be expelled.

Jean Paul

On a hot August day she was considering which way to go to work to make it as pleasant as possible. The street she finally opted for went uphill and was dug up,

dusty and covered in litter. She was pushing her bike, sweating and swearing in her mind. She grumbled about the mess as well as the fact that life has thoroughly adjusted itself to the aggressiveness of motoring leaving no pretty road in Prague with which to follow on ones way from home to work, when, all of a sudden, she spotted a specter from ancient times. A man was standing on the hill, at the end of the dug up street. He was tall, slim, dressed in a dark suit, wearing a hat and playing around with a walking stick. She could not believe her eyes. He was a dignified and beautiful apparition amidst all the dirt of the city. He stopped near a house and was reading the names on the door bells. She slowed down and relished the extraordinary sight. As she approached the man, she could see that he was holding a magnifying glass to illuminate and better see the names on the doorbell. She came to him and inquired whether she might help him? There was silence for a while, and the man slowly turned around and she could see tears in his eyes. She was about to leave when, all of a sudden, as if he was not present, he said that the Rose of the Orient had lived and died in that house. At first, she thought that he had gone crazy—he was the age when various illnesses are considered to be normal. Consequently, she asked him again what her name was and if she could be of any help to him? After a longer silence, he said her name in a way that moved her, stating also that she had lived and died there. After her death he had come to see the place where her son and she had lived. She found a doorbell with the name, touched it with her forefinger, laying his forefinger on it, said goodbye and pushed her bicycle up the hill along the red hot, ugly road.

She could not get the vision of the festively dressed, dignified man out of her head—he was mysterious and enigmatic. When she came to work, she took a pack of magazines that someone had left there and went to the adjacent office to tell her colleagues about her experience. They listened to her with passion and emotion. Finally, she said that she had brought some new issues, which were at their disposal. She suggested, by the way, that they could give them to their mothers or whomever they wished. Her colleagues thanked her gratefully. He was thinking of a present for his mother's name day which she was celebrating on that day. She had no idea what name day it was, she did not really know what she was saying—something spoke to her influenced by the strong experience with the man who had come to say farewell to the Rose of the Orient.

Our memories, memories of each and everyone of us, personal experiences, details of our lives as well as personal feelings of happiness or tragedy, these are the storehouse of our minds. The media, the entertainment industry and, ultimately, book production and distribution try to crush us, to persuade us that somewhere far away there are people who have the patent to intelligence, arts and the ability to really experience and depict beauty.

This is not so and we must not let them crush us. We experience the smell of roses, the beauty of the sunset or the color of dandelions in a similar way. We can speak, write, and draw. Why not capture personal memories of each of us for everyone surrounding us and for generations to come? Ideas and attitudes, the memories of each of us are important.

Admiration (2000)

*I do not like people who do not admire anything since I have spent
all my life admiring everything.
Goethe*

She caught a glimpse of a statue of a woman near an interesting fountain in the park. The woman was short, chubby, of soft contours despite the fact that they were made of stone. She inspected her thoroughly, thinking to herself that her maker could not have been gay, someone who recognizes the unified model of female beauty, a model determined by fashion designers or advertisement pimps. The statue of the woman was tiny; approximately a hundred and fifty centimeters high, she could not apply for today's miss competition, as she would not have met the required height or slenderness. She was being washed in a shower of light and the chubby silhouettes were shining in simple beauty, which fitted the neat park. She stopped and attempted to find a flaw in the woman in the same way as she had been always used to look for flaws in her own body. She had always thought—and people around her had always tried to convince her — that her buttocks were too large, her breasts were too small, her teeth had been repaired, she was too short, her laughter was too loud, she was constantly astonished and was not clever enough. This is what she had heard all her life in many variations and from different directions.

She was glancing at the statue and started asking herself if the small woman had been the sculptor's mistress or wife. Did he love her or was she his model? Is she still alive and if so, what does she look like? And what does the sculptor look like? Had the model ever looked at herself as she was doing now? She pondered these questions for a moment and then, in silence, she said goodbye to the statue, wished her many admirers, those she had always longed to have and those whom she had always lacked.

The desire "to have" many admirers mentioned in the end can indicate the female desire to be promiscuous. According to recent views of sexologists and biologists, initially it was natural in both women and man.

If the participants of the round tables were to comment on the dictate of modern times briefly described by the slogan "be slender, blond and small",

they were at a loss. Questions were raised, touching upon the issue of whether we carry the ideal, which our appearance wants to present, inside ourselves or whether it is the real dictate of present times. Many women voice their opinion that older women are an immense asset to society who, according to the media, employers and superficial partners, are losing their attractiveness. All the women thought this idea very unfair.

Timely Help (2000)

There is nothing more welcome for a person than a friend at the right time.
Plautus

She refused to go to the early morning meeting. She wanted a good sleep, have a shower, and exercise a little, as she liked the long mornings all to herself. The next appointment was planned for half past eight in the morning so she had to hurry to make it. Her driver and she set off in time but could not find a place to park; at the very last moment, they spotted the entrance to an underground garage. As they drove in, a latch cropped up in front of them, and a queue began to form behind them. The passage was narrow; it was not possible to reverse or to go straight on. Suddenly—Open Sesame—the latch was raised and the car entered the concrete maze. Next to the car, a charming woman appeared and explained the mystery of the raised latch. It was necessary to possess a card confirming the fee payment for parking underground—it was she who had opened Sesame. They did not have a card and wished to leave the underground as quickly as possible. The stranger made circles with her hand, insinuated something and tried to provide explanations; as soon as she saw they did not understand, she stopped explaining and got in the car to take them out of the garage. The block of garages, into which they had wandered, consisted of several floors, so they had to get out of the deepest cave to reach the exit by a series of circles.

She realized that had it not been for the helpful stranger, they would have spent a long time in the garage without the card and knowledge of the local language. She thanked her for being so helpful and she set off humbly for the appointment where other self-sacrificing women voluntarily and willingly dragged the burden of the world on their shoulders.

The readiness to waste a little time, to enjoy good will and selfless help to a person in need are getting lost in the anonymity of large cities. Again, it is necessary to say that each of us has to start with herself to fight against this trend in order to be exemplary to our children and people around us.

Nature (2000)

*The soul is not spoilt by the flaw of the body while
the beauty of the soul decorates the body.*

Seneca

She was wandering in the streets of an unknown city, wearing tight shorts. It was hot and her trousers enclosed her thighs which were not really slender. From the back, underneath her knees, her varicose veins could be seen and she spitefully recalled a book by a famous Czech writer she had recently read. The author was reflecting on the ugliness of female legs with varicose veins. While describing the ugliness, he sought relief by remembering the beauty and purity of forget-me-nots.

As she was reading the book, she thought of the writer's legs; now, she walked the streets provocatively, with a feeling of satisfaction. A while ago, she had locked her bike near the city gate—amidst the dressed up ladies, her tight shorts made her look eccentric. She thought of how the varicose legs of mothers have to run, worry and fetch; when this service is naturally reflected in their physiognomy, some scribbler speaks of ugliness. What gives him the right? She is aware of uglier things, legs with varicose veins are natural compared to the filth she saw around her every day. Be it the mess in the streets or drivers' roughness, men spitting on the pavement, rude remarks and vulgarities, violence, financial transactions and corruption.

The stream of her reflections was interrupted by a change in the environment. She had entered a beautiful residential quarter where there was a lot of cultural verdure, the houses were immaculate and almost all of them bore names of professions such as psychiatrist, psychologist, and psychotherapist. It is because the world despises nature and finds delight in artificiality, she thought. A feeling of spite overwhelmed her again as a motorway cropped up amidst the rear sections of the houses. So this is where they heal their disorders, their traumas and depressions, these aesthetes of the human body? Are there not too few elder women's varicose veins around them?

Stubbornness which has persisted in many of us perhaps since puberty is useful every time we are pushed into the corner: by means of adverts for beautiful artificial breasts, the omnipresent bodies and faces of models, ignorance on behalf of our long-term partners. Stubbornness is useful: our own thoughts and dreams help us live in a world in which it is inappropriate or even abject, to be old, wrinkled, experienced and consistent. How on earth can we, the non-young, bob-rich non-models, survive? Is our life—

so distant from the world of films, adverts, and serials of all kinds—survival or living in the proper sense of the word? All the same, I think—and am thus stubbornly opposed to a classical writer who wrote “Life is elsewhere”—that my life “is not elsewhere”. It is where I am, here and now!

This active approach to one’s own life was presented by numerous participants of the “Quo Vadis, Femina?” round tables—they inspired each other as well as all the other participants.

To Live and To Let Live (2000)

There is nothing dearer to mankind than children.

Livius

After ten hours of an exhaustive journey they eventually reached their destination. The elder son was driving a rented car and together with his mother they accompanied his brother to a school which had awarded him a scholarship for the year. It was a public school (in the British sense of the word public) which was considered to be one of the best in the world—according to all available sources. The school is situated in the Swiss Alps and the programme is focused on the overall development of the personality, individual dispositions and talents of every child. One teacher is in charge of five pupils, who thus have enough time to explore and develop every individual’s abilities. The school was very expensive, they would have never saved enough to finance it; however, the mother’s strenuous efforts were successful. She tried to obtain money wherever it was possible—yet, the only kind of advice she ever received was how to pay a private teacher which is always cheaper. Her instincts told her that the case was different, and she did not think the advice important. The efforts she had made were not in vain, just before the school year started the son had been awarded a scholarship.

The children had been expected by the school since Saturday, just after lunch; the children were glad they made it late in the afternoon. The parents’ session was taking place then, the English part had unfortunately finished and they did not understand German. From the teacher’s gestures they were able to grasp what was going on; this way they had the opportunity to realize the incredible and obvious gift which every child is given by their mothers—the gift of tongue, the mother tongue which is absorbed naturally without being ingratiated. She realized that this applied to everything mothers did. For the most part, they cherish their offspring without demanding reward, they offer them a home without a word up to their dying day—a place where they can always come back to, where they can arrive without appointment, a place where they will always be fed and where they can always lay their head free of charge. They do not ask for gratitude, this is not

even a barter trade. Is it really so obvious to adult children to leave the door open for their mothers to come to them at any time?

She thought of the tyranny imposed by some mothers who emotionally blackmail their children all their life with their doting love, but she did not really want to dwell on those mothers who were indifferent to their own children's fate. She was in strange territory as she handed over her son to these new parents who were to look after him. She considered them better than herself, even though the torn strap of the new rucksack she had given him made the new mother nervous. They had a sewing machine but the child could not operate it. A typical Czech young man for whom his mother had always done and solved everything. It was high time to leave so she left the torn strap, the son and the mother to their fate. They would be able to settle it without her anyway. Before the departure, the school offered them dinner. Pasta, stewed meat and a vegetable salad. She had heard before that the food served at school was plain and simple. She sat at the table with the former head teacher, the founder of international camps to which her younger son had gone every year since the age of eight. While they were dining, they spoke of the school's limited capacity, of how the children absorbed the atmosphere of mutual co-existence by means of summer stays which were held for a month all over the world. The tradition of the camps had lasted for more than forty years and now their former head teacher had left it up to the younger generation to manage the school and organize the camps. She supervised the management of the school and the proper upholding of all the rules from a distance, in a motherly and loving way. As for her, she was a mother to her own four children as well as many hundreds of other children whom she had been influencing and encouraging all her life.

She was happy to have led her son into the human community with love and understanding, at ease. She did not think about what would happen once her son returned. She saw his eyes wide open and glittering, she saw him surrounded by friends—and that was enough to make her happy.

Mothers will do almost anything for their children, which is a fact documented by this story, literature and a great many real stories which have not been recorded. Mothers' self-sacrifice is boundless, especially in critical situations. It is mothers who carry the fragile mankind through the tough human history in the form of children.

Nakedness (1998)

*The body is a machine as well as a driver, and if a good machine has a drunken and irresponsible driver, I will not remain undamaged for long.
To put it differently: the body needs the spirit to change.*
Sinclair

It was a beautiful sunny day, the mother and her son borrowed bikes and went on a trip. The landscape through which they passed was neat in the southern German style and the routes for bikes were pleasant to follow. They received a map from the host, as well as a recommendation of where to go. They pulled up a few times to see that they had followed the right direction to the lake where they wanted to have a swim. They bought ice creams with the last few marks that they had and within two hours had reached the lake with its translucent blue water. To their surprise they found that the whole beach was for nudists, crowded with naked men, women and children. The son was appalled and upset by the sight. Why should he have to look at the naked bodies of old, fat matrons! The mother rebuked him, saying that he was free to look in any direction and at whomever he wished. He should not inhibit the others. As for her, she undressed and exposed her naked body to the sunrays and probably the ozone hole too. After a while, she went to have a swim and from the water, she observed the beach. The son was lying there in shorts and a T-shirt; the map, in order not to see the neighbors' dress in their birthday suits, covered his eyes. She could see naked bodies debating—their obese bodies—and recalled a walk with a stranger several months before. Then, they had unexpectedly come across at a meadow full of nudists. The stranger of Jewish-Catholic descent turned away and condemned the human body as anaesthetic. She laughed and wanted to know what is more aesthetic than nature? He was willing to admit that a young body was beautiful; however he was critical of older bodies even though he himself was in his middle age. She asked him boldly how he made love to his wife who was no longer fifteen? He did not reply, which made her suspect him of making love to his wife like an embarrassed schoolboy whose incertitude are disguised in contempt and the feeling of superiority. She thought the way he made love to his wife was like “tapping out”, if he made love to her at all.

Now, she was glancing again at naked bodies, bodies rummaging in refrigerator boxes for food, stuffing it in and washing it down with loads of champagne. The view of men's exposed bellies sticking out, under which their willies were cowering, the Venus-like contours of the women's bodies and the uniformly tinted complexions filled her with joy. When she got out of the lake for the third time, her son turned his pinched face to her and asked her if they could leave. She

agreed and started to dress. The son had been dressed since their arrival, so it was not a problem for him to leave at once. She could not refrain from getting at him for his juvenile Puritanism, behaving like a catholic priest; the son retorted with sincerity that he need not have everything, including a nudist beach along with his own mother.

Nakedness... oh yes, nakedness, I remember. I recall the little pink heels with which I used to play as a child. I recall the first time I saw a naked penis, pulsating. I recall the naked, whitish and pinkish bodies of my new-born children. I recall the naked belly of my old mother who was showing me the healing scar after the last operation. Nakedness is human and deserves admiration, love, and understanding. Why is not this information included in the school curriculum?

Equilibrium (1999)

The Earth is the mother common to all mortals.

Livius

They traveled abroad for the whole week. The summer was ending; the beauty of the landscape and the neatness of the gardens and villages, which they were passing through from north to south and vice versa, took her. She was only startled by the fact that she had seen no birds flying and had not heard any birds singing. It was the end of summer and besides ravens, no other birds were to be spotted in the meadows. They reached their destination where they spent three days; their attention was drawn to the noise of a near-by motorway, trains, planes and a few ravens in the meadow where a flock of cows were grazing. She mentioned this to their host who explained to her that at the end of summer, birds could not be heard since they flew too high. She accepted this explanation although she had long observed that in the city where she lived, sparrows, tufted larks, swallows and martins could not be seen either in spring, in summer or autumn. Only pigeons and magpies. Mankind changes nature and consequently nature reflects mankind and its activity. Greedy magpies collect everything that glitters, in the same way as Homo greedy sapiens consume. She thought briefly of the political party preaching economic prosperity which had a bird in its emblem — by that, they surely meant magpie, not titlark. Where on earth would one find a titlark and who would hear it sing in the everyday hedgerow?

She was doing her regular morning exercise in a stranger's meadow when she saw a kitten playing around with something. That something was bigger than a mouse, it was not a sock or a piece of rug; the cat was torturing a blackbird. She

ran towards the cat and took the scared bird in her hand. The cat attacked her but she managed to catch it and take it to her owner. In the kitchen, she complained about the cat and how it had amused itself. There were other people in the kitchen who seemed surprised and objected that the blackbird must have been ill, otherwise the cat would not have caught it. The blackbird was torn, its leg was injured; yet she thought of the overpopulated mankind and its over-bred pets, cats and dogs that help mankind finish off the unbalanced and beaten equilibrium of nature. A man who was sitting said that the bird need not have been ill but that the kitten was quick and had all day to play and hunt. Without a word, she turned away and left for a remote meadow, still holding the poor bird in her hand and looking for a hiding place where it could either recover or die peacefully. It was not capable of standing on a branch so she placed it under a tree, on a heap of hay, caressed it and wished it peace and good luck.

When she came back to the kitchen, the other people were still talking about the kitten and how it caught everything that moved—it even caught a butterfly a while ago. Again, she could not recall when she had last seen butterflies flying in a meadow, a natural, living, wild creature? She got on a bike and rode in the direction of an artificial lake to have a swim. When she came back, she found tinfoil torn apart and spread all over the place, the same tinfoil in which she had brought cakes and gingerbread from home. The gingerbread was lying on the ground and the cakes were gone. She thought of the cats as well as the fact that it was not their fault. They behave naturally in an artificial world.

Today we have to pay money to go back to our roots, to wild nature, in remote lands. Our flying trips to the wilderness damage the ozone layer just a little more, we waste oil in the form of petrol, and we leave litter behind even in those places where there are no sewage plants. After we come back, we tell everyone with zest about the intact environment and we list the names of exotic animals and plants in the name of the love of nature...

Those who are poorer or perhaps more aware travel to the wilderness in their thoughts and sentimental reminiscences of the time long, long ago (it is most likely that no one admits that there used to be famines, no vaccinations or antibiotics).

Mass hysteria, sports events and passion evoke in us wilderness beyond control. From the rain forests of South America, we know the speed with which the wilderness drowned ancient towns. Wilderness takes over in all those places where space is offered.

Sex and the European Union (2000)

The price of violence we commit on ourselves to stay faithful to our beloved one is not greater than infidelity.
Rochefoucauld

While she pondered the economic and political advantages of membership in the European Union, she was feeling a Dutch fly in the Czech Senate. A discussion was being held on the necessity of joining the EU, the audience applauded, was frenetically enthusiastic and her neighbor unzipped. It was evident this interest in his manhood pleased him. The Dutch penis was strong and wet. If she could compare it with the Czech–American penises with which she had had to do so far, this one was extremely sensitive and helpful. The penis of an American scientist was similar in size, his only flaw was temporariness, breathlessness, and the need to compete, remorse after some time, and then return to his wife. He is a computer man, she had learnt from their Austrian acquaintance, and had run for the post of Austrian president some time ago. She was grateful to the penis of an American gay for getting to know vaginal orgasm which she had not even come across in literature. Her husband's hands were agile enough to move on the clitoris, and she was grateful to him for teaching her how to rejoice in her own body. In time, he grew lazy and vibrators replaced him, evoking the same or even greater pleasure in the physical sense of the word; she had long forgotten about the mental aspect due to its absence.

The overall concept of intimate relationships was luxurious and pleasant in her pan–European sexual experience. Her boyfriend's sensitive hands massaged her whole body, which made her feel as if she was floating. In comparison with the aromatherapist's massage, the erotic culmination, to which the massage led in a sensitive and elegant way, was an advantage. She could not omit the exceptional gift of listening and perceiving, not just advising and preaching, an experience she had had a chance to have so far and about which even women in the Third world complain of.

She caressed the Dutch penis and while the speakers were applauding, she thought of how little time the system of education, family and society devote to love between men and women. Imagine how long it is necessary to exercise and study to be able to play a few tunes on the violin! The art of love is a far more demanding skill. One does not play wood and strings of different ages and qualities; one plays with living creatures that have no chance of learning the art of love in these central European conditions. Of course she is aware of prostitutes and gigolos, however, she thinks of the way bodies and souls fuse. Giving yourself away in trust, without proprietary and power games, without jealousy, rivalry and envy—that would be a good training!

The concluding remarks were made by the speakers, she pulled her hand out of the Dutch fly, she zipped the trousers sensitively, they smiled at each other in a conspiratorial manner, shook hands with their neighbors and went to a UN meeting which dwelled on the topic of racial and national tolerance.

Let an intimate experience be related to the wilderness—passion, or a profound religious experience! The routine of a married couple is hammering not only in the kitchen, but also, if I recall correctly, young, elder and old women agreed in discussion forums organized in the scope of the project that it was not beneficial for sex life. Be quiet, we could wake the children (grandma, neighbors...), I am tired—conditions in family life and common life are almost contraceptive. Intimate life is a rare flower which we ought to look after, but our cultural customs are very barbaric in this respect. The body is a taboo, be it one's own or someone else's, and its needs? They are either satisfied on the run or not at all—when something does not work, we seek instant help in surgery.

Women perceive this intimate area as a wide field for improvement. And since sex is the continuation of communication by other means ☺, it is apparent even here that communication between men and women flags in our country.

Dialogue for the 21st century (2000)

*Without sincerity any discussion is mere prattle.
Rousseau*

In the interest of world justice, she launched the Dialogue for the 21st century program, the aim of which was to hold round tables with the representatives of various structures of society. The first one took place in the middle of the 1990s with representatives of a number of business companies and ecological organizations. They had a chat and parted. She maintained a personal dialogue with McDonalds whom she had asked not to use disposable covers. The then representative of the company said that he was a bread winner who merely did his job, nothing more, nothing less.

She met the representatives of the Shell Oil Company in a restaurant where they launched a historical dialogue on the meaning of shared responsibility for a common future. Those bosses, who had previously obtained philosophical and technical educations and were interested in communication with non-governmental non-profit organization, were denounced in public for their ruthless mining and the devastation of environment.

Company Monsanto contacted her out of their own accord, inquiring what she had against their genetic programmes, and a discussion was held on the scope of the work process, behind closed doors, with a firm registrar present. Her impression was that they were trying to obtain an argument in order to use it in their promotional campaign.

A specific result of the Dialogue for the 21st century was the information obtained on the ecological safety of petrol stations run by the company. Shell's advertisements were to be found in their promotional material, with their representative posing next to a tree, which they themselves had planted, and for which Shell did not finance although had promised.

And the lessons learned from the Dialogue for the 21st century with the giant and powerful? One should be careful of them.

Multinational monopole companies act differently in different countries, always in a way that the legislations of the respective countries allow. For instance cigarettes in packets, which looked similar, used to contain a different amount of nicotine in different countries. The amount of nicotine (a drug) designed for us (primitives?) was higher than the one designed for the Swiss. Another infamous issue which our decision-makers seem to have missed is the permission to use disposable plastic bottles en masse. By buying certain products we make it obvious what we are content with and what we do not agree with. Each and every one of us can influence industry by their consumer conduct. An extensive education campaign would be essential in order to bring about an "enlightened" approach to consumption. A campaign among ordinary people, ... as well as politicians.

The Wisdom of Life (2000)

*It is better to lose a friend than to lose wit.
Quintilianus*

Hamburgers are sold and eaten in Slavkov, there is a shooting gallery for Germans in Terezín, fashion shows and feasts for businessmen held in the Betlém chapel, and the golden treasure of Bohemia was exchanged for stocks and shares. There is a debt to many billions in the Czech economy after ten years of building democracy, which did not hamper the government's decision to invest billions into the purchase of army jet fighters. Our fathers' heritage of water networks is bargained for, with which corporation will pay more for this natural resource and life necessity. Men rule women, The Party for the 21st century offers a fifty-percent quota of women in decision-making processes but does not allow a woman to speak.

There is no interest in the local agricultural production, fields lie fallow and the nation is getting ready for the feast of multinational genetic engineering by means of a gradual and systematic campaign. Four hundred thousand people have cancer and the number of those who are ill is rising. Neighbors protest against the Temelín giant in village backyards. Our people fix their hope on the European Union, which offers solutions via the free market. TV news repeatedly shows pictures of protests against the world hegemony of money but women's activities offering alternatives to the state of the world seem to bore cameramen. In the new millennium, songbirds have begun to arrive in Europe as early as February.

It appears we will need to consult someone. But who? There is a reference to the city of wisdom in one popular book, into which all paths should lead, to allow people to purchase wisdom. It can be bought and tucked away into a pocket, handbag, rucksack, or trolley. They would consume it as they consume hamburgers but the difficulty lies in how to find the city and how to get there. Years ago, city councilors were opposed to the idea of building a railway and they knew why. They have waited and now they can immediately start building a motorway with a large car park at the city entrance where trolleys full with wisdom will be ready. The city is said to be able to do without technology. The mayor is capable of telling that it is raining when water drips from a rug hung on a pole. When the rug is dry, he knows that the weather is beautiful. They sing while working and they do not produce light in a nuclear plant. Initially, they tried to catch it in a bag but later on they realized they had forgotten to have windows made in the city hall. This, they realized only after a thief made a hole in the wall. He was recognized as the most intelligent of all and appointed mayor—however, this honor and responsibility scared him and he ran away. Heat is not let out of windows—they have built the stove right in the square and drew fishing nets over it in the direction of the city hall in order to preserve all the heat. As regards their economy, they grow their own salt. Why should they wait for someone else's and not have their own? They ploughed a large field, bought a little more salt and spread it into the black soft trenches. The field thief, the sparrow, has gone. The fact that he was thrown down from the highest window of the city tower, accompanied by the mournful sound of a drum may have been the cause. The death of the sparrow was terrible because they could not find any trace of him, not even the tiniest feather. He must have been surely crushed to dust by the fall, which made sparrows so scared that they prefer to avoid the presence of humans. Elected mayors, who like to call themselves *Your Wisdom*, are the most assiduous of all the citizens who are always at work. The city is run by directives such as:

When water reaches this charter, swimming is prohibited!

Those who want to have a dog must have a muzzle and be tied onto a chain!

Before this year's feast each basket case peasant is bound to sow two hogsheads of semolina.

Those of you, who are asses, raise your hand!

What more to add? We conclude the lines above by properly playing the innocent, which is so common in the Czech Republic. Yet, it is not funny—only depressing “sadly embarrassing”, which is very Czech. All the same, there is hope related to all polite and decent people who, on an everyday basis, refuse to give in, do not leave their land, do not lose their courage and will and make strenuous efforts to recreate civil society as we knew it for a brief period under the First republic. These people are the salt of the Earth. They are those who were recently described by the European Commissioner for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities Vladimír Špidla in a quote: “It is not true that there are some people capable of changing things and others who cannot. The truth is that there are some people who are willing to change things and others who are not.”

“Let us become the instrument of change!” invites the Quo Vadis, Femina? project along with him.



**“QUO VADIS, FEMINA?—The Vision of Women on Sustainable Life”
Proposal for a Public Discussion**

	If → then	Success indicators	Verification sources	Preconditions
Where are we heading? (objective of QVF)	Harmony between men, women, and nature.	Improvement of environmental, ecological and social indicators.	Personal happiness, health. More human relationships. Statistics . Priorities of the government and political parties. Media Topics.	Positive thinking. Active approach of the general public. Openness of the powerful. Change of media content. Discussion, education. Absence of a glass ceiling.
Why? (explanation)	So as to live better lives.	Satisfaction and happiness, both internal and external, of people of all walks of life and nationalities. Peace, love, friendship.	Bodily and mental health. Reduction of interpersonal conflicts.	Readiness for personal as well as social development. Psycho hygiene. Positive, efficient and constructive thinking and acting.
Which steps will benefit and contribute to the achievement of the set objective?	1. Man and woman participate in the upbringing of children, creating of home and environmental surroundings in equal share. Natural coexistence of generations. The time and work of women is evaluated equally as the time and work of men.	1. More men on maternity leave, engaged in household, public discussion, part-time work, interest of media in the topic of equality. Healthier development of children. Nursery schools and day care centers for children at workplaces.	1. Statistics of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Czech Statistical Office, monitoring of media, psychological and sociological studies.	1. Readiness of the society for a change, existence of an institution dealing with gender issues that would be continual in time, increased social and legal knowledge of women, availability of alternative education and care.

<p>2. Man and woman participate in the public life in equal share.</p>	<p>2. More women in policy, elimination of stereotypes in advertising, participation of women in public discussions, the increasing of their interest in social events and processes.</p>	<p>2. Statistics of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Czech Statistical Office, monitoring of media.</p>	<p>2. Acceptance of women, absence of a glass ceiling, elimination of stereotypes, acceptance of feminism within the society.</p>
<p>3. The domestic and public spheres are interconnected.</p>	<p>3. Better interpersonal relationships, better relationships between men and children, between generations; growing number of opportunities to work from home, transmission of experience between generations.</p>	<p>3. Growing number of opportunities to work from home, flexibility, family tolerance, better conditions for small and medium enterprises.</p>	<p>3. Elimination of one-sided influence for the benefit of global institutions and global economy at the expense of the local economy, manipulation with personal time.</p>
<p>4. Housework and the upbringing of children are sufficiently evaluated by the society.</p>	<p>4. Happiness and health of women and children, engagement of men in housework.</p>	<p>4. Statistics about the health of the population, interviews with women, improvement of the situation of women, especially elderly ones.</p>	<p>4. Absence of social barriers; media are not only in the hands of men who are not sensitive to gender issues.</p>
<p>5. Women on maternity leave and retired women are duly appreciated by society.</p>	<p>5. Better economic status of women, women do not have to face discrimination on the labor market, they are represented in public positions, incomes of men and women are equitable.</p>	<p>5. Statistical data of the Parliament, companies, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Czech Statistical Office, the conception of state family and pension policy.</p>	<p>5. Willingness and self-confidence of women, priorities of political representatives, examples of good practice.</p>

	<p>6. Women are economically self-supporting and independent.</p> <p>7. Women are self-confident and self-realizing.</p> <p>8. Women cooperate to achieve common goals and implement common projects.</p> <p>9. Prague is a sustainable city.</p> <p>10. Men and women cooperate and inspire each other.</p>	<p>6. Self-reliance, freedom, the possibility to decide about one's own life and priorities.</p> <p>7. The influence of women on the public sphere, involvement of women, assertion of women's own opinions and projects, the state supports women's projects.</p> <p>8. Shared priorities and goals, unification of women and women's organizations leading to their achievement.</p> <p>9. Enlargement of green areas, drinking water, reduced number of cars, more environmental projects, and better community life, reduction of ecological footprint.</p> <p>10. Lower divorce rate, higher readiness for partnership and responsibility.</p>	<p>6. Economic independence on men, market research, the statistics of salaries and consumption, assets and capital also in the hands of women.</p> <p>7. Qualitative and quantitative change of the society; monitoring of the change in various time horizons, monitoring of the women's movement.</p> <p>8. Shared vision to be signed by Czech and Prague women, women's organizations; annual reports, press releases.</p> <p>9. The statistic data of the municipal authority, city districts, NGO projects, measurement of the ecological impact per inhabitant.</p> <p>10. Statistic data, opinion polls, researches in mixed teams and working groups.</p>	<p>6. Elimination of the slave and servant mentality of women and "mother" hotels, equal opportunities of promotion at work, upbringing and education, examples draw.</p> <p>7. Cooperation, promotion of soft women's values, communication, cooperation, intuition, instinct, utilization of female spontaneity, mutual solidarity.</p> <p>8. Readiness to cooperate, identification of common goals. Ability to agree on priorities, solidarity.</p> <p>9. Interest of the general public in public issues. Ecology is valued as much as economy. Educational campaigns, willingness of municipal council members, transparent evaluation of public contracts.</p> <p>10. Elimination of stereotypes, self-confidence of women, awareness of the situation.</p>
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Expected results				
<p>1. Conditions have been created for work from home, part-time jobs and small entrepreneurial activities of women, micro loans.</p> <p>2. Quotas have been introduced in policy to support the participation of women as well as a binding ethical code laying higher moral and ethical demands on politicians.</p> <p>3. A Woman is the president.</p> <p>4. Man and woman are equally evaluated at work as regards barriers to their employment and are remunerated with the same salary for the same work.</p> <p>5. Housework and upbringing of children are included in the GNP and pensions, the remuneration is comparable to an employee's salary.</p>	<p>1. Increased supply/demand. Flexible forms of work, simplification of paperwork, equal tax conditions for small and large businesses.</p> <p>2. Existence of quotas in political parties, non-existence of prejudices towards women, increased social intelligence, new faces on the political scene, higher participation in elections, trust of the general public.</p> <p>3. The number of publicly discussed lists of candidates, direct voting.</p> <p>4. Absence of negative experience of discrimination during recruitment interviews; the same questions for men and women, the same remuneration for the same work, transparent evaluation.</p> <p>5. Changes in the legislature, requirements of the general public.</p>	<p>1. Supply/demand at Labor Offices, labor exchanges, personnel agencies. Research among small entrepreneurs.</p> <p>2. Results of elections, participation of women in elections and lists of political party candidates. Personnel policy in general, election statistics and opinion polls.</p> <p>3. Cooperation among medias, the ability to agree on a candidate list.</p> <p>4. Evidence Gender Studies, o.p.s, ČSÚ, Labor Offices, personnel agencies.</p> <p>5. The Civil Code, Labor Code, Family Act, macro and micro indicators.</p>	<p>1. Readiness of employers to employ part-time employees or employees working from home. Flexibility of people, absence of favoritism paid to foreign investors and large companies.</p> <p>2. The level of policy culture, recognition of women's abilities, change of the value system, respect, esteem and self-esteem.</p> <p>3. Trust given to the leadership capacities of women.</p> <p>4. People are not afraid to announce and make public any discrimination, transparency of the commercial sphere, sufficient self-confidence of women.</p> <p>5. Financial evaluation of time devoted to the care of others. Political will and interest of the general public, transparency.</p>	

	<p>6. Pension reform will be elaborated that will take into account reduction of social differences between pensioners and people in their productive age, care of the handicapped.</p> <p>7. Women are able to speak openly about their problems, sexuality, to define their goals and head towards them.</p> <p>8. The state makes financially more favorable such an approach of an individual and a family toward nature which is environmentally friendlier.</p> <p>9. The conception of public spaces adaptation will be elaborated so as they would meet the needs of men, women, children, handicapped people and so as neither of the groups would be discriminated against.</p>	<p>6. Respect paid by the society to old and handicapped people, the state invests in dignified life, more elderly, prudent women in leading positions.</p> <p>7. Existence, definition and implementation of a personal vision, women create women's communities and projects, they are satisfied.</p> <p>8. The awareness of the general public about the ecological footprint, legislative framework. The ecological footprint is taken into account on the level of taxes paid by an individual or a family.</p> <p>9. Aesthetics, efficiency, ecology and functionality of the public space, satisfaction of its users, community plans.</p>	<p>6. Act on pension insurance schemes and social insurance, medial presentation of old age and care.</p> <p>7. Dialogues, cooperation, women's associations, annual reports, sexual and psychological research, discussion forums on the internet and advisory services in the media.</p> <p>8. Economic rules. Consideration of ecological and health-related connectedness, the state of the environment.</p> <p>9. Municipal plan, newsletter of city districts, strategy of development, city budget, gender budgeting.</p>	<p>6. Change of values respected by the society, infrastructure, media, products taking into account aging of the population.</p> <p>7. Time and desire to think, self-confidence, openness, readiness to life-long psychological, social, personal and sexual development.</p> <p>8. The government also respects values other than the material and consumer ones, education, educational campaigns, higher level of knowledgeability.</p> <p>9. Absence of corruption, lobbying interests, patriarchal values are not pre-dominating, self-awareness and knowledge of the future.</p>
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	<p>10. Education and upbringing at schools and in families is aimed at ecology, relations, morality, courage, equal opportunities, tolerance, healthy sexuality, love and friendship, multicultural education. Integration of the handicapped. Education leading toward esteem and love towards one's body and soul.</p>	<p>10. Change in the curricula and content of textbooks, horizontal thinking of people engaged in the school system, the state makes investments in education and educational campaigns also in the spiritual dimensions of life, birth and death, positive relationship between parents and children toward nature and life.</p>	<p>10. Textbooks and lecture notes, conceptions, research on the attitudes of children and teachers toward bullying, foreigners, nature, the handicapped. Engagement of men in the school system on lower levels, the internet.</p>	<p>10. Understanding of connectedness, horizontal education, enough time and interest in families and the society, openness, spontaneity, esteem and self-esteem, love, positive examples.</p>
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5

Solutions—Procedural Changes

The aim of this research was to find out if there would be any positive changes in the answers to the questions about the group maintaining their traditional lifestyles. Whether women can largely participate in public life and share in society's strategic management. The respondents didn't think that questions of "ancestry" would be important. They didn't expect that many or any women currently in the public eye would have any significant influence on our women's group. People accept traditional roles, which is reflected in the poor representation of women in public life and shows what little interest this problem evokes in the Czech Republic.

I chose a theme called *A Rose Among the Thorns*, just as I had a few years ago when organizing the "Women in Political Life" International Conference. At that time I wrote to and phoned television stations many times asking that they invite one of our organizers to their Sunday debates. They always promised, but never followed through; back then banking scandals were the hot discussion topics.

The question of women in public life was only partly addressed; for them, societal roles were perfectly natural. They saw no difference between men and women's issues. Nor did they consider the questions as being a priority. One respondent wrote "Women will never win", feeling perhaps that the questions were too broad and covered too wide a spectrum of concerns. However, this is not about winning; our aim is not to win by force. We would all benefit if more women would think horizontally rather than vertically, as men do. It makes no sense for women to behave according to a hierarchal structure that was created and fostered by men for hundreds of years.

Discussion about the roles of men and women is important for both genders. This brings to mind a German psychiatrist, Ernst Borneman, who wrote in the *Encyclopedia of Sexuality* (1990), that it is necessary to help men by making women's beliefs and priorities the center of attention in order to liberate all of society. In regard to the Czech Republic, our situation in political life and o the awareness of our priorities is circumspect. It's as if politicians do not have a strategy or focused agenda. Our lifestyle limits us, whether we admit it or not; it has been undervalued since our recent democracy came into being as witness these statements of Václav Klaus: "Ecology is only the icing on the cake." "We must

first earn the money to deal with the environment.” “We have so many domestic problems that we don’t have time, money or people to resolve global issues.” A more intelligent government could have dealt with global strategies while democracy continued to mature and develop. But the question remains: How can we raise self-confidence in women? How can we best utilize their experiences and knowledge so it will benefit all of society?

It’s not just a matter of what women must gain, but also of how Western men are changing under the new attitude of “slowing down one’s tempo of life.” Don’t go charging after a career and high earnings; devote more time to family, friends, hobbies, your community, and develop interpersonal relationship. This ranked number one in our study.

Good Examples

Democracy is a government of the people, which includes both men and women. What can be done to change the current status quo?

The questionnaire ascertained that for women the most important issue is education. Just as is stated in an old Chinese proverb: “If your objective is one year, plant rice; if your objective is ten years, plant trees; if your objective is 100 years, educate people.”

Following are several different methods for dealing with changes; you may choose the endings yourselves. There are questions at the end of each essay which may help you to clarify and understand your personal situations. Words result from ideas; deeds from words ... and self-improvement must not be kept waiting.

1. Girls and Boys and Their Upbringing

Alexandra Berková once wrote an article about a good little girl and a naughty boy, and about passivity and activity. A girl who misbehaves and is troublesome is seen as being unpleasant and annoying; whereas a good little boy is considered a sissy. The life of a young girl revolves around learning to suppress her individuality and think less of herself. But boys live in the certainty that their destiny is in their own hands; they’ll manage to assert themselves through their jobs and they don’t have to concern themselves with anyone or anything else. Up until recently a girl’s goal in life was to marry well and take care of her spouse; to be attractive, well-mannered, and keep an immaculate and orderly household. This was clear cut, just as was the fact that one day the pimply-faced brat living next door may end up being her boss. Just because he’s a male.

From the moment a child is born certain rules seem to apply in raising girls and boys. They not only receive different toys, but there's a marked difference in how parents treat a son or daughter. The rejoicing when a son is born has existed since days of old; whereas congratulations were more subdued at the birth of a daughter.

During Christmas I happened to see the gifts that some kindergarten children received. Girls got ironing boards, pots and pans, dolls, and combs. Boys received Legos, blocks and cars. (And a gun might even be added to that Lego set.) Separate roles begin forming during babyhood: a girl is viewed passively and as a future homemaker, while the boy is seen as creative, as a race car driver or even an engineer. The teacher described to me how four-year old toddlers play. The little boys sit at a table and become immersed in some game. The girls hover over them, offering "coffee" and asking what they'd like and how may they help them.

Boys in elementary school read, and learn a little about the world. Girls have their Bravo Girl dolls and learn how to apply make-up, shave their legs and buy the right name-brand clothing that will one day help them snare Mr. Right. They're led to accept a boy's image of them. Let's reverse the situation and give the boys Bravo Boy dolls, a two week diary, and a pep talk on how to get and keep a vigorous girl of their dreams. Not that any of this would be unpleasant, but what kind of market would there be for this type of magazine?

Questions to think about:

- Do you give much thought to the toys you buy for your children?
- Do you have any idea what kind of magazines your sons or daughters buy?
- What kind of magazines and books are available in school libraries?
- Are you able to influence your children's reading matter?
- Do you know what programs your children watch on television?
- What do you watch on TV? What do you read? What films and plays interest you?
- Do you ever think about the differences between girls and boys?
- Are you careful not to be discriminating in your reprimands by: "Aren't you ashamed to play with that carriage; it's only for girls" or "Leave those blocks alone and don't bother those boys while they're busy building."
- How much time do you spend outdoors in the country; by what means do you get there?

2. Freedom and (Non) Dependence

Stephen R. Covey in his book, *Seven Individual Habits for a Successful and Harmonious Life* (1989) wrote that we are like children, dependent on our parents or others to take care of us. Without them we could not survive. And this dependence lasts until we are teenagers, when our egos let us become aware of our surroundings, that we're no longer dependent, but capable of managing everything for ourselves. From this short lived phase we progress to the realization that we are in fact dependent on others, on nature, and rules of the universe. We thank the farmers for the grain; the miller for grinding it into flour; the baker for baking it into bread; and the deliverymen for delivering it to the bakeries where we are able to buy a loaf of bread. That same dependence connects us with school, our health care, electrical power, water, etc. Are we completely satisfied with being given all these things? Or do we adopt even more forms of dependence, such as becoming addicted to someone or something, such as alcohol or drugs? Some women are so emotionally dependent on their husbands that they live their lives through them. Men, being focused on their jobs are unable to recognize their wives' needs, their support, or even sometimes their misery. Being passively dependent on TV as an entertainment pastime in lieu of social interaction is another one of the displays of social immaturity.

In the past, when people went to a dance they'd spend more time conversing as their dancing was more social, whereas the new dance forms today are made up of couples. Years ago, men and women danced the polka and waltz, and partners would be exchanged; today one usually dances with the same partner. Although in the past ten years or so it seems that no partner is even necessary. The music in discos nowadays seems to be for dancing solo or in a group. The steps and rules that our ancestors had to learn in dancing school were communication-in-motion lessons; this could easily be applied to verbal communication. Discotheque dancing looks like imitations of African dances where all communication is non-verbal.

The current style of life is evident not just in dancing, it is reflected in many other forms of entertainment. In paintings of years past, one can see groups of people out in the countryside or at social events. At the end of the twentieth century paintings became more abstract and wrapped up in self-absorption. You can draw your own conclusions about literature and music.

Questions to think about:

- Are you able to spend 10 minutes each day in quiet meditation?
- Do you think about your life? About your lifestyle?
- What would you like to accomplish in your life?
- How many friends do you have?
- How many people do you respect and think highly of?
- How many people respect and think highly of you?
- What helpful thing do you do for others?
- Do you at least occupy your time by doing something creative? What?

3. Seeking Harmony

Imagine a beautiful countryside in which there is a man, a woman and a young child. Above them is the immense spread of the heavens; around them trees and plants are growing; birds are flying; animals are roaming, and the sun is shining. Very idyllic! This scene reminds us of a story written about the philosophy of European man when he replaced the belief in God the Father with a belief in science and intellect; later on the focus was a belief in indulgent materialism. Sexuality, which enables our birth and our lives on this earth, was seen as either taboo or as a gateway to consumerism.

For nearly two thousand years Western culture has been based on man's prayers to God, fearing Him, loving Him, thanking Him for food, and beseeching Him for mercy. The love for God is expressed by a heart symbol and a glance at the heavens.

About two hundred years ago from the beginning of the scientific–technical revolution, man's belief was concentrated on intellect, his brain. This has led to an insolated and rational observance of life's details, a shift from the shared belief in a higher power, to the idea that science will explain and resolve everything.

After World War II, consumerism totally saturated Western society. An interest in consumption is expressed not only in overeating and the subsequent consumption of weight–loss pills, but also in the emphasis on the accumulation of things and the quest for items that often are superfluous. The belief arises that the more we have, the happier we will be as our personal worth increases. We earn a living in order to spend money; we work in order to buy a car that we need to get to work. The symbol of this viewpoint is the stomach.

Man is different from other animals because he is able to stand on two legs and can use his hands like instruments. All this happened two million years ago. Hands help us bring nourishment into our mouths; many people earn a living with their

hands. And this is now underrated and disparaged. “The smart ones study; manual work is for dummies.”

Sexual organs—the penis and vagina—give birth to new life and provide mutual satisfaction and pleasure to men and women. In the history of western civilization these organs have been written about, but to speak of them in polite society is taboo. Their existence is hidden away in the darkness of the bedroom even though their union ensures the continuation of life. Recently materialism in the form of pornography has arisen wherein relationships between men and women are portrayed as rather harsh and callous. These parts of the body are simply a means to achieve orgasm; sex is now a performance.

The earth is considered to be four and a half billion years old. Our patriarchs revered God; today it's science and tangible property; the gifts we receive from the earth are taken for granted. Concentrating only on satisfying our needs causes looting and exploitation, even to the depletion of natural resources. The result is global warming, holes in the ozone layer, natural disasters, and devastated land, which affects the quality of life, both physically and mentally.

Let's return to the introductory paragraph; People on earth. By now it's clear that what our civilization values is located from the waist up (the heart, brain, stomach, heaven). Those entities below the waist are most decidedly not appreciated (hands, penis, vagina, the Earth). This chapter is called Seeking Harmony or balance. To perform only manual work leads to exhaustion, the outcome of which is a deterioration of individuality. Only intellectual pursuits can spark creativity and innovation; separate from and not of the physical world. Exaggerated demand for material possessions robs us of interest in natural pursuits. Mechanical sex will achieve orgasm; but that does not satisfy the needs for human contact, understanding and love. And if we don't value Earth; then it's only a matter of time until an erosion of the interconnectivity and relationship of mankind with nature will occur.

Questions to think about:

- Are you interested in anything that exists beyond your doorstep?
- How much time do you spend on developing your character; on relationships?
- Do you read, meditate, exercise, or take long walks?
- Do you know Tantra (a hindu religious text)?
- Are your shopping trips planned to buy only necessary items?

4. Holistic Training

One of the inspirations for our group is the Schumacher College in southeastern England, where a holistic approach to life is taught. They believe that enrichment of the senses is influenced by beautiful surroundings and an inner esthetic. Therefore, their decor and gardens are pleasing to the eye and soul. Next to the kitchen and dining room is a communal area with a piano, an excellent library and a meditation room, which is open every morning. Holistic training consists of engaging students in all activities necessary for living. Along with academic education, students participate in essential activities such as cooking, housekeeping and gardening, all of which lead to a healthy existence.

Breakfast is from 8–8:30 and is self-service. Immediately afterward, there's an obligatory session in the round; a morning ritual that serves to energize everyone. The session begins with a reading of something positive that will put everyone in a good mood. This is followed by light aerobics, singing and social intercourse. Afterwards everyone separates into groups where they perform their assigned chores. Such as kitchen duty.

When it's your turn to work there, put on an apron and head for the kitchen. Under the watchful eye of the cook, you'll prepare the basic ingredients for dinner such as cutting up vegetables and baking cookies or cake for dessert. The cuisine is vegetarian; creative and delicious. The reason it is vegetarian is to show compassion for other living creatures.

Self-instruction is from 10:00 to 13:00. Intellectual activities are only a part of the lesson just as they are in real life. One is made aware of the different occupations that exist in the world. Some people are mentors; others are waiters/waitresses, and still others clean lavatories. In what way do these people view life?

Afternoons are free. Small groups often gather to discuss the lessons in order to gain a more deeper understanding. Others go for a walk in the neighborhood or stop in at some of the shops that sell handicrafts by local artisans. Free time is devoted to theatre, music, singing and dance. An organized and inspirational school structure ensures a feeling of well-being. The quality of its teachers such as Arne Naess and Fritjof Capra guarantee that the students will most assuredly learn something worthwhile. Lessons of art and science, interconnected with practical living, brings holistic satisfaction.

Questions to think about:

- Are you aware of the inner and outer esthetics of your environment?
- Do you sing? Dance? Sculpt? Meditate?
- Do you divide your domestic responsibilities equally?
- Do you respect the right to privacy for your family?
- Does your family respect the right to privacy for you?
- Do you feel your life is challenging? Or that its an opportunity for lifelong development and knowledge?

5. Modernism and Post–Modernism

When I was in the U.S. on a scholarship, I learned a lot, including the difference between modern and post–modern styles of management. We live in changing times; old values are no longer relevant and new ones have yet to take hold. However it’s pointless to be bothered by this. After all, variety is the spice of life.

Organizations, just like individuals, have their own problems whether they are joint ventures, corporations or government institutions. In each there are the issues of managing and working with people. Eastern Europeans lived under communism and experienced that brand of management: methodical, well–developed, yet lacking in substance. Currently, we’re undergoing huge changes; activities are rich in content, but we’re often exhausted by the lack of structure. We miss schedules and discipline.

The English language defines two different forms of management styles, “modern (bureaucratic)” and “post–modern“. An overview of these will help determine what style fits your company and how you can use it to improve your productivity. There are assignments included in the text that will help you analyze your situation.

Structure

The modern (bureaucratic) style of management has a more rigid structure, bound by job obligations. Various hierarchal levels have boundaries that are set by rules and procedures; and relationships between workers are formal.

Assignment: Think of an organization you are familiar with; in what area would you like relationships to be less restrained?

Relationships in the “postmodern“ style of management are complex. The boundaries between the workers and management are not well defined. The emphasis is on the ability to form relationships with others, and to work together on the same footing.

Assignment: Look at the organization you work for and assess what could be made easier and whether it's necessary to have boundaries that presently don't exist?

Organizational Flow

In modern management, supervision is based on hierarchy. Information is clearly passed through set channels. The manager's role is fixed by tradition and legitimacy; they and their employees have clearly defined rules and responsibilities.

Assignment: Recommend procedures that you think need to be applied to the hierarchical work methods in your organization.

The postmodern style is not hierarchical as employees act according to their expertise. Relationships fluctuate and each job has its own mini-hierarchy.

Assignment: Take a good hard look at your organization; where do you think stronger hierarchical relationships should be established?

Organizational Philosophy

In modern management, responsibility of each employee is fixed. This style is best illustrated by the procedures at the Moscow Institute of Eye Surgery. A patient lies on one of eight beds while a doctor and nurse are responsible for specific steps of the operation. It's all about a high degree of mutual relationships, where each plays his predetermined role. There aren't many variations in the division of labor.

Assignment: Try to predict where in your organization an increase in higher flexibility would be most effective.

Postmodern management's relationship to the job and its employees is flexible. The organization is autonomous; it's governed by an inner awareness. Emphasis is placed on experience and holistic thinking. This internal unity is complex and depends upon the people who understand unwritten "laws of the game", and are able to comprehend ambiguity.

Assignment: Do you think that an automatic approach in your organization would be more effective?

Management

In modern management, all roles are predetermined. Emphasis is on establishing stability, command and discipline. A high degree of supervision is expected in the organization, just as it is found in the outside world.

Assignment: Identify where personal responsibility is needed in your organization as well as more tolerance; allowing more opinions to be voiced regarding resolving problems or offering cost-effective ideas.

Postmodern management is a reflection of the unpredictability and uncertainty of the outside world. It is assumed that everyone will willingly contribute to the growth of the company, knowing that they are not under any pressure to do so.

Assignment: Identify where greater supervision is needed to improve people's relationships and their jobs in relation to the growth of the company and its cost-effectiveness.

Problem Solving

Modern management assumes straight-forward cause and effect, so problem-solving springs from this premise. Emphasis is placed on logical and rational thinking, which is highly valued.

Assignment: Suggest a better resolution to a complex problem in your company and recommends methods on how to implement this.

Postmodern management presumes reciprocity. Managers are encouraged to "think in groups", which means that it's necessary to see the whole picture. The emphasis is on discussions with all the significant employees. The presumption is that there's more than one way to resolve a problem.

Assignment: Estimate the extent of the problem in your organization as its resolution is dependant on the cause. What would be the result of this type of procedure, negative or positive?

Objectivity/Subjectivity

Modern management presumes that the best way to understand an organization is objectively. An objective reality exists and can only be seen outside of one's self. This leads to the assertion that resolving problems depends on facts and thus objective criteria must be applied to the solutions.

Assignment: Identify the methods needed to understand the feelings of others and be able to step into their shoes. Emphasize how this will lead to a better functioning company.

Postmodern management believes in reality. Its methods rely on subjectivity in order to better understand the world. Subjective factors come into play when employees are willing to examine their feelings about different aspects of their work.

Assignment: It's possible that your company has adopted a more objective approach. Define such a method and explain why you think it would be useful for you.

Adaptability

Modern management. Basically, a traditional organization is static, with procedures that are defined as either protective or supportive of current methods of operation. It embraces both a formal and informal supervisory system; and is aware of its legal responsibilities; designated procedures; and regulations. Any organizational changes are strictly controlled.

Assignment: Identify the areas in which you have an opportunity or a need to be creative and useful.

The postmodern approach is spontaneous, unpredictable and uninterrupted. Their procedures are directed toward training, development, research, new techniques and suitable management styles. When this exists, people become motivated and interested in working harder. They become part of capable and creative teams. Employees are stimulated by the fact that each day is different from another. Instead of strict supervision, the priority is on being pro-active, and anticipating changes for which they are already prepared.

Assignment: Describe the level of your company, where better planning is needed and the reactions to changes.

7. Time is Life

Time plays a very large part in one's life. It's said that time is money, but the truth is that time is life. Even the most extreme workaholic realizes that money isn't everything when he finds himself in the hospital with a heart attack. One's lifestyle is governed by the time accorded to it either by us or others. A person's worth is often measured by their unavailability and importance; the more important they are, the more valuable is their time. In addition, we can also take note of space. Bosses always receive the best office, furthest away from the hustle and bustle.

The value of time can be learned very easily in a training course called "Leadership". This was created many years ago in England for women whose time has traditionally been used and abused. Women's time is often sacrificed and usually donated to others. Thus "Leadership" is made up of groups of people who individually reply to prepared questions. There is a four minute time limit for each answer and no exceptions are allowed. However, if an answer takes less time, than the remaining minutes are observed silently. No notes are taken during these sessions and participants are asked to refrain from making any spontaneous remarks. Criticism and negative appraisals of others is forbidden.

I went through this training with both women and men and realized why this was created just for women. Men often interrupted, laughed, or paid no attention; the atmosphere of goodwill and trust that exists among the women was non-existent among the men. They were constantly showing off. So they had to be steered away from their foolish and self-absorbed behavior in order to get them to pay attention to what others were saying. Everyone here is given a chance, not just those who are talkative or aggressive. However, the moderator is able to encourage the passive ones, which often leads to a big surprise. It's amazing what is hidden in those who don't have the urge to constantly talk.

Questions to think about:

- Do you know how to economize your time?
- Are you aware of your “investment” into others?
- Do you find time and space for yourself?

7. How to Use the EU Resources of Spain

Many years ago I worked on a project that was supported by the European Commission called, Time is Life—fostering equality between men and women and international cooperation. The Department of Equal Rights of the Czech Ministry of Work & Social Affairs recommended Estepa, a small southwestern town in Spain with 12,000 inhabitants, and one hundred kilometers from Seville as a good choice for the project. It was once the most arid and poorest place on earth.

We were housed in a hotel that was converted from a former agricultural grange; left behind was a restaurant, a well and stream from which the locals get their non-chlorinated water. We were officially welcomed in one of the town hall’s buildings that carried both the Czech and Spanish flags, the GAIA Agency logo and the city’s crest. We discovered that half of the council are women, and it was obvious from the beginning that this balance runs throughout the town, whose name means step. Estepa lies at the foot of a hill, and its white tiers harmonize with the countryside. Nowhere did we see offensive advertising or unsightly supermarkets although the town has them, but they are concealed behind more traditional architecture.

Estepa has used resources provided by the European Union, working with them and other European countries on various projects by employing local people. A community initiative to support and develop employment of certain segments of the population was created for the youth of the town. Information is available in the schools as is recruitment of anyone interested in being part of this program. In addition to being a good employment opportunity, it’s also great for the young people and for their self-confidence. They’re free to choose their own line of work, one they’d like to become more proficient in; by doing so they become involved in the town’s activities and thereby share in its future. We inspected many workshops which produce different things: cabinets, furniture, benches, tables, wastebaskets, carpets, metallic items and window shades made from synthetic material. These items primarily are made for this little town. The handicapped and retirees prepare flower beds in the school garden that will later be transplanted into public areas. A professional restorer did all the restoration of the paintings,

pulpit, confessional, and steeple bell in the local church. The statues were tackled by a group of young would-be restorers who are learning the trade. The pride of the town is its traditional mass produced Christmas candy; work begins in September and continues until the holidays. Most of the employees are women who do this to earn much needed income.

The town administrators oversee public resources to make sure they are used by private businesses, but under public supervision. They also make the public aware of various social and health issues, and support a large number of community projects. They would also like to diversify their manufacturing process with the help of the EU's resources. The EU helps subsidize regional development by exchanging old technology for new by buying the equipment in the towns and cities where it was manufactured.

There is a free social services office in town offering counseling for divorces, widowhood, single mothers and the unemployed. In connection with eco-tourism, a hotel was built (in which we stayed) in cooperation with the city; in return its owner provided the city with services at cost. Behind the hotel a large park was created with the help of the city, which bought the plot and provided workers and craftsmen. There was a workshop established in one of the houses that produced olive oil to demonstrate ecologically sound production methods.

From this short visit we were left with the feeling that Estepa is a model town, exceptional by its various projects and undertakings. In the beginning, the townspeople focused on seeking adventure and creativity; later on they realized the benefits of joint cooperation and gradually began to work on projects that would benefit the entire town. As for our reason for being here, we discovered that the reason for women's inferior social standing was very often a passive attitude of "waiting for our luck to change." But by attending the courses and seminars of our Woman XXI, they are now looking for new ways to improve themselves.

8. Management Styles

The following observations are from Maureen Gaffney from the National Economic and Social Forum in Dublin, Ireland.

From childhood, men are in a conflict about creating relationships. Until they establish their own little hierarchy, small boys spend their time bragging to their peers and fighting with them. But all this is basically friendly behavior as it makes them feel good.

Girls, however, are put off by this behavior and prefer to create close knit groups, and to know who their best friends are. As a rule, women don't understand why men are so reliant on hierarchy relationships, so they pass it off as a silly men's game. This is one of the reasons why women don't rush into politics.

Their form of management lies in helping other women to advance in their work and in creating a network of interpersonal relationships. So while men create a social pyramid, women create circles. But if a woman resorts to using the same methods as a man, she is regarded by other women as being bossy and domineering and is not accepted in their circles—and that is considered the worse thing that could happen.

Men are more concerned about what their bosses think; women on what their subordinates think. She has no compunctions about criticizing her boss, but fears reproaching his secretary.

How does this relate to your life? This questionnaire will help you to find out.

1. Consider the entire organization where you work. What is its declared mission? Its beliefs? What are its characteristic reactions to change?

Read all four of the questions worth 9 points. Next to each point, mark the one that best fits your organization with the corresponding number. Write the numbers from 1 to 4 under the column marked organization

2. When you have completed the marking, read the questionnaire again from the beginning, but this time mark off the answers to the above according what you would prefer your company should be or do. Work independently of your previous responses.
3. When all 9 categories have been marked, add the scores of each point section and write it into the table next to the proper letter (a); (b); (c); (d); one for company responses and another for your preferences.

	Total a)	Total b)	Total c)	Total d)	Final Total
Organization					90
My choice					90

Comments: Have confidence in your work. Don't analyze your responses, and don't undermine yourself by writing "... it all depends on..."

Sometimes it will be difficult for you to differentiate between several choices as some answers may seem the same to you. Don't get confused by this; precise responses are not called for here; what you do have is an opportunity to learn something from others.

Work fast; don't complicate your life with doubts.

For uniformity, one gender is used for both men and women.

Remember! First evaluate from the organization's perspective; and then when you are finished, start again, but this time evaluate it all from your personal viewpoint.

1. A good boss:
 - a) is strong, decisive, firm, and fair; protects his employees, is loyal to them;
 - b) is impersonal and precise, avoids using his authority to his own advantage; expects his employees to do what the company requires of them;
 - c) treats everyone equally; accepts suggestions in matters that pertain to business; uses his position to acquire resources necessary for the job.
 - d) is interested in his staff's needs and values other people's opinions; he uses his position to devise working conditions that will satisfy and stimulate his staff.
2. A good staff:
 - a) they work hard, are loyal to their boss; are resourceful and dependable;
 - b) are responsible and reliable where work is concerned; avoid incidents that could embarrass or upset their boss
 - c) they're motivated to work hard and do their very best; they're free to express opinions and suggestions; they never try acting superior around people who are less experienced or capable than they are.
 - d) Are extremely interested in developing their own possibilities; willing to learn and welcomes help; respects the needs of others and aids in their development.
3. A good employee puts emphasis on:
 - a) personal requests made by her boss;
 - b) responsibility, work requirements, good habits and behavior;
 - c) daily job demands, capability, vitality and being resourceful;
 - d) the needs of other employees.
4. People who are good for the organization:
 - a) are aware of the political risks they may run into and accept them;
 - b) are conscientious, responsible, and strongly loyal to the company;
 - c) are technically competent and capable and extremely trustworthy;
 - d) are effective and efficient; and have a strong desire for personal growth and development.
5. The organization treats individuals:
 - a) as trusted agents; their time and energies are at the disposal of the boss;
 - b) fairly when fulfilling their contractual obligations;
 - c) as if they were partners, doing their best in the interest of the company;
 - d) as competent and accomplished people who have personal rights.
6. People are controlled and influenced by:
 - a) personal motivation in the form of rewards, reprimands and charisma;
 - b) non-personal motivation through financial and political power strengthened by procedures and performance;
 - c) communication and discussions about the conditions of their job;

- d) inner interest and pleasure from fulfilled activities; concerned about the needs of others.
7. It is legitimate for one person to supervise the activities of others:
- a) providing he has the power and leverage to do so;
 - b) if the work outline calls for doing so;
 - c) providing the employees being supervised don't object;
 - d) if that person has more knowledge about the job.
8. The basis for the distribution of work is:
- a) personal judgment of those who assign the work;
 - b) formal division of work and responsibility in the system;
 - c) researching and analyzing the situation as to know who is best suited to do it;
 - d) for individual employees to choose; a personal desire and need to learn and grow.
9. Competition:
- a) is good in order to gain personal power and advantages;
 - b) is done to achieve status in the system;
 - c) is necessary to better accomplish the job;
 - d) is to be alert to the personal needs of an individual.

Grading (1 being the best; 2 very good; etc.)

Add up the points and fill in the table above. The total should be 90. In the first line the category (a, b, c, d) where you have the lowest total of points, that is where your organization is located. The second line reflects your answers; and again the category with the lowest point value is what your personal beliefs are.

- a) do you prefer the ZEUS method—egotistical men's club
- b) do you prefer the APOLLO method—divisional management
- c) do you prefer the ATHENA method—team work
- d) do you prefer the DIONYSUS method—being waited on or serving others

9. Ecological Feminism

In the past, women were seen as being invisible and pure, yet they were exploited, ravaged, and debased. Not unlike the earth. They were noticed, but often treated with insult and injury.

Questions to think about:

- To whom would you assign characteristics such as intuition, irrationality, instinct, emotion, feelings, love, empathy, maternal, concern for others, real human relationships; music, dance, literature, beautifying one's home, flowers, children, animals, life, and leadership?
- To whom would you assign understanding, engineering, applied science, technology, language, logic, detail, usefulness, goals, selfishness, competitiveness, rights, hierarchy, money, property, battles, hunting, death, management, outer space, and power?

10. Ecological Eroticism

The world needs a new philosophy, whose new concepts encompass love, sex and partnership. Ecological eroticism? The Swiss psychiatrist, Maitrey Piontek, deals with problems of contemporary people, men and women, in a similar way as the German psychiatrist Ernest Borneman. Both reached the same conclusion that people's problems lie in suppressed sexuality. Westerners know more about outer space, the world and nature, but very little about themselves. All one has to do is take a look at how the Eastern cultures deal with a person's psyche and soul. Dr. Piontek comes often to Prague and gives seminars on how to energize women's sexuality. The healer Joyti teaches us how to find it within our inner consciousness.

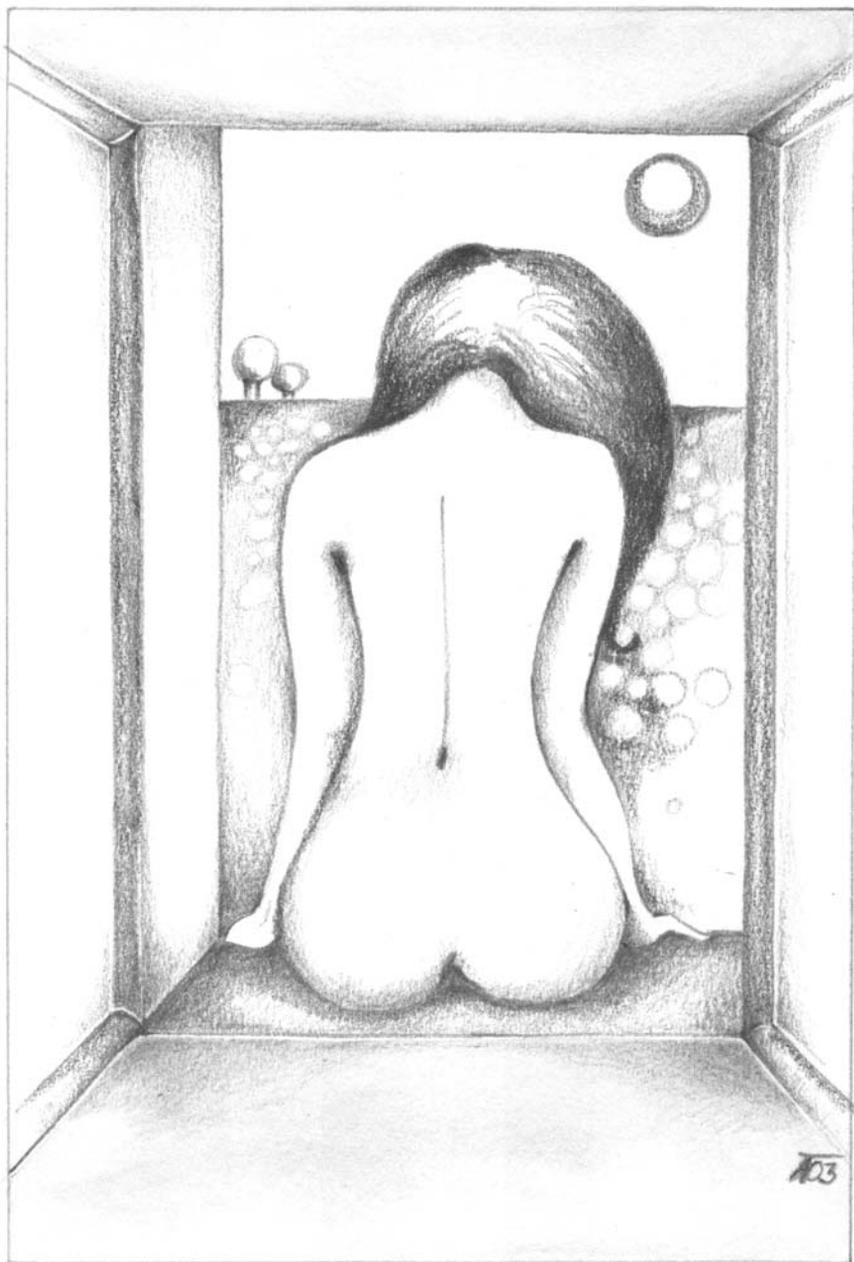
It might occur to a vertical-thinking person that these conclusions have little to do with programs established by the European Social Fund for increasing employment and supporting employers. Horizontal thinkers are aware of the connection of everyone to everything and take into account global warming, and the ecological danger to life. Also the fact that work and money should not be one's only focus.

Express your feelings

- Are you afraid to talk in front of a crowd? yes no
- Are you able to clearly explain yourself so that people don't keep interrupting you? yes no
- Do you complain about bad service in a shop or restaurant? yes no
- Do you resist listening to disparaging or ridiculous remarks about women? yes no
- Do you demand that a shopkeeper or salesgirl exchange a defective item? yes no
- Are you able to express criticisms to your boss? yes no
- Can you tell your partner what you would like even if you think he would be against it? yes no
- When at a meeting, would you refuse to make coffee or to take notes? yes no

TEST SCORES

- 30–37** beads on the string represent quite a large amount of self-confidence, based on the appreciation and encouragement you obtained in childhood, characterised with an atmosphere of presence and safety. These preconditions, besides others, help you overcome all obstacles with greater ease than the others and there are not many situations in your life that catch you unawares. We'll keep our fingers crossed for you. However, you should be careful not to let your self-confidence go beyond the limits of acceptability of your nearest and dearest and your colleagues since, as you know, pride has its pitfalls.
- 20–29** beads represent a good start for any further development of your self-confidence. After having completed this test, it will be more or less clear to you what you could improve and what aspects of your personality you could work on. If your parents did not talk about certain issues with you when you were a child, do not stay indebted to your children or grandchildren, discuss the matters we described above with them, it will be decisive and important in their further development!
- 10–19** beads deserve admiration considering you were not afraid to pick up a pen and contemplate your self-confidence, which is in "rather poor health". But it is never too late! Try to work on yourself, discover new interests for the development of your personality. Knowledge and skills acquired in this way will boost your self-confidence.
- 0–9** beads is evidence of you having forgotten your glasses at home. Because, if you had had them with you, you would have seen yourself and the surrounding world in sharper forms and it would have been clear to you that you could not give in interminably, try not to stick out, not to say a word, and sacrifice yourself because this is what people around you would expect. Pull yourself together. It is never too late!!!



Epilogue

When we began the “Quo Vadis, Femina” project, a number of question marks lay ahead of us. Is there really anything that modern women have in common? Are there any bonds among them? What do modern women expect from the European policy of equal opportunities? Do they perceive their position within society as subordinate, and, if so, where do they see a solution to that? So in order to be able to find at least indications of the answers to these questions, it was necessary to work with women by communicating, meeting together, listening to them, and reflecting on the whole range of social phenomena which determine what they live through every day, their experiences and perception of themselves. Since its beginning, the “Quo Vadis, Femina” project has set itself the goal of finding and defining such requirements concerning the policy of equal opportunities that would be identified by women, the participants in the project themselves, not by the directives and regulations that the Czech society often perceives as negative and limiting from the side of the European Union.

The “Quo Vadis, Femina?” project was established with the support of the European Union to which the Czech Republic has pledged to apply an equal approach towards men and women. In 1957, the principle was incorporated into Article 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community according to which men and women shall be remunerated equally for the same work. The Treaty of Amsterdam amended Article 141 and included support towards equality between men and women among the objectives of the European Community set in the Treaty, establishing the European Economic Community. In June 2000, the EU Commission adopted the report “To the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality”. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union from December 2000 obligates to observe equal opportunities for men and women.

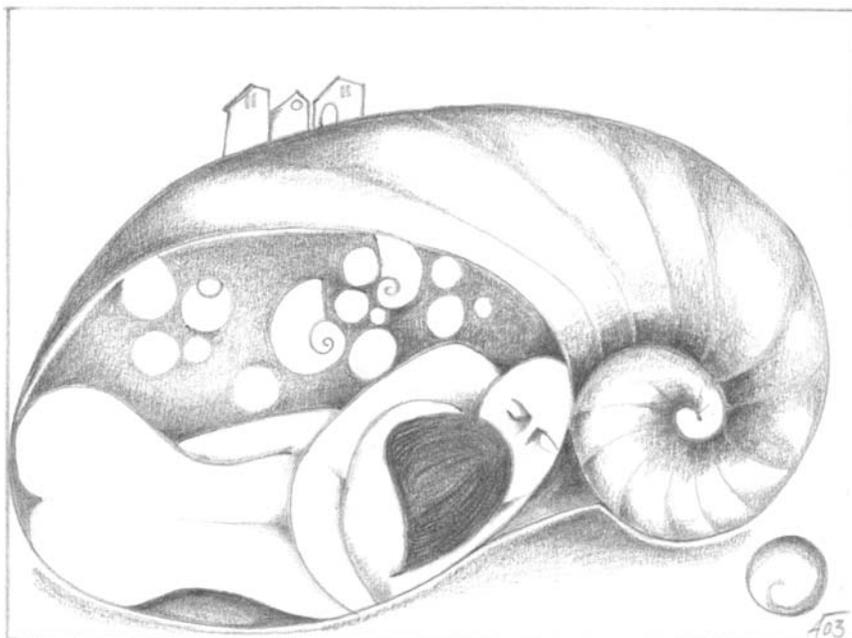
During the project, we repeatedly returned to the fact that the equal opportunities policy is usually identified with feminism in the Czech environment, and both these approaches are considered to be extraneous elements coming to our country from the culturally distant United States of America or the bureaucratic centre of the European Union. Sometimes the mere work itself done with the women and the questions we asked were often a sufficient reason to accuse us of fighting against men in the sense that “who does not play with men, plays against them”. And those who accused us of that were also some of the women participating in the round tables. Is it however necessary to disavow from feminism on purpose, because of that? The women engaged in the feminist movement in the 19th century handed over, to the following generations of women, not least franchises,

economic and legal positions within a family, educational opportunities and professional engagement and self-assertion. We can even say that they in fact realized the equal opportunities policy now in practice. The slogan of the women's movement "bread and roses" expressed economic security, respect and esteem within society. The "Quo Vadis, Femina?" project continues and develops this legacy. Today, women can be presidents, cosmonauts, pilots in fighters, directors of big companies; in fact, none of the public and professional life spheres is officially closed to them. However, despite all that, the overwhelming majority of socially prestigious positions and tangible assets are still in the hands of men according to an unwritten law. Despite the seeming equality of opportunities for men and women, we kept on getting at the stressful dilemma, at the round tables, that modern women have to solve when trying to balance their family and professional life. Employed women suffer from remorse that they are not good mothers, not being able to devote to their children as much time as they would like and as is expected from them. On the other hand, women who stay on maternity leave for a longer time suffer from a feeling of not being duly appreciated by the society, fearing the loss of social contacts and self-realization outside of the home or even the suspension of their professional growth. Can this problem be eliminated, however, without reflecting on the scale value of our society and the real needs of women? Due to their traditional role as mothers, women have not had much time or possibility to participate in the creation of public life, policy and culture during the whole history. The effort to achieve equal participation of women in all spheres of public life, especially policy, is a relatively new trend, promoted by the European Union under the term 'gender mainstreaming'. This includes the integration of women into mainstream society from the very beginning of all decision-making processes. The method of gender mainstreaming is a procedure where all conceptual, decision-making and evaluation processes are subject to the aspect of equal opportunities for men and women in all phases of their preparation and implementation. According to the Government Decree No. 456 of the 9th of May 2001, the Czech government approved this method as a legitimate tool for the performance of a policy of equal opportunities for men and women in the Czech Republic, and included its application among the priority objectives in this area. The international organisations supporting gender mainstreaming include e.g. the Council of Europe, European Union, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations, and others.

Adéla Purschová
PR Coordinator

Information sources and selected websites dealing with equal opportunities issues:

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic	www.mpsv.cz
Euroskop	www.euroskop.cz
Občanský portál Rovné příležitosti (information website for citizens about equal opportunities)	www.obcan.ecn.cz/rp
Gender Studies, o. p. s.	www.feminismus.cz
Agentura GAIA, o. s.	www.ecn.cz/gaia
Quo Vadis, Femina?	www.quovadisfemina.cz



Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to the women who participated in the discussions at the round tables and the men and women who attended the lectures given on the Quo Vadis, Femina? project. Those who stayed with us until the end showed great courage since during the work on the project we also were in touch with the fear which influences the behaviour of many Czech women. We would like to thank the project administrators from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the National Training Fund for their operational reactions and willingness to solve the problems that arose during the course of the project.

It took a long time for the idea of the Quo Vadis, Femina? project to be born. A number of people participated in its development. It is not possible to mention them all, nevertheless those who appeared in the Agentura GAIA o. s. during this period of time always came up with some inspiration or incentives. International contacts and intensive communication with foreign countries was very important, be it during our internship stays abroad or during the implementation of various projects. Exceptional thanks go to the executive team of the agency Agentura GAIA o. s., the members of the Council and all those who were supporting us morally as well as materially during the period of time.

The collection is published in the Year of Equal Opportunities when the European Union celebrates fifty-year anniversary since its existence and the agency Agentura GAIA o. s. ten-year anniversary since its establishment. Thanks to the European Social Fund of the European Union, these texts may be published and inspire others.

Marie Haisová, the Author and Head of the Project

Née Voráčková, and born on the 12th of April 1951 in Klatovy, she spent most of her childhood in the former Sudetenland, in Vlkýš near Heřmanova Huť, where a glassworks and its workmen could be found, a countryside and its farmers, school, doctor, and a private music teacher who taught her to play the violin. She took private lessons and was a member of a string orchestra where children were subconsciously trained in listening to and the sense of harmony. At the farm, full of domestic animals which she had to take care of, she learnt time management in order to be able to play with the other children besides her work. The surrounding woods were full of mushrooms and blueberries which she would go to pick on her own or with her mother, spending a lot of time in the woods. With the other kids, she used to pasture goslings in the spring and cows in the autumn until they were taken away to the collective cowsheds. Her mum and her partner were hard-working people, and so they bought a yellow sport car with a black sliding roof that nobody had in the neighbourhood. She lived through this unwanted exclusivity, hunched over in the rear seat when they went for a family outings. She would have preferred to be like the other children, to walk, to play pig-in-the-middle on the village green. Since her childhood, she was the leader of the children's gangs, which she only realised after some time had lapsed, when she got told this by her classmates. She used to go on holiday to the family of her stepfather, to Čunčice in South Moravia, where she was received as a full member of the family. When Marie was fourteen, her sister was born, and her stepfather died in a car accident one year afterwards. Mother moved with her daughters to Klatovy where her relatives lived. She did not have money to spare and so Marie left the Secondary School of General Education after two months of her studies there and started to attend a Two-Year Economic School. It was a girly classroom, cosy, cheery, full of girlish secrets and awakening womanhood. Later on, she studied external courses to get her GCSE examination. She said good-bye to her classmates who consequently got married, and changed their surnames and so they cannot be simply found in the phone book today, be called to meet each other. She got married when she was twenty-three and brought up two sons who, for a change, had traumas as their family had never had a car. They wanted to be like the other children, however, in a different historical-material context. Later on, she completed her studies of management at Sheffield Hallam University and the Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies, completing the course of NGO management in the USA. She has obtained the practice of a mother, housewife, cleaner, secretary, assistant, and director.



Agentura GAIA, o. s., Civic Association

Agentura GAIA, o. s. (the GAIA Agency) was established in the spring of 1997. Its mission is to seek for new forms of interpersonal communication in the areas of environmental protection, education and popular cultural activities. Through its activities, the agency contributes to a more harmonious society where horizontal thinking is on par with the vertical, which is the basic precondition for an efficient communication among people in general, however, here it especially concerns the situation where men understand women and women understand men. Concrete projects have been implemented in three main categories: **Greenery is Life, Women and the Environment, Alternatives to Consumer Life Style.**

Greenery is Life

The goal of the program is to return trees to the streets of our cities and villages, and the protection of public greenery. Trees in cities play their irreplaceable role in the decreasing of noise and dust nuisance, they provide shade and moisture, and last but not least complete the aesthetic appearance of a city.

Planting and Revitalisation of Prague Alleys

More than ten years have lapsed since the inhabitants of the Prague metropolitan district of Vinohrady could enjoy the first alley of acacias planted by the GAIA Agency in Lublaňská and Wenzigova streets. However, it took nearly two years to obtain thirty-three permissions to plant the trees. Finally, the agency managed to plant the *Umbraculifera* type of the acacia, which is pre-grown in a special way to be resistant to the city conditions. The planting of the acacia trees in Vinohrady was enabled thanks to the assistance provided by the metropolitan authority, the metropolitan district of Prague 2, donations from many organisations, foundations and individuals. As a follow-up event, the many years' efforts were annually commemorated by celebrating the Earth Day under open skies, and the event was always accompanied with a rich cultural program. Thus, the GAIA Agency as one of the first environmental organisations in the Czech Republic to draw attention to the need to return "life" to Prague streets, which have been recently and increasingly turned into mere car parks.

As in Vinohrady, new trees were also planted in the Prague metropolitan district Žižkov in 2000. On 14th November 2000, a ceremonial début was held in Kubelíkova Street of the ten trees of the maple cultivar that were planted there by the GAIA Agency thanks to the donations and support provided by Ms. Barbora Sadílková, the company RadioMobil, a. s., Ms. Nataša Perglová, Ms. Helena

Franková and the metropolitan district authority of Prague 3. New trees also grew up in front of the Legerova Basic School situated directly by the Prague arterial road.

On a recommendation by the Prague metropolitan authority, we were contacted by the metropolitan district authority of Prague 14, where the condition of public greenery was critical in many places. After having reviewed the strength of alley trees, the GAIA Agency in cooperation with the company Lesař, carried out a health and safety pruning in Novozámecká, Pilská, Kyjský mlýn, and Konzumní streets.

Parks and Playgrounds

Thanks to support provided by the Prague metropolitan authority, Nadace rozvoje občanské společnosti (The Civil Society Development Foundation), the municipal authority of Prague 14 metropolitan district, and the company Lesař, we reconstructed the park next to the basic and nursery schools in Prague—Hostavice, including the renewal of greenery and the planting of new trees in addition to older greenery. A dendrological nature trail in the park was established. In 1999 and 2000, we organised a spring celebration entitled “Working Magic for the Earth” for children and their parents from Hostavice.

With support from the metropolitan authority of the capital city of Prague, the municipal authority of the Prague–Kunratice metropolitan district, and the company Lesař, the GAIA Agency constructed a playground in the location next to the Ohrada pond in Prague–Kunratice. It is an important touristic and recreational area, however, in the past there was no facility providing sport and cultural activities for children and young people.

With financial support from the municipal authority of Prague 6 metropolitan district and in cooperation with the charity association Dobročinný spolek medáků, the GAIA Agency had a study drawn up about the natural park in old Střešovice. The future park was to replace the missing village green that could not be built due to the compact housing in old Střešovice. The main organisers of the project were the charity association Dobročinný spolek medáků, the VIA Foundation and the GAIA Agency; the project partners were the municipal authority of the Prague 6 metropolitan district, inhabitants of old Střešovice, the Norbertov Basic School, the Department of Architecture of the Czech Technical University, the Mepro architectonic studio, and NGOs and foundations from the USA. Unfortunately, the park construction was finally cancelled due to new zoning plans by the Prague 6 municipal authority.

Community Work

“Do you know your space?” was the title of a project drawn up by the GAIA Agency to develop community and neighbourhood cooperation during the adaptation

of the internal block in Radhošská Street in Prague 3. When we contacted the municipal authorities of all the Prague metropolitan districts at the end of the 1990s to offer them our cooperation on a pilot project of community work, Prague 3 was the only municipal authority that responded to our proposal. They had already elaborated a project draft for adaptation of the above mentioned internal block, nevertheless, they decided to make use of the experiences gained by the GAIA Agency in the area of work with the general public. These experiences prove that involvement of the local people to the implementation of changes is a precondition for any adaptations to be accepted and for the space to be subsequently maintained. In cooperation with the deputy–mayor, Tomáš Mikeska, and the Environmental Department of the municipal authority of Prague 3, the VIA Foundation, two architects and several volunteers, we carried out an opinion poll for nearly two years, asking the inhabitants for their suggestions and comments, organising public meetings. The outcome is the adapted internal block, the appearance of which most inhabitants are happy with. The project was awarded a prize within the Ford Motor Company’s programme for revitalization of the environment and cultural heritage, and the “About People With People” prize for local democracy. It is the prize annually awarded by the Centre for Community Work and the East West Studies Institute in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Environment to municipal authorities cooperating with local citizens on local planning in decision–making processes.

Fund–Raising Campaign: The general public could support the planting of trees and revitalization of greenery in the Czech Republic by buying a sticker bearing a slogan “I will donate a tree” for fifty CZK.

Women and the Environment

The objective of the program is to increase women’s engagement in public decision–making processes and the protection of the environment. The program puts an emphasis especially on the application of the ‘female principles’ in ecology, policy and public life.

A Rose Among Thornbushes

As soon as the beginning of the 1990s, we started our active cooperation with women, which was roofed by the Green Circle, an association of ecological organisations, at that time. Regular meetings of the women’s club were held there and the first international conference in the history of the Czech Republic was organized on the topic of women in political and public life. The proceedings entitled *A Rose Among Thornbushes* or *Women in Political Life* was published as an outcome of the conference. The authors of the contributions to the proceedings

included e.g. Gabriela Bozok, a German member of the Parliament for the Green Party, Freda Meissner Blau, the candidate for the Austrian president, Alena Wagnerová, Czech writer and journalist, and Erazim Kohák, philosopher.

Time is Life

In 2000, the GAIA Agency started its educational gender project entitled “Time is Life”. First of all, the project tried to draw attention to the fact that many people in the current patriarchal arrangement of society follow the slogan “time is money”. Thus there is no time and space left to realize the negative aspects that money, this new deity of the liberal economy, brings along. Generally accepted values are based on economy and the possession of things. However, the Gross National Product (GNP) is not any measure to show if people are doing well, if they are happy and how much useful work they do. For example, it does not reflect housework that is mostly done by women. The study of the UN about the global situation of women states that women who make up one half of mankind carry out two thirds of the work done globally (measured in hours), but earn only one tenth of what men do and own only one hundredth of what men possess. The project was begun with assistance provided by the European Commission and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. A number of Czech and international organisations participated in its implementation: ATTAC (France), PROYECTOS COMUNITARIOS (Spain), Občanská inspirace (Prague), Matefské centrum (Poděbrady), Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Germany), Women in Europe for a Common Future (The Netherlands), Nakladatelství Academia (Prague) and AK Agentura (Prague).

The homonymous international conference bearing the sub–title Women, Children, Nature—an Alternative to the Policy of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation was organised by the GAIA Agency in the “hot” September days of 2000 when the International Monetary Fund was holding its meetings in Prague. Leading personalities of the world’s ecological and women’s movement, including the leading representative of the association Diverse Women for Diversity, Vandana Shiva from India, had their presentations at the conference “Life Is Not for Sale”. A collection of the contributions presented during the conference was published and the French company Les Penelopes shot a documentary there giving evidence on the negative after–effects of globalization in various parts of the world. It maps the activities of the worldwide women’s movement for a solution and prevention of these after–effects. The conference “Life Is Not for Sale” took place with the financial assistance provided by the European Commission, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Alternatives to Consumer Life Style

Life Is Not for Sale Money or Life

The objective of the program is to seek for the ways leading to a solution of the environmental crisis through changing everyday behaviour and promoting alternatives to the consumptive life style. In 1997, the GAIA Agency organised a international conference “Money or life or where is the way out from the consumerism trap”. The goal of the conference and the proceedings bearing the same title was to offer the general public some incentives and practical advice on how to lead a lifestyle that would be less consumption-oriented and how to protect the environment.

LETS or Let Us Help Each Other

Based on a purely voluntary principle, the project of mutual neighbourly assistance was implemented under the auspices of the GAIA Agency from 1999 to 2005. It is an alternative to the market economy lying in the exchange of services and products carried out without any cash paid as payments are done by means of imaginary payment units. The LETS (Local Exchange Trade System) project was organised according to the model that has already been put in practice successfully e.g. in England, the USA, Canada, Germany, Italy or Australia. The LETS system helps to save money, supply or demand services and goods that seldomly appear on the common market, but also to establish new friendships and contacts among neighbours. The LETS group of the GAIA Agency meet regularly every first Thursday in a new month, with people were organising trips, parties and cultural events together.

Ecological Way to the United Europe

We were given grants from the Nadace rozvoje občanské společnosti (The Civil Society Development Foundation), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Heinrich Böll Foundation to support the project titled “Ecological Way to the United Europe”. Its objective was to organize programs, lectures, informal meetings and practical training that would inform the pupils of elementary schools about various aspects of our accession to the European Union, focusing on ecology, team work and the development of creative abilities and independent thinking. The project ended with the conference of children entitled “We and the Europe of the 21st Century” focused on the knowledgeability of issues related to a common Europe, especially with regards to the environment. As part of the project, we organized a celebration of Earth Day with the children from the Legerova Basic School, and a fund-raising festival for the Children Home in Dolní Počernice with children from the Pílská Elementary School.

We in the 21st Century

The objective of this project was to adapt the garden and objects of the Karafiát nursery school in Klatovy so as it might get involved in the European network of ecological nursery schools. The incentive to carry out the changes was provided by the German NGO IGU and the project was supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the School Department of the District Authority and the Municipal Authority in Klatovy. An architectonic project was developed in cooperation with the architects Olaf Reiter, Václav Weinfurter and Miroslav Kabele to turn the garden and nursery school, which were built in the socialist era, into a space aesthetically and ecologically suitable for children games and to please the eyes of passersby. The architecture was to be complemented with a solar-heated community centre where parents could meet teachers, children and neighbours. The GAIA Agency submitted the whole draft of the project to the inhabitants of Klatovy during a public presentation accompanied with an exhibition about ecological nursery schools existing abroad. Unfortunately, after a number of meetings the draft proposal was rejected by the Municipal Authority of Klatovy, or rather postponed for an indefinite period of time due to the lack of financial means.

Ark 21

In 2002, the GAIA Agency in cooperation with the International Association for Education and Popular Cultural Activities in the Area of the Environment started to implement the project entitled “Ark 21—the European Network of Ecological Nursery Schools”. In the first part of the project, being supported by the German Federal Ministry of Environment and in cooperation with the magazine *Informatorium*, we carried out an opinion poll among nursery schools with the aim of mapping the current conditions of ecologically oriented nursery schools and pre-school ecological education in the Czech Republic. According to the research, we then compiled an address book of Czech ecological nursery schools and invited their representatives to an international conference in November 2003. The nursery schools had an opportunity to exchange their experiences there, both as regards to the territory of the Czech Republic and the European space. The proceedings were published from this conference as well as being complemented by an address book of ecological nursery schools in the Czech Republic.

Prizes Awarded

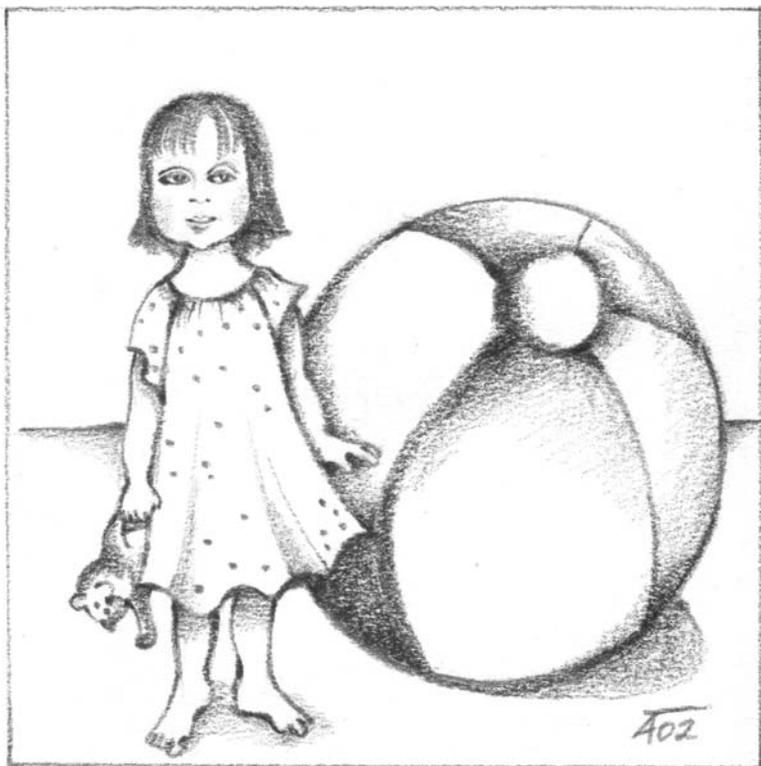
During the time of its existence, the GAIA Agency obtained several awards for its work in the area of ecology, equal opportunities, education and popular cultural events. The most important include:

- The scholarship of the Ashoka Association awarded for innovation approaches applied in publicly beneficial activities and so called social enterprising.
- The “About People With People” prize awarded for local democracy by the East West Studies Institute for cooperation with citizens during local planning in decision making processes.
- The prize awarded by the Ford Motor Company for revitalization of the environment and cultural heritage of society.
- The international award titled the International Green Apple for Environmental Best Practice.

International patronage

Since its establishment, the GAIA Agency has become a member in many Czech as well as international organizations and associations:

- ACCent
- Anna Lindh Foundation
- Ashoka Association
- Association for Equal Opportunities
- Balaton Group
- Diverse Women for Diversity
- Karat Association
- International Association for Ecological Education
- Schumacher College
- SOS Praha
- Organization for Contemporary Documentation
- Women’s Environment and Development Organization
- Women For a Common Europe
- Green Circle



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Marie Haisová summarizing the project idea



Women working on their vision of the world



Baby Expo at Veletržní palác



This is how we started



Sustainable life is only possible in nature, with animals, and healthy children



Cross-generational round table—photograph of participants



Lecture given at Gender studies, o.p.s.



Discussing the "Who Governs the World?" topic



Earth Day celebration project presentation



Vision developed with the use of a log frame



Quo Vadis, Femina? marching through Prague



Home in Prague—a topic-based round table



Presentation of teamwork results



Mutual introductions by women participating in the cross-generational round table



Round table for women age 30–48



Exchange of opinions among women of the younger generation



EKO GYMNAZIUM Praha o. p. s.

Private school

Nad Vodovodem 460/81

108 00 Praha 10 Malešice

Tel./fax: 274 783 072

E-mail: ekogym@bohem-net.cz

Website: www.volny.cz/ekogym

School authority: EKO AUXIS s.r.o.

Director: RNDr. Hana Pokorná

Study programmes: 4-year and 8-year

full-time, 4-year external

Orientation: general

EKO GYMNAZIUM Praha o.p.s. is a private secondary school that completed thirteen years of its existence in September 2006.

In terms of the school's programme, the education provided by it is **permeated by the efforts to form environmental thinking**, attitudes and value orientation towards the nature, people and the environment. The basic philosophy of the school includes the endeavour to **create modern life-style** based on a creative, friendly atmosphere in the relationships between the school, students, parents and the surrounding environment, and on the education leading towards harmonious attitude of man to the nature and other people, on the deepening of individual responsibility for the attitude to one's own health, education and personal growth. This mission is significantly supported by broad participation of students in multiculturally oriented activities, related to the interest in various forms of direct assistance in the creation of conditions that open new horizons of human cognition.

The school has been successfully integrated and active in the Czech school system. It has prepared for life 405 graduates who have been studying at all types of universities. Currently, it has 200 students in 13 classes.

The school offers education of an above-standard quality in many subject areas, out of which we extract the following as examples:

- modern language education in English, Russian or German
- comprehensive ecological and economic education in study cycles in seventh and eighth forms
- preferential options of several subjects in the highest forms of the study programme specialized with respect to future humanities or science studies or practical professions
- intensive language education in small study groups
- quality education of computer science in very good conditions as regards equipment and technology

- maximum number of students in a class: 24
- motivation of students by means of monthly achievement–related and other performance–related scholarships
- participation in knowledge testing olympiads and competitions with important tradition of the school’s cooperation on their organization; the school is the gestor of a number of Prague–wide competitions and national competitions and olympiads
- availability of contacts and exchanges with partner schools abroad
- engagement in projects—ecological association TEREZA, the World Cultural Heritage UNESCO, Sedmíkrásko—healthy and tolerant life–style
- week–long skiing courses
- ecological excursions during all grades of the studies programme
- contact with experts and important people from various areas at regular informal meetings
- engagement in the interest groups of the School Sports Club; especially the volleyball and floorball teams are very active



The private grammar school EKO GYMNÁZIUM Praha o.p.s. has obtained the **status of an affiliated school of the UNESCO**. It is also a **teaching school for the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Education of the Charles University in Prague**. It has been developed as a prestigious ecology & humanities oriented educational institution that bases its programme conception on the **idea of an interrelated world** that every man, every graduate of the school will affect through their behaviour, regardless of the area in which they will work. For this purpose, the school annually elaborates its plan of ecological education. The school is a holder of the Medal of Hurvínek’s Smile for its help to conkers in Prague; it also obtained the title **EKOŠKOLA (ECOSCHOOL) 2003, 2004, 2005**, and has the IES certificate. Currently, the school has been seeking to obtain the international ECOSCHOOL title.

The students of EKO GYMNÁZIUM Praha o.p.s. have an opportunity to express their individual personalities and creative activity not only during lessons, but also as regards regular events organized by the school (school balls, events on the occasion of the Earth Day and the environment, etc.)

Through all its educational activities, the school has been trying to lead its students to thinking in context and an awareness of their responsibility for their health and the environment in which they live. At the same time, it is apparent that improvement of the environment is not exactly measurable. However, when students and graduates acquire **habbits of healthy and tolerant life–style**, there is no doubt they will be able to significantly influence not only their own **family, but also society**.

Marie Haisová,
the team of the Agentura GAIA, o. s.

Quo Vadis, Femina?

The Vision of Women on Sustainable Life



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