1848 in Austrian Galicia:
New Polish Studies


The 1848 revolution in the Austrian province of Galicia is perhaps the least studied aspect of the Polish “Springtime of the Nations.” Traditionally, writers stressed the general European participation by Poles in 1848—in Italy or Hungary—rather than Poland’s less fortuitous domestic features. This neglect stemmed in part from the contention, popularized in Polish historical literature, that the year of revolution in Galicia actually took place—and misfired—two years earlier; hence 1848 was treated as an inglorious epilogue to the abortive Polish uprising and peasant jacquerie of 1846.

And despite longstanding scholarly interest in the revolutions of 1848 and the nationalities question in the Habsburg lands, the attention paid to Galicia, the most recently acquired of Austria’s possessions, has remained disproportionately meager. The reason for this is due not to the lack of materials but to the difficulties in their accessibility since World War II. When the former Galician capital of Lvov (Lwów, L'viv, Lemberg) was incorporated into the Soviet Ukraine in 1945, many of its libraries and archives that had survived the war were packed up and shipped off in various directions. The plan, not always faithfully executed, was to allow the Poles to keep their own materials, but to retain in Lvov the official Austrian records as well as the Ukrainian materials. In fact, considerable Polish-language materials remained behind and numerous Ukrainian files were shipped to Kiev and Moscow. Most of the papers of Polonized “Ruthene” magnates—for example, the Sapiehas and Dzieduszyckis—stayed in Lvov. The distinguished Polish research library, the Ossolineum, was transported in part to Wrocław, while still other Polish materials were sent to the National Library and the Main Archive of Old Acts in Warsaw. Even today, thirty years after the war, some of this material has not been catalogued and it is not known what happened to several of the Lvov collections.

No less inhibiting have been the restraints placed on East European scholars. For some time after the war, Polish scholars were discouraged from publishing studies on Poland’s former Eastern territories. Henceforth this subject presumably would be handled by their Soviet colleagues. A further hindrance to the study of Galicia has been the difficult accessibility of Viennese repositories for East European scholars.

No comprehensive monographic study of the revolutionary year 1848 in Galicia
exists in any language, although a number of articles on specific aspects have
appeared. The most extensive Polish studies are by the Warsaw historian Stefan
Kieniewicz, published on the occasion of the centenary of 1848,1 In Soviet
literature, E. M. Kosachevkii's brief survey of Eastern Galicia in 1848 suffers
from a narrowly schematic approach and does not make full use of Lvov archival
materials.2 In light of this neglect, two recent Polish studies on 1848 in Galicia are
especially welcome.

Prior to World War II only two scholars had examined the memoirs (in manu-
script form) of Aleksander Batowski, "Moje Pamiętniki": Marceli Handelsman, the
dean of interwar Polish historians, included excerpts in his work on the Ukrainian
national movement and the policies of the Polish émigré leader, Prince Adam
Czartoryski; and the Czech historian and specialist in inter-Slavic relations, Václav
Žáček, made use of them in his studies of Czech-Polish relations and the 1848 Slav
Congress in Prague.4 The Kraków historian, Marian Tyrowicz, who had briefly
examined the memoirs in their original location in the Baworowski collection in the
Ossolineum in Lvov, relocated them recently in Warsaw’s National Library. In
preparing them for publication, he changed the title to "diary," a designation more
in keeping with the character of the work.

Aleksander Konstanty Batowski (1799-1862) was a middle-gentry landowner
from the Eastern Galician district of Zoltek. He remained aloof from the Polish
émigré’s conspiratorial activities in Galicia in the 1830’s and took no part in
planning the abortive uprising of 1846. Although he entered the Galician Estates in
1833, his main devotion was to collecting and cataloguing old manuscripