



# Between Transnational Cooperation and Nationalism

## *The Little Entente of Women in Czechoslovakia*

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### ABSTRACT

Focusing on the involvement of feminist activist women from Czechoslovakia in the Little Entente of Women (LEW), this article examines the ideological and political limits of transnational cooperation within such an international organization, one that aimed to promote women's rights and pacifism in Central and Eastern Europe. The case of Czechoslovakia suggests that deep, ideological divisions between liberal feminist and conservative nationalist threads within the LEW's national branch seriously undermined efforts at unity and "global sisterhood" on the international level. It became possible to overcome ideological and political differences in the 1920s without questioning the very existence of the LEW. However, the antirevisionist political agenda of states involved in the LEW was a decisive factor in its reorganization. This article characterizes the rather limited impact of the LEW's activities in Czechoslovakia and presents new details on its reorganization in the 1930s.

**KEYWORDS:** Czechoslovakia, Eliška Purkyňová, Františka Plamínková, Little Entente, Little Entente of Women, Transnational women's movements



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In recent methodological reflections on the history of feminism and women's movements, Francisca de Haan underlines how important it is to understand such groups in their full complexity, with competing ideological streams acting on national and international levels. In her words, it is "important to speak about women's movements and feminisms in the plural, to emphasize the different strands that have always existed within them, with forms of overlap, cooperation, and contestation between them." She stresses that "it is very important to be specific about the strand of feminism one is referring to."<sup>1</sup> De Haan references two central methodological approaches: the importance of long-term perspective in evaluating continuities in the international women's



movement, and the interconnections among organizations (personal connections, mutual influences, strategies, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

Both approaches have proved useful in researching the impact of the regional transnational women's organization known as the Little Entente of Women (LEW). While its founders united to promote the general goals of women's rights and pacifism on an international level, they were forced to overcome not only the very different cultural and political configurations of their members, but also ideological divisions in the understanding of feminism.

Isidora Grubački has uncovered strong, ideological divisions among the differing strands of the Yugoslav national women's movement in the LEW. She argues that due to such clashes in the case of Yugoslavia, the LEW took on an ambiguous character, which "can be explained by the ideological differences between the involved feminists rather than through differences between national sections."<sup>3</sup> Recent research on Czechoslovak participation in the LEW partially confirms these conclusions. The case of Czechoslovakia shows that we can also explain the organization's overall ambiguous character through internal, ideological divergences among particular women's activists within the same national (Czechoslovak) section during the 1920s. In the Czechoslovak segment of the LEW, a conservative, ethno-nationalist movement struggling for a "unity of Slav women," represented by Eliška Purkyňová, fought for dominance against the more Western-oriented—according to contemporary terminology—"progressive" liberal feminist movement headed by Františka Plamínková. This battle for supremacy extended all the way to the leadership and direction of the entire LEW. However, the deep political differences and controversies among national sections that emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s were based on the international politics of particular nation states and played a decisive role in the activities and the very existence of the LEW. One objective of the LEW's founders was to serve as a counterweight against established international women's organizations dominated by activists from Western Europe and the United States, which had already exhibited great influence and organizational infrastructure (the International Council of Women, or ICW, and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, or IWSA), and to unite feminist aspirations in Central and Southeastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> In the end, the LEW failed in this effort due to controversies based on the political aims of nation states concentrating along the same lines of the winners and losers of World War I. Ultimately, antirevisionist politics within the LEW finally led to the dissolution of the organization's original form, established in the 1920s—a regional women's organization that (unlike the political Little Entente) united women activists from Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Bulgaria.

In other work, I have focused on the objectives and forms of collaborations in the LEW from the perspective of the Czechoslovak leaders. The rather limited impact of the LEW was obvious in comparison with other international women's organizations in terms of the feminist movement and its portrayal in the media in Czechoslovakia.<sup>5</sup> This article, in contrast, focuses on the specific factors that limited the collaboration of particular national sections within the LEW, as well as on the diverging streams within them. Czechoslovak archival sources shed more light on the reasons for the exclusion of some members from the original LEW, as well as the function of the new LEW af-

ter its reconstruction as a women's organization mirroring the structure and political goals of the Little Entente.

This article is based mainly on archival sources from Czechoslovak members of the LEW—the central umbrella organization of liberal feminist women *Ženská národní rada* (National Council of Women, *ŽNR*) and its president Františka Plamínková, who was active in several international women's organizations including the LEW. Besides materials chronicling the LEW's activities in Czechoslovakia, this archive contains materials documenting the participation of the *ŽNR* in other international women's organizations.<sup>6</sup> The primary source for this article is the journal *Ženská rada* (Council of Women) published by the *ŽNR*, which regularly discussed international women's networks and feminism. Other sources are Plamínková's personal collection from the Památník národního písemnictví archive (Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature, Prague), as well as the Archive of the Czechoslovak Presidents' Office, which includes letters from Plamínková addressed to President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. For context, I consult secondary sources on women's movements and feminism before World War I and in the interwar period. To this day, there remains a scarcity of literature focusing on the LEW,<sup>7</sup> and Slovak and Czech historiography includes only sporadic mentions of its existence.<sup>8</sup>

## National or International? Continuity of Prewar Goals and Practices

Czechoslovak participation in the LEW was viewed as a model for its members from other countries, because of Czechoslovakia's high level of women's emancipation compared to other Eastern European and Balkans countries, as well as a longer tradition of the women's movement, including involvement in international organizations. The dissolution of the multiethnic Habsburg monarchy and the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in October 1918 marked a radical change for women's movement activists. The consequences of World War I dramatically altered the map of Europe, establishing new successor states with new political regimes. With respect to women's civil rights, the new Czechoslovak Republic put the equality of men and women into law and authorized universal suffrage for every citizen regardless of gender in its constitution of 1920. The new regime granted women access to education at all levels and in all fields, including the hitherto unattainable study of law at university. Although women began to appear in positions that had previously been reserved for men—even as politicians, members of parliament, and senators—this was only the first step. As leaders of the feminist movements repeatedly stated, there was still a long way to go to achieve gender equality in the labor market, employment, and social status.<sup>9</sup> This was the goal—to advocate for gender equality in everyday life—that the feminist societies in Czechoslovakia, led by the *ŽNR* (1923–1942) and its chairperson Plamínková, were striving for. The *ŽNR*, an umbrella organization of feminist women's associations in Czechoslovakia, was through its association *Výbor pro volební právo žen* (The Committee for Women's Suffrage, *VVPŽ*) a member of international women's organizations, including the LEW.

The tradition of Czech women's movements was characterized by a close connection between feminism and nationalism, as well as confrontation with dominant German and Hungarian feminist groups in Austria-Hungary. These methods maintained a strong influence on the politics of exclusion based on ethnic nationalism and antirevisionism after World War I, enforced by Czechoslovak LEW members. Before World War I, the leaders of Czech women's associations used international platforms such as the ICW and the IWSA to promote the emancipation of women, as well as to put forward the political ambitions of the Czech nation. They understood the struggle for women's emancipation as part of the fight for equal rights for the Czech nation in the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>10</sup> For these reasons, a relatively large portion of Czech male politicians supported the prewar feminist movement, and they elected Czech writer Božena Viková-Kunětická the first female deputy at the Bohemian Diet in Austria in 1912.<sup>11</sup>

Due to the strong ethnic-national identity of the activists, as well as ethnic tensions in the Habsburg monarchy, Czech women's associations refused to join the Austrian umbrella organization controlled by German women. Following the example of the ethnic Czech women's movement, the single national society of Slovak women, Živena (named for the Slavic goddess of life and fertility), also refused to join the women's societies in the Kingdom of Hungary led by ethnic Hungarians as a form of protest. Similar tactics were employed on the international level.

A prime example of such nationalistic controversy within the international women's movement, recalled in the postwar period by Czechoslovak feminist leaders, was the last prewar congress of the IWSA in Budapest in June 1913. Viková-Kunětická used the congress as a forum to present not only the national ambitions of the Czechs in the Kingdom of Bohemia, but especially the goals of her own political party and her personal ambitions. The IWSA leadership invited her to the congress as "the first woman in Central Europe elected a Member of a Diet" to speak about the successes of the feminist movement in the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>12</sup> Viková-Kunětická would only accept the invitation on the provision that the Hungarian organizers of the congress fulfilled two conditions: (1) her speech would be in Czech or Slovak; and (2) it would include criticism of the ethnic policies of the Kingdom of Hungary and a demand for the congress to issue a protest against discrimination toward Slovaks. As part of the IWSA leadership's efforts to maintain neutrality and the desire of Hungarian organizers to avoid cancellation of the congress for political reasons, Viková-Kunětická's requests were denied. She responded by announcing a Czech boycott of the congress. Moreover, the Czech female activists organized a so-called pre-congress conference in Prague for delegates on their way to Budapest a few days before the assembly, where Viková-Kunětická gave her "forbidden" Czech speech. However, a large number of the foreign delegates in Prague did not understand the intentions behind the Czech actions. The Czech and Slovak press presented Viková-Kunětická's strategy as a major protest against the ethnic policies of the Habsburg monarchy. Although some Czech delegates did attend the congress after all, none of the participants from other states considered this national conflict worth noting, nor was it even included in the written history of the IWSA.<sup>13</sup>

After state independence was gained, nationalism remained a strong force among Czechoslovak women's activists at the international level. The new nation state of Czechoslovakia was based on the political dominance of ethnic Czechs and Slovaks, emphasizing national values and interests at international forums. In addition to building transnational cooperation, putting forward a positive image of democracy in Czechoslovakia remained a central goal within the Czech and Slovak women's movement throughout the entire interwar period. As for activities among international women's organizations, the ambitions and practices of leaders from Czechoslovak women's movements showed remarkable continuity with the prewar period. In this context, it is important to ask whether the LEW became—at least in the case of Czechoslovakia—a place for transnational cooperation or rather simply a place for the representation of the particular national—or nationalistic—interests of individual members.

## The LEW in Czechoslovakia

In considering the importance of the LEW for the Czechoslovak women's movement, it must be taken into account that during the interwar period, Czechoslovak feminists remained active in several international women's organizations with varying degrees of engagement. Priority was given most to engagement with the ICW, the IWSA/IAWSEC,<sup>14</sup> and the League of Peace, with the LEW in a less prominent position.

Two antagonistic streams clashed within the Czechoslovak LEW members, despite the fact that they both represented middle-class women striving for emancipation. Because of strong ideological differences between the groups, Czechoslovakia became the only state with two women's organizations in the LEW: the more traditional, conservative, and nationalistic Ústřední spolek českých žen (Central Association of Czech Women, ÚSČŽ), represented in the LEW by Purkyňová; and the liberal and more radical VVPŽ. The second group had been a member of the Ženská národní rada since 1923 and was led by Plamínková.<sup>15</sup>

Purkyňová, as a delegate of the aforementioned organization, with an agenda oriented toward social work and promoting a more patriarchal model of femininity, represented a type of prewar nationalist activist for women's emancipation who prioritized nationalism over feminism in her values. Being a deputy of the Czechoslovak parliament for the National Democracy Party, Purkyňová's main reason for engagement in the LEW was her ambition to continue pre-World War I activities, specifically to create a platform for presenting the unity of Slavs.

In contrast, Plamínková can be regarded as a radical middle-class feminist par excellence. When Melissa Feinberg writes that there was a specific mixture of progressive feminism and democratic values in the Czechoslovak Republic,<sup>16</sup> it is the liberal feminist thread led by Plamínková that she considers the prime example. In practice, Plamínková described herself as a Czech "patriot" and fought for nationalist goals with an unshakable loyalty toward the Czechoslovak state, although avoiding the extreme vocabulary used by the radical right-wing Purkyňová.<sup>17</sup> Plamínková, a senator in the Czechoslovak parliament for the National Socialist Party,<sup>18</sup> took great

care to build a positive image of the Czechoslovak state and of the leadership position of Czech (Czechoslovak) feminism within international organizations. This was a clear continuation of strategies of the Czech women's movement during the Habsburg monarchy. As a member of the LEW, Plamínková made sure to show continuity with the IWSA. Before World War I, the IWSA was the first organization in which Czech activists enjoyed notable success, creating the "affiliated organization of Bohemia" in 1908 even though they belonged to a single branch of the IWSA for Austria, along with German women's societies. Therefore, Plamínková consistently acted as a delegate of two Czechoslovak organizations: the prewar member of the IWSA, VVPŽ, and the postwar ŽNR, a prospective national outlet of the ICW (a goal achieved shortly after the ŽNR's creation in 1923).

The opposing ideological foundations of both women were expressed in the form of differing reasoning for the establishment, goals, and membership of the LEW. Purkyňová, who was personally present the moment the LEW was created at the 1923 IWSA congress in Rome, wrote in the Czechoslovak press that the stimulus to establish the LEW emerged out of discussions at the 1911 IWSA conference in Stockholm on the need to form a "Slavic bloc" within the international women's movement.



**Image 1.** Participants at the 1923 IWSA congress in Rome, where the decision was made to create the LEW.

Source: Archiv Národního muzea (National Museum Archive) Prague, collection Františka F. Plamínková, box 3, file 35–36.

Purkyňová claimed that she was one of the organization's initiators and that she had developed one of two proposals about the future form of the LEW (ultimately, Alexandrina Cantacuzino's proposal was accepted). According to Purkyňová, two groups with two specific regional aims were present at the creation of the LEW: (1) a group of "Slavic women" (i.e., "Serb, Croat, Slovene, Bulgarian, Polish, and Czechoslovak women") aiming to create a "Slavic Alliance of Women"; and (2) "delegates from Balkan states" (i.e., "delegates from Romania and Greece") striving for "a Union of Balkan women."<sup>19</sup> The first group and its mission was supported by Purkyňová, the second by Cantacuzino.

Plamínková credited Alexandrina Cantacuzino exclusively for the initiative of founding the LEW. By not personally attending the discussions on the LEW's foundation, Plamínková undermined the presence of Purkyňová and the ÚSČŽ as its founding members. Plamínková repeatedly claimed that only the VVPŽ had the right to represent Czechoslovak women in international women's organizations, but that the LEW was founded by delegates and associations "that were by chance attending the [IWSA] congress."<sup>20</sup> Unlike Purkyňová, who prioritized the unification of Slavic women, Plamínková declared that the aim of the LEW was to create "a union of South-eastern European countries, which would form a strong faction in the international women's movement." According to Plamínková, Romania's leading role in founding the LEW was connected with the aims of the Little Entente right from its foundation: "When creating the LEW delegacy, Cantacuzéne<sup>21</sup> . . . invited not only Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, but also Poland and Greece. I think the then minister of foreign affairs from Romania, Take Ionescu's approach had an influence—he wished to unite all five nations in the Little Entente."<sup>22</sup>

In the first phase of its existence, the LEW was not Plamínková's priority. She did not personally attend the LEW's founding in Rome nor its conferences in Athens (1925) or Warsaw (1929).<sup>23</sup> She was significantly more involved at the time in other international women's organizations (for example, at the 1925 ICW congress in Washington, Plamínková was elected as one of eight vice presidents of the ICW).<sup>24</sup> This was not due to underestimating the importance of the LEW or disagreeing with its direction, but rather a result of ideological and personal disagreements with Purkyňová, something that characterized the entire interwar period.<sup>25</sup> Personal conflicts between the two Czechoslovak leaders in the LEW escalated after the conference in Prague (1927), when Plamínková declared that she "will resign as a delegate in the LEW due to the impossibility of peaceful cooperation with the other Czechoslovak delegation (those of Mrs. Purkyňová)."<sup>26</sup>

Analyzing the activities specifically undertaken by the Czechoslovak LEW members of the liberal feminist stream, it is clear that in its first phase, the international political-diplomatic agenda remained peripheral. The dominant issue was the enforcement of gender equality: practical proposals for measures that were meant to improve the socioeconomic position of women, and especially their legal position, in all countries involved in the LEW, and more specifically, reform of the civil code and addressing of problems concerning children outside of marriage, unemployed women, pay equity, and so on. However, in the 1930s, a significant shift in the LEW agenda occurred after the reconfiguration of its membership, and when diplomatic

goals began to dominate over transnational cooperation as far as the implementation of gender equality was concerned.

## Stages and Intensity of Cooperation within the LEW

What made the work of the Czechoslovak branch of the LEW so particular, and how intensive was it in comparison to other international women's organizations? The forms of cooperation were the same, and personal meetings were held at LEW conferences and meeting sessions organized by LEW members, even while they were abroad at ICW and IWSA/IAWSEC congresses.

During the first stage (1923–1929), Czechoslovak members participated in LEW initiatives, attended conferences, and published articles about their activities in the Czechoslovak press. They also collaborated on several surveys, expert reports, and proposals on women's legal, economic, and social positions. A successful 1927 LEW conference in Prague represented the culmination of the first stage for Czechoslovakia.



**Image 2.** Members of the LEW at the IAWSEC committee meeting in Prague (1927). Seated in the middle row, L–R: F. Plamínková, A. Theodoropoulou, M. Corbett Ashby, D. von Velsen; in the middle of the bottom row: Milena Atanacković.

Source: Archiv Národního muzea (National Museum Archive) Prague, collection Františka F. Plamínková, box 3, file 35–36. It was also published in *Ženská rada*, no. 4 (1927), 52.



The way it was organized can be understood as a symbolic expression of the importance of the LEW for Czechoslovakia in the hierarchy of international women's organizations. In fact, the Prague LEW conference was organized as the second of three consecutive meetings of the international women's movement. An IAWSEC congress was held from 24 May to 2 June 1927, partially overlapping with the LEW conference held from 29/31 May to 3 June,<sup>27</sup> followed by an official visit by delegates of the Czech and Slovak women's movement from the United States.<sup>28</sup>

The LEW conference proceedings in Prague followed a typical agenda, including several social events organized together for IAWSEC members (a soiree, an excursion around Prague, a reception by the mayor, dinner with Minister of Foreign Affairs Edvard Beneš, a reception with President Masaryk of the Czechoslovak Republic, etc.).<sup>29</sup> As for the number of foreign delegates, the LEW conference was smallest, with only seventeen representatives from Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and Greece. Regarding the LEW leadership, the Prague conference was attended by chairpersons "Princess Alexandra Cantacuzène" from Romania, Milena Atanacković from Yugoslavia, and Avra Theodoropoulou from Greece.<sup>30</sup> No reference to the Bulgarian delegation as observer and potential applicant in Prague was mentioned in the Czechoslovak women's press, as indicated in Maria Bucur's article in this Forum.<sup>31</sup> As for the conference resolutions, *Ženská rada* reported only that the delegates had decided to issue the LEW bulletin on a quarterly basis.<sup>32</sup>

After the LEW congresses in Prague (1927) and Warsaw (1929), the Czechoslovak press did not reveal the plans to divide the organization into two sections: a Balkan division including Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania; and a Central European one with Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, and possibly Austria, as indicated in a recent study by Krassimira Daskalova.<sup>33</sup> Only the internal minutes reported on the resolution of the LEW's conference in Prague that the organization should include new members from other states, namely Bulgaria, Albania, Turkey, and Hungary. Even plans to rename the LEW after expansion were not mentioned in the Czechoslovak feminist press. According to the internal minutes of the Prague congress, "It was decided to change the LEW's name, as it does not correspond to the new goal, and to change it to the 'Women's and Peace Union of Southeastern Europe' or another analogous name."<sup>34</sup> The proposal to rename the LEW was again raised during the 1929 Warsaw conference. Documents prepared for the meeting mentioned the proposed name in French as "l'Union féministe et pacifiste des femmes du Sud-Est Européen," but it was not accepted or even discussed further.<sup>35</sup>

The 1929 LEW conference in Warsaw was followed by a period of limited activity (1930–1933/34). No further conferences were held and the Czechoslovak women's press reported only sporadically on the undertakings of the LEW, making no mention of the internal crises started as a consequence of the heated discussion on its reorganization during the Prague conference. Similarly, there was no discussion of the ŽNR in the press regarding the Balkan Entente founded in February 1934 after the separation of Balkan members from the LEW.<sup>36</sup> In this period, the Czechoslovak women's movement kept in touch with LEW members through events organized by other associations. For instance, Plamínková considered it important to arrange a trip to Prague for delegates as part of the events of the 1930 ICW congress in Vienna. After

a great individual effort, she managed to arrange an official program for the Vienna congress delegates in Prague, regardless of the organizations they represented. Her greatest dream came true: the delegates from the international women's organizations from twenty-two states were personally received by T. G. Masaryk at a special garden party.<sup>37</sup> Plamínková considered this a demonstration of the high level of democracy in Czechoslovakia and of the strength of the Czechoslovak women's movement, supported by the president of the state, a renowned advocate for women's rights.

