

Civil Society and the Birth of Elections: The Voting Culture of the 1848 Revolution on the Example of the Bohemian Lands, Galicia, and Bukovina

The political changes of the nineteenth century meant a gradual introduction of constitutional governments in individual states, which resulted in establishing representative bodies – parliaments. This was conducive to the formation of a civil society. In the case of Central Europe, the turning point for such changes came in the form of the Revolutions of 1848. This was also true of the Habsburg Monarchy, where 1848 saw the proclamation of a constitution, the establishment of a parliament (*Reichstag*) and the first parliamentary elections. In some parts of the Monarchy, elections to local assemblies were held at the same time – this was the case of Bohemia, where elections to the Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian assemblies, as well as the German National Assembly in Frankfurt on the Main (*Deutsche Nationalversammlung*), took place alongside the election to the *Reichstag*.

The Austrian *Reichstag* was short-lived but it started discussions on a number of issues which were important to the Monarchy. It is worth stressing that the electoral law gave the lower social classes the opportunity to become members of the parliament, for instance in Galicia approximately one third of the elected MPs were peasants. In 1848, the citizens of the Monarchy had the first opportunity to become so involved in an election and in the electoral campaign preceding it. For many, this was the first encounter with terms such as constitution, parliament or election. Therefore, these events can be regarded as significant milestones in the formation of the political culture and civil society at the time. So far, not much attention has been devoted to them either in Polish or Czech scholarship, with the research on electoral processes focusing on the later period.

The main objective of the project is to analyse the electoral campaigns of 1848 in Bohemia and Galicia as well as Bukovina (which belonged to Galicia at the time). This will enable us to collect the material necessary to study the political culture of the Revolutions of 1848. The second objective is to compare the obtained findings, both on the level of the examined groups of countries (Bohemia – Galicia and Bukovina), as well as individual countries (e.g. Galicia-Bukovina, Bohemia-Moravia) and regions (e.g. eastern and western Galicia). Further down the line, this will also give us an opportunity to conduct a comparative analysis of the whole Habsburg Monarchy and other European countries. The selection of Bohemia and Galicia as the subject of this study is not random; these countries covered an extensive area and were inhabited by large populations; they had some similarities (such as their peripheral character) as well as differences (such as their level of economic development). Due to their varied ethnic and religious character, it will be possible to use them as case studies for analysing the impact of the events of 1848 on the development of the political culture of particular communities.

The research plan is: to analyse the principles governing the elections and their specificity; to examine the events of the electoral campaigns (their content and forms of communication with the voters); to describe the population's attitudes towards the elections and the accompanying pathologies (such as fraud); to collect information about the MPs elected in 1848 in Bohemia, Galicia and Bukovina and about their later careers. The research materials will be collected through extensive archival research and press surveys.

The project results will include: a database of MPs elected in 1848 in Bohemia, Galicia and Bukovina, articles about the elections (case studies) published in renowned academic journals, as well as more comprehensive studies on the sequence of events and the results of the electoral campaigns, intended for a collective publication. Selected articles will be published in foreign languages.