From 1933 onward, there were efforts to revive the LEW, but in an altered form. After a Little Entente meeting in Prague in June 1933, Plamínková sent a letter to Cantacuzino asking her to restore LEW operations. She was supported by Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Beneš, to whom she offered the LEW platform as a cooperating partner for the Little Entente.<sup>38</sup> Yet, as is implied in correspondence between Plamínková, the presidential office, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they welcomed a restored LEW and hoped its form and objectives would match those of the Little Entente. However, Plamínková wrote, a decision about restarting the LEW was made in 1933 on the initiative of Cantacuzino: "In June 1933 reorganization was carried out on the Romanian proposal so that the LEW was now limited to the countries forming the political Little Entente."<sup>39</sup> According to a letter written by Plamínková in 1933, she agreed with the LEW's limited membership, claiming that she never supported the organization involving Balkan states.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Cantacuzino was even against opening the LEW to the women's organizations from Bulgaria, Turkey, and Albania. According to Krassimira Daskalova, the resolution of the 1927 Prague conference declaring the LEW's extension "was voted against strong opposition of Cantacuzino."<sup>41</sup>

Operations of the new LEW began in 1934 with a series of lectures in Czechoslovakia and the other states of the Little Entente. In the following year, the headquarters of the Little Entente organization was established, including the LEW and other specialized "Little Ententes": the Little Entente of journalists, of students, and of legionnaires.<sup>42</sup> The LEW declared itself to be one of the founding members of this central organization.<sup>43</sup> To highlight the importance of the LEW, but at the same time the close connection between the Czechoslovak branch and the Little Entente regarding diplomatic policy, Plamínková was named, along with two men, one of the vice presidents of the Little Entente's headquarters.<sup>44</sup>

In 1938, the ŽNR commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the LEW, but only in its limited form. In an article celebrating its jubilee, readers were reminded of the importance of the cooperation among Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, and their chairpersons, Leposava Petković, Cantacuzino, and Plamínková, highlighting that all three were, in fact, also ICW Vice Chairpersons. The article mentioned an exhibition of over two hundred works of fine art created by female artists from Little Entente states as a culmination of their cooperation. The itinerant exhibition was held between January 1938 and February 1939, traveling from Belgrade, through Zagreb, Ljubljana, Bucharest, and finally to Prague. The other original LEW members were not mentioned in the article.<sup>45</sup>

Free democratic activities in the international women's movement ended with the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of its western territory by Nazi Germany in March 1939. An open letter of protest by Plamínková addressed to Hitler

and other calls by the ŽNR to save Czechoslovakia sent in October 1938 to the foreign press and 130 women's organizations abroad met with a strong response of solidarity from more than fifty international women's organizations, including the former LEW members. The Czechoslovak activists declared this to be the highest level of solidarity they had ever experienced within the transnational cooperation of women's organizations.<sup>46</sup>

It remains questionable, and a subject for further research, whether connections between LEW functionaries and other international women's associations increased the real impact of the LEW or had detrimental effects. On the other hand, further research should consider the specific reasons for the dissolution of the original LEW in more detail: whether it was due to international tensions in Europe and the varied interests of member states, the different threads of feminism, or even personal conflicts within the leadership and individual members of the LEW.

### Continuation or Dissolution of the LEW?

The antirevisionist agenda and the relationship agreed on with the political Little Entente seem to be the most critical factors in the failure of the LEW as a transnational feminist network connecting the Central European and Balkan states. While representatives from Little Entente states more or less openly supported its aims, other LEW members distanced themselves from the Little Entente. During the process of formulating a peace resolution at the Prague conference in June 1927, then president Theodoropoulou from Greece expressed a cautious stance: "We cannot know whether we will be [in the future] still in agreement with the Little Entente. . . . We were never an envoy of the political Little Entente. We accepted this name to geographically mark our group of states. Nevertheless, Greece is not a member of the political Little Entente, and neither are the other states that we want to unite."<sup>47</sup>

Alexandrina Cantacuzino supported the LEW's close relationship with the Little Entente, stating that she considered the LE to be binding for the LEW. According to the conference sessions minutes, she noted that "she [could not] accept the article [of the conference's peace resolution] because it opposes the political Little Entente, which is finally a treaty for us that we cannot break." In contrast, the representative of Yugoslavia, Milena Atanacković, responded, "we cannot say that we are the vanguard of a political union, because we cannot know whether we will always agree with the political L.E."<sup>48</sup>

The idea of expanding the LEW by accepting more states created disagreements between members. One document mentions that in 1931, the Czechoslovak members did not agree with the dissolution of the LEW as long as the Little Entente existed. The "renewal" of the LEW—at least from the Czechoslovak perspective—was achieved with the direct assistance of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Beneš.<sup>49</sup> Sources from Yugoslavia show that Plamínková discussed the continuation of the LEW with Yugoslav colleagues in Belgrade in November 1934. Jasmina Milanović claimed that the final decision was made in 1935 in Paris during a meeting of national women's committees at the Ninth Session of the ICW, when the representatives of Yugoslavia and Romania "accepted Plamínková's idea to renew the work of the Little Entente of Women."<sup>50</sup>

Statutes of the “renewed” LEW were modified. While the main goals of the original statutes—to promote feminism and pacifism—remained unchanged, the paragraph relating to the admission of new members became entirely subject to the policy of the Little Entente. Article 3 of the Statutes was worded as follows: “According to the provisions agreed in Stockholm and confirmed in Paris, members of the LEW can be National Councils of Women from Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. If a political LE (*Petite Entente politique*) would be extended to a state, the National Council of Women of that state may join the LEW.”<sup>51</sup> Other states and women’s organizations previously involved in the LEW were excluded.

Under the new LEW structure, Plamínková gained a crucial position in the Czechoslovak section, and her influence in the LEW’s headquarters grew significantly as a result of her role in the “renewal” of the organization.<sup>52</sup> As for the reasons for the LEW’s “reorganization,” Plamínková summed them up in 1935:

Some delegations wanted to restrict the LEW only to LE states while others, especially Greece, requested to extend the LEW’s reach to other Balkan states. These were reactions to the “Balkan conferences,” that is, the emerging Balkan Union. There were other difficulties. We tried for the LEW to wipe away differences between winners and losers in World War I. More and more, it became clear that [the LEW] should include members from the whole female world [i.e., central women’s associations from every state] and not associations randomly associated in the LEW. So, we arrived at the reorganization of the LEW, proposed by Romania in 1933, that the LEW will unite only Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia by means of uniting the [central] National Councils of women. The LEW’s work was to be updated based on the aims of the political Little Entente.<sup>53</sup>

As Krassimira Daskalova argues in her article in this Forum, the reason for the interruption of cooperation with previous members of the LEW was their involvement in other regional women’s networks newly created in the 1930s. New details on the reasons for and practices of exclusion from the LEW as a potential basis of transnational feminism raise the question of the continuation of a “feminist” Little Entente from 1933 in the form derived from the antirevisionist “political” Little Entente. With regard to the LEW’s original aim to create a feminist network of women from Central Europe and the Balkans, its reduction to the states involved in the Little Entente should be understood as a dissolution rather than the proclaimed “reorganization” or “revitalization.” From the perspective of the excluded members of the original LEW, it was clearly a dissolution. Members from Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia declared their actions after 1933 as a “renewal,” “continuation,” or “reconstruction,” despite the fact that they were directly derived from the Little Entente with regard not just to membership, but also goals and forms of activities. Such a significant shift in the LEW should be seen as the end of free and wide opportunities for transnational feminist cooperation.

Reducing the LEW’s activities to mainly public speeches and cultural events, almost in the frame of cultural diplomacy,<sup>54</sup> while putting more radical feminist demands and work into the background must have been frustrating for Plamínková, a

very active and quite radical feminist. It can be assumed that the changed status of the LEW in the 1930s contributed to the ambivalent recognition of its importance as a regional feminist network by activists and the general public in the Czechoslovak Republic. Plamínková, as well as the many other feminist activists and associations in Czechoslovakia, valued and preferred work and publicity in other, more prominent, global women's organizations.

### Limits of Transnational Cooperation: Practices of Inclusion and Exclusion

Transnational cooperation within the LEW was limited by, among other things, insufficient funds and contacts that were restricted to sporadic personal meetings. However, an important restriction remained the ambition to push the national and regional sovereignty of the particular LEW members. The case of Czechoslovakia exposes additional limitations of transnational sisterhood. Similarly to other LEW members, leaders representing Czechoslovakia insisted on "defining women's issues along ethno-racial terms, even as they sought to represent all women," as Maria Bucur concludes in her article in this Forum.

An explicit intention to distance themselves from potential feminist partners—viewed as national and political opponents—cannot be found in the official documents of the ŽNR, but it can be identified in Plamínková's correspondence addressed to the presidential office of T. G. Masaryk. While preparing a program for foreign delegates to the ICW congress traveling from Vienna to Prague in 1930, Plamínková expressed clearly in a letter addressed to the presidential office that her main aim was to present Czechoslovakia as a progressive state independent from Austria and Hungary, the "long-term enemies" of Czechs and Slovaks. In her words, "Inviting the female delegates to Prague became inevitable at the moment they were also invited to Budapest. Therefore, the journey to Prague is important, in order for the participants to leave Central Europe having learned not only of Vienna and Budapest, our enemy cities and states. . . . It will be probably always our curse that we have to catch up with Vienna and Budapest." Her comparison with events organized by the Czech women in Prague before the Budapest congress in 1913 is significant: "Back in 1913, before the war, an IWSA congress was held in Budapest and we invited them to Prague as well. . . . But today, when we have an independent state, it would be a good idea to show them what a huge difference a free republic means to all the participants that might have been in Prague at that time."<sup>55</sup> In fact, by moving away from Austria and Hungary, Plamínková was completely in line with Czechoslovak foreign policy and the political objectives of the Little Entente, understood by state leaders as a wall against the revisionist efforts of Hungary.<sup>56</sup>

As for the international level, the core problem for feminist leaders remained the same as in previous decades: who, meaning which threads of the national women's movement and which associations and persons, would be authorized to represent women activists in the international women's organizations? The question was now modified to include the new Czechoslovak nation state as: who is authorized to nominate delegates to represent "women from Czechoslovakia"?

Plamínková struggled greatly to achieve a leading position in the ŽNR, among other women's associations in Czechoslovakia, and to acquire the authority to appoint representatives to prominent international women's organizations. At the very founding of the ŽNR, she stated that the name of this new central feminist umbrella organization should be the "National Council," to be suggestive of the name used for national divisions of the International Council of Women.<sup>57</sup> Despite Plamínková's noteworthy attempts, the ŽNR was unable to attract women from lower social classes or most women's professional organizations. Some left because of internal ideological and political discrepancies,<sup>58</sup> like the aforementioned ÚSČŽ, led by Purkyňová. Nevertheless, the ŽNR fulfilled its ambition to be the main agent in a feminist, transnational cooperation of women.

Although this central union of liberal Czechoslovak feminists included some organizations representing women from the German minority and a few Jewish groups,<sup>59</sup> the struggle for dominance on the international level continued. Despite proclaiming democracy, liberalism, and the ambition to represent "all women from Czechoslovakia" at the international level, the ŽNR and Plamínková herself employed various strategies of inclusion and exclusion based on ethno-national and ideological lines. Internal documents from the archive of the ŽNR and VVPŽ reveal practices of exclusion in the case of ethnic German women's associations. In this context, the arguments for exclusion were significant.

In February 1928, the VVPŽ discussed the petition of the union of ethnic German women's organizations in Czechoslovakia, *Frauenfortschritt* (Women's Progress),<sup>60</sup> to



**Image 3.** Members of the LEW in Paris, 1926. Seated in the middle row, L–R: A. Theodoropoulou, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, F. Plamínková.

Source: *Knihka života: Práce a osobnost F. F. Plamínkové* [Book of life: Work and life of F. F. Plamínková], ed. Albína Honzáková (Prague: Melantrich, 1935), 544a.

be accepted by the IAWSEC as an independent member. According to the minutes from this discussion, Czech members expressed their “concerns that Frauenfortschritt would be accepted as a member of the Alliance.” Plamínková was referring to how she discussed the issue with the former president of the IWSA, Carrie Chapman Catt. According to Plamínková, Catt agreed with the statement, “it was unthinkable, as the state is ours, it is the Czechoslovaks, and the Germans are only a minority.” However, the IAWSEC committee recommended working with Frauenfortschritt in the Joint Committee with a proportion of representation based on the number of their members.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the ŽNR offered Frauenfortschritt an invitation to send two of its delegates to Berlin for the next IAWSEC conference in June 1929. Based on this decision, Czechoslovakia was also represented in Berlin by Slovak delegates and representatives of Frauenfortschritt.<sup>62</sup>

However, to a request by Frauenfortschritt to have their own representatives in the commissions of the IAWSEC, Plamínková revealed the real reason for VVPŽ’s refusal: “If we offer Frauenfortschritt one of the commissions, Czechoslovakia will be represented abroad by the German Association.”<sup>63</sup> Despite such strategies of exclusion, in the 1930s the leaders of the VVPŽ and ŽNR finally accepted delegates from the German minority women’s umbrella association to represent Czechoslovakia in the international women’s organizations.<sup>64</sup> At the IAWSEC congress in Istanbul in 1935, besides the delegates from the VVPŽ and ŽNR, delegates from Slovakia and from two associations representing Czechoslovak German women (the Frauenfortschritt and Frauenbund (Women’s Union)) were also present.<sup>65</sup> On the national level, the ŽNR collaborated with women’s organizations and its individual members from Slovakia; however, on the international level, cooperation occurred only with those of Slovak or Czech ethnicity. No examples of cooperation between the ŽNR or Plamínková and representatives of the Hungarian ethnic minority are known.

Plamínková attempted to use similar practices of selective inclusion in the entire LEW structure, arguing that the transnational network should be represented by “progressive” feminists. Based on correspondence with LEW members, it appears that she sought to inspire a shift in a more liberal, “progressive” feminist direction. She worried that a conservative type of feminism would prevail in the LEW, that is, that the majority of delegates would be from conservative nationalist associations or those justifying totalitarian or right-wing extremist regimes. Plamínková tried to influence the organization’s direction by accepting new liberal and democratically inclined members into it. In response to Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, in November 1926 Plamínková stated:

I was worried about receiving applications to the LEW from too many organizations, which would defeat our character of democracy and progress. But as you can see now, we are having a struggle anyway. Romania and half of Czechoslovakia<sup>66</sup> are, in fact, conservative. The only progressive organizations are coming from Yugoslavia [to the LEW conference]. From us [Czechoslovakia], the Ženská národní rada might attend, or perhaps the Moravská pokroková organisace žen [the progressive women’s organization of Moravia]. We can thus be sure about these two countries. From Romania, the more pro-

gressive associations might come (the IAWSEC committee). And now Poland. I am completely dispirited that the Polish National Committee is in such backward hands. Could we not work in the direction so that someone more progressive may take it over? I think it is really impossible to take a different stance than to increase the number of LEW members and attempt to receive applications from progressive associations.<sup>67</sup>

The letter was apparently part of the discussion on the LEW's extension to other member states. Although the various proposals for who should and should not be part of the LEW included a discussion of "progressive" or "conservative" streams of feminism, the foreign policy of individual states became decisive for the continuation of the LEW in 1930s.



**Image 4.** Františka F. Plamínková.

Source: [https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franti%C5%perka\\_Plam%C3%ADnkov%C3%A1](https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franti%C5%perka_Plam%C3%ADnkov%C3%A1) (accessed 14 June 2022).

## Conclusion

The example of the Czechoslovak LEW members reveals continuities of institutions, personalities, goals, and strategies from before World War I. Ongoing collaboration, however, was strongly disrupted by differences in the ideological orientations of LEW members at both the national and international levels. The most significant limits in regional transnational cooperation between women from Central and Southeastern Europe were the strong connection between feminism and nationalism and the anti-irredentist policy that LEW members followed. In this sense, some LEW members used this organization for the propagation of particular national(istic) aims.

In her article in this Forum, Katerina Dalakoura clearly shows that the Greek members of the LEW acted in line with their state's foreign policy on the Balkans. Similarly, the approaches of Czechoslovak LEW members did not significantly differ from the diplomacy of the Czechoslovak authorities in the 1920s. Reorganization of the LEW in full accordance with the diplomatic-military Little Entente in the 1930s eventually meant an identification with the official foreign policy of Czechoslovakia and its allies. The revival of the LEW's activities directly followed—both ideologically and chronologically—the consolidation of the Little Entente in February 1933.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, for the redefined LEW, such a reorganization meant a significant



shift away from its feminist orientation and expert work in promoting gender equality. The so-called revitalization of the LEW meant the de facto disappearance of previous methods of work and a narrowed focus on foreign cultural diplomacy.

Although the impact of the LEW on the real position of women remained limited, some of its original goals were fulfilled. Women from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and at the same time, leaders of the LEW—in particular Theodoropoulou, Cantacuzino, and Plamínková—obtained leading positions in large international organizations. The LEW's transformation in the 1930s did not interrupt cooperation with former member states and personalities; these continued on the basis of personal contacts and through other international women's associations. However, the shift away from feminism in the 1930s most likely reduced the importance and influence of this feminist regional network.

Nevertheless, the members of the LEW substantially changed and co-created the discourse on gender equality, contributing to its promotion in the countries of South-eastern Europe. However, the feminists involved in the organization (at least those from Czechoslovakia) did little to challenge the foreign policy of their states, nor the male definition of nationhood in countries striving for legal gender equality. LEW members criticized discriminatory measures against women in the specific social and cultural circumstances of the region and made several expert and anti-discriminatory legislative proposals, in some cases with success. Besides this, the LEW's work was emancipatory, providing space for women to enter foreign diplomacy, which was still the exclusive domain of men, especially in Eastern Europe.

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history: The pattern of modern history and society in the Central European region] (2021).

## ◆ Notes

1. Krassimira Daskalova, "Entangled Histories of Women's Movements and Feminisms: An Interview with Francisca de Haan," *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 4, no. 2 (2020), 2, <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/8518>.

2. Francisca de Haan, "Worlds of Women Making a Difference," *Journal of Women's History* 29, no. 1 (2017), 140–148, here 142–143.

3. Isidora Grubački, "The Emergence of the Yugoslav Interwar Liberal Feminist Movement and the Little Entente of Women: An Entangled History Approach," *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 4, no. 2 (2020), 1–27, here 1–2, 15, <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/8515>.

4. For further details on the goal of the LEW's founders to "overcome marginalization" of women from Eastern Europe and the Balkans within the international women's movement, see Krassimira Daskalova's and Katerina Dalakoura's articles in this Forum.

5. Gabriela Dudeková Kováčová, "The Little Entente of Women in Czechoslovakia: Between European Cooperation and the Promotion of National Goals," paper presented at the Twenty-Sixth International Conference of Europeanists, "Sovereignties in Contention: Nations, Regions and Citizens in Europe," Madrid, 20–22 June 2019.

6. Národní archiv Praha [National archive in Prague, NA Prague], Fond no. 627 Ženská národní rada [National council of women] (ŽNR).

7. See mainly: Krassimira Daskalova, "Women in the Balkans, 19th–20th C.," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Women's and Gender History*, vol. 1, ed. Bonnie Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 185–195; Krassimira Daskalova, "Little Entente of Women/Malkata Zhenska Antanta i feministkite dvizhenia na Balkanite prez 20-te i 30-te godini na XX vek" [Little Entente of Women and the feminist movements in the Balkans during the 1920s and 1930s], *Sotsiologicheski problemi* [Sociological problems] 50, no. 2 (2018), 675–695; Grubački, "The Emergence of the Yugoslav Interwar Feminist Movement"; Jasmina Milanović, "Regionalna ženska udruženja—Mala Antanta žena i Jedinstvo slovenskih žena" [Regional women's associations—Little Entente of Women and the unity of Slavic women], in *Jugoslavija i Poljska u XX veku, međunarodni tematski zbornik radova sa konferencije Jugoslovensko-poljski odnosi u XX veku* [Yugoslavia and Poland in the twentieth century: Proceedings of the international conference dedicated to Yugoslav–Polish relations during the twentieth century] (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, Institut za istoriju i međunarodne odnose, Društvo istoričara Srbije "Stojan Novaković," 2017), 19–40; Jasmina Milanović, "Mala Antanta Žena" [Little Entente of Women], in *Români și sârbi in marele război/Rumuni i Srbi u Velikom Ratu* [Romanians and Serbs in the First World War], ed. Ian Bolovan and Momčilo Pavlović (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, 2018), 229–253; Marijana Kardum, "Interwar Women's Movements from the Little Entente to Nationalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, ed. John R. Lampe and Ulf Brunnbauer (London: Routledge, 2020), 223–230. For the personalities involved in the LEW, the biographical dictionary of women's movements in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe is very useful. See Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, 19th–20th Centuries* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006).

8. For example: Jana Burešová, *Proměny společenského postavení žen v první polovině 20. století* [Changes in the social status of women in the first half of the twentieth century] (Olomouc:

Univerzita Palackého, 2001). Some information on the LEW in the context of other international women's organizations can be found in the recent popular biography of F. Plamínková: Eva Uhrová, *Radostná i hořká Františka Plamínková* [Joyful and bitter Františka Plamínková] (Prague: Mediasys, 2014). On the international dimension of the Czechoslovak Council of Women (ŽNR) and Plamínková, see the volume edited by ŽNR members published in honor of Plamínková: *Ženská rada F. F. Plamínkové, Vydáno k 60. narozeninám F. F. Plamínkové* [Council of women to F. F. Plamínková, published on the sixtieth birthday of F. F. Plamínková] (Prague: Ženská národní rada, 1935).

9. With regard to women's rights and their limits in Czechoslovakia, see Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918/1950* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).

10. On the connection between feminism and nationalism in the Czech national(ist) and women's movements, see especially Jitka Malečková, *Úrodní půda* [Fertile soil: Women serve the nation] (Prague: ISV, 2002); Jitka Malečková, "The Importance of Being Nationalist," in *Czech Feminisms: Perspectives on Gender in East Central Europe*, ed. Jiřina Šiklová and Iveta Jusová (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), 46–59; Jitka Malečková, "Nationalizing Women and Engendering the Nation: The Czech National Movement," in *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ida Blom (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 293–310; Jitka Malečková, "The Emancipation of Women for the Benefit of the Nation: The Czech Women's Movement," in *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 167–188.

11. For further details on the election of Viková Kunětická, see Luboš Velek, "První v Rakousku! Zvolení prvního poslance—ženy Boženy Vikové-Kunětické v roce 1912" [The first in Austria! Election of the first female deputy—Božena Viková-Kunětická in 1912], in *Reflexe a sebereflexe ženy v české národní elitě 2. poloviny 19. století* [Reflections and self-reflections of woman among the Czech national elite in the second half of the nineteenth century], ed. Milan Vojáček (Prague: Scriptorium, 2009), 259–319; Jiří Koralka, "Die Wahl einer Frau in den böhmischen Landtag im Jahre 1912" [The election of a woman to the Diet of Bohemia in 1912], in *Von Bürgern und ihren Frauen* [On bourgeois men and their women], ed. Margaret Friedrich and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 165–178.

12. The fact that she never sat as a Member of the Diet, as the Austrian regent did not allow women to do so, did not diminish her position as the first woman to hold such a title.

13. On the strategies of ethnic Czech women's organizations and Viková-Kunětická at the Budapest IWSA congress, see Gabriela Dudeková Kováčová, "V ženskom alebo národnom záujme? Božena Viková-Kunětická a jej bojkot kongresu medzinárodnej aliancie za volebné právo žien v roku 1913" [In the women's or national interest? Božena Viková-Kunětická and her boycott of the IWSA congress in 1913], in *Ženy a politika (1890–1938)* [Women and politics], ed. Marie Bahenská and Jana Malínská (Prague: Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, v. v. i., 2014), 91–127. On the strategies of women's organizations of particular minorities of the Habsburg monarchy in relation to the international women's movement, see Susan Zimmermann, "The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 2 (2005), 87–117; Judith Brehmer, "'Die tschechischen Frauen müssen von den deutschen Frauen nichts lernen': Nationale Kooperation und imperiale Opposition der tschechischen Frauenbewegung in der späten Habsburgermonarchie" ["The Czech women do not have to learn anything from the German women': National cooperation and imperial opposition of the Czech women's movement in the late Habsburg monarchy], in *Kooperatives Imperium: Politische Zusammenarbeit in der späten Habsburgermonarchie* [A cooperative empire: Political cooperation in the late Habsburg monarchy], ed. Jana Osterkamp (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 187–204.

14. At the 1926 congress in Paris, the IWSA was renamed the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAWSEC).

15. "Výroční konference Malé Ženské dohody za rok 1927" [The annual conference of the Little Entente of Women], *Ženská rada* [Council of women] 3, nos. 5–6 (1927), 73–74, here 73.

16. Feinberg claims that "Unlike most women's activists in central Europe during the interwar years, the Czech feminists rarely argued that women should be granted rights based on their special qualities or social significance as women. . . . For them, rights were attached to human equality and deserved despite, and not because of, gender difference." See Melissa Feinberg, "The New 'Woman Question': Gender, Nation and Citizenship in the First Czechoslovak Republic," in *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe 1918–1948*, ed. Marc Cornwall and R. J. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45–61, here 51–52.

17. For the arguments and vocabulary of Plamínková and Purkyňová compared with other LEW leaders, see the analysis by Maria Bucur in her article in this Forum.

18. "A left-oriented nationalist party that had no connection with the German Nazi Party." See Melissa Feinberg, "The Promise of Gender Equality in Interwar Central-Europe," in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, eds. Katalin Fábíán, Janet Elise Johnson, and Mara Lazda (London: Routledge, 2022), 303–310, here 305.

19. Eliška Purkyňová, "Malá ženská dohoda" [Little Entente of Women], *Ženská rada* 3, no. 4 (1927), 56–58, here 56.

20. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, F. F. Plamínková, "Malá ženská dohoda" [The Little Entente of Women], manuscript of an article [1935].

21. Alexandrina Cantacuzino is referenced in Czechoslovak sources as "Cantacuzène" and frequently called a "princess."

22. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, F. F. Plamínková, "Malá ženská dohoda" [LEW], manuscript of an article [1935].

23. Plamínková was not personally present at the LEW conference in Athens, but she sent a paper to be presented; see Jasmina Milanović, "Mala Antanta Žena," 245. According to the minutes of the Warsaw LEW conference, Plamínková was absent; see NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55: Proces-verbal de la V-me Conférence de la Petite Entente des Femmes, tenue á Varsovie du 25 au 28 Juin, 1929.

24. On the same occasion, the title was also achieved by Alexandrina Cantacuzino. Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví Praha [Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature, Prague], Fond Ženská národní rada [National Council of Women], Manuscript, Ishbel Aberdeen et Temair, Resolution of ICW 1925, 5.

25. For details, see Denisa Nečasová, "České ženy na cestě k volebnímu právu na stránkách ženského tisku" [Czech women on their road to suffrage reflected in the women's press], *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty Brněnské univerzity/Studia Minora Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis* [Proceedings of the Faculty of Arts, University of Brno], no. C 52 (2005), 119–132; Denisa Nečasová, "Buduj vlast—posílíš mír!": "Ženské hnutí" v českých zemích 1945–1955 [Build a homeland—you will strengthen peace!": "Women's movement" in the Czech lands 1945–1955] (PhD dissertation, Masarykova univerzita, 2008), 36–38.

26. "Ze Ženské nár. Rady" [From the National Council of Women], *Ženská rada* 3, nos. 7–8 (1927), 99.

27. Therefore, the dates of the conference in Prague differ in the sources from particular LEW member states—see the Introduction to this Forum.

28. The events in Prague were officially held on the following dates: IAWSEC congress, 24 May–2 June 1927; LEW conference, 29 May–3 June 1927; visit of the US women delegates, 10 June–end of August 1927. See NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 1, "Správa odboru Styk s cizinou za r. 1927," [Report of the department contacts with foreign countries], p. 2; "Mezinárodní Alliance

pro volební právo žen a rovná občanská práva žen v Praze" [IAWSEC in Prague], *Ženská rada* 3, nos. 5–6 (1927), 70–74; "První výprava českoamerických žen v Praze [The first expedition of Czech-American women in Prague], *Ženská rada* 3, nos. 5–6 (1927), 66–68; "Mezinárodní ženské konference v Praze" [International women's conferences in Prague], *Ženský svět*, no. 10 (1927), 168.

29. According to the reports on the congress, the program on 31 May 1927 included an audience of delegates from both the LEW and the IAWSEC with President T. G. Masaryk of the Republic. See "Mezinárodní Alliance pro volební právo žen a rovná občanská práva žen v Praze" [IAWSEC in Prague], *Ženská rada* 3, nos. 5–6 (1927), 70–72, here 71.

30. "Výroční konference MŽD za rok 1927" [The annual conference of the LEW], *Ženská rada* 3, nos. 5–6 (1927), 73–74, here 73. In the contemporary press in Czechoslovakia, Avra Theodoropoulou was listed as Theodorop(ou)ulos, A. Cantacuzino as Cantacuzène, Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka as Tylická-Budinská, and Milena Atanacković as Atanaskovič.

31. See the articles by Maria Bucur and Krassimira Daskalova in this Forum.

32. "Zpráva odboru Styku s cizinou za prázdninové období červenec–srpen 1927" [Report of the department contacts with foreign countries for the period June–August 1927], *Ženská rada* 3, nos. 5–6 (1927), 81–83, here 82.

33. See Daskalova, "Little Entente of Women," 679; and Krassimira Daskalova's article in this Forum.

34. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, Protokol konference MŽD v Praze, 3. VI. 1927 [Minutes of the LEW's conference in Prague, 3 June 1927], 17.

35. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, Compte Rendu de l'activité du Bureau Central de la Petite Entente des Femmes à Varsovie de juin 1927 à juillet 1929 [Account of LEW's central office in Warsaw on the activities from June 1927 to July 1929], 3.

36. For the Balkan Conferences, the Balkan Entente, and the LEW see Krassimira Daskalova's and Katerina Dalakoura's articles in this Forum.

37. Archiv Kanceláře prezidenta republiky Praha [Archive of the Presidential Office Prague], Fond KPR-01: 1919–1947, no. 1014, sign. D 9603, box no. 128, A Letter from ŽNR to the Presidential Office, 28 June 1930.

38. "Styk s cizinou" [Contacts with foreign countries], *Ženská rada* 9, no. 6 (1933), 144–145.

39. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, F. Plamínková, "Malá ženská dohoda" [The Little Entente of Women], manuscript of an article (1934).

40. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, Letter concept of Plamínková to the attaché in Poland, 30 December 1933.

41. See Krassimira Daskalova's article in this Forum and Daskalova, "Balkans," 194.

42. "Styk s cizinou" [Contacts with foreign countries], *Ženská rada* 11, nos. 8–9 (1935), 216 and *Ženská rada* 12, no. 5 (1936), 122–123, here 123.

43. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, "Malá ženská dohoda" [LEW], concept of an article (1937), 2.

44. "Styk s cizinou," *Ženská rada* 11, no. 8–9 (1935), 216.

45. I[rena] Malínská, "Jednatelská správa Ženské národní rady za rok 1938. Malá ženská dohoda" [Annual report of the National Council of Women for the year 1938. Little Entente of Women], *Ženská rada* 14, no. 2 (1939), 2–46, here 33–34.

46. *Ibid.*, 29–32.

47. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, Protokol konference MŽD v Praze, 1. a 2. VI. 1927 [Minutes of the LEW's conference in Prague, 1–2 June 1927], 4; For the French versions of the congress minutes see *ibid.*, Procès verbal de la 4-me Conference de la Petite Entente des Femmes á Prague.

48. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, Procès verbal de la 4-me Conference de la Petite Entente des Femmes á Prague, 5.

49. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, "M.Ž.D. od roku 1929," [Report on the LEW after 1929], n.d.

50. Milanović, "Mala Antanta Žena," 248.

51. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, "Stanovy Malé ženské dohody podle oprav ze Štokholmu a v Paříži" [LEW statutes according to adjustments made in Stockholm and Paris], n.d.

52. Milanović, "Mala Antanta Žena," 253.

53. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, F. F. Plamínková, "Malá ženská dohoda," Manuscript of an article dated 1935.

54. For the example of Yugoslavia, Kardum and Ograjšek came to a very similar conclusion about the LEW in the 1930s. Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak and Marijana Kardum, "Mala ženska antanta (1923–1939): Mali savez s velikim ambicijama" [Little alliance with a great ambition: The Little Entente of Women, 1923–1939], *Historijski zbornik* [Historical journal] 52, no. 1 (2019), 111–138.

55. Archiv Kanceláře prezidenta republiky Praha, Fond KPR-01: 1919–1947, no. 1014, sign. D 9603, box 128, Letter from F. Plamínková to the Head of the Presidential Office, J. Říha, dated 16 May 1930.

56. For the politics and goals of the Little Entente, see Eduard Beneš, "The Little Entente," *Foreign Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1922), 66–72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028198>; Stefan Osuský, "The Little Entente and the League of Nations," *International Affairs* 13, no. 3 (1934), 378–393, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2602635>; Robert W. Seton-Watson, "The Little and Balkan Entente," *Slavonic and East European Review* 15, no. 45 (1937), 553–576; Bohumila Ferenčuhová, "La vision slovaque des relations entre la France et la Petite Entente (1918–1925)" [The Slovak vision of relations between France and the Little Entente, 1918–1925], in *Nations, cultures et sociétés D'Europe Centrale aux XIXe et XXe siècles* [Nations, cultures, and societies of Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries], ed. Catrine Horel (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2006), 83–105; Bohumila Ferenčuhová, "Funkcia Malej dohody v priestore medzi Balkánom a Baltom—predstavy a skutočnosť" [The role of the Little Entente in the space between the Balkans and the Baltic region—ambitions and reality], in *Republika Česko-Slovensko: Od monarchie k vlastnému štátu II* [The Czech-Slovak Republic: From the monarchy to its own states II], ed. Miroslav Pekník (Bratislava: Ústav politických vied SAV; VEDA, 2021), 76–106.

57. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 1, "Zápis o schůzi přípravního výboru komité ŽNR z 5.10.1922" [Minutes of the meeting of the national council's preparatory committee meeting, 5 October 1922].

58. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 1, Ročenka ŽNR. První rok trvání 1923 [Yearbook of National Council of Women for the first year, 1923], 2–5.

59. Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 53.

60. Frauenfortschritt (Women's Progress), founded in 1893 in Prague, was a member of the central union of (German-speaking) women in Austria, "Bund Österreichischer Frauenvereine" (The League of Austrian Women's Associations) until 1918. For details see Deutscher Verein "Frauenfortschritt," Prag, *Frauen in Bewegung 1848–1938* [The German association "Women's Progress," Prague, Women in movements 1848–1938], <https://fraueninbewegung.onb.ac.at/node/541> (accessed 14 June 2022). After the creation of the ŽNR in 1923, Frauenfortschritt became a member.

61. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, "Schůze Výboru pro volební právo žen dne 8.2.1928" [Meeting of the committee for women's suffrage on 8 February 1928], 2.

62. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, "Schůze Výboru pro volební právo žen dne 4.3.1929" [Meeting of the committee for women's suffrage on 4 March 1929], 1–2.

63. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55, "Schůze Výboru pro volební právo žen dne 28.11.1929" [Meeting of the committee for women's suffrage on 28 November 1929], 2.

64. In 1936, the Czechoslovak ŽNR referred to Frauenfortschritt as a legitimate organization of German women representing Czechoslovakia (together with the ŽNR and VVPŽ) in the IAWSEC. "Styk s cizinou," *Ženská rada* 11, no. 5 (1936), 122–123, here 122.

65. Hana Havlůjová, "Cesta zástupkyň Ženské národní rady do Turecka v dubnu 1935: Příklad mezinárodně politické role žen (nejen) v meziválečném Československu" [The journey made by National Council of Women representatives to Turkey in April 1935: An example of the international political role of women (not only) in interwar Czechoslovakia], in *Ženy a politika (1890–1938)* [Women and politics], ed. Marie Bahenská and Jana Malínská (Prague: Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, v. v. i., 2014), 304–306.

66. Here, Plamínková meant the *Ústřední spolek českých žen*, with its leader Eliška Purkyňová.

67. NA Prague, 627 ŽNR, box 55: draft of Plamínková's letter dated 10 November 1926.

68. The Reorganization Pact of the Little Entente, signed 16 February 1933. See "The Little Entente Pact," *The American Journal of International Law* 27, no. 3 (July 1933), Supplement: Official Documents (July 1933), 117–119, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2213488>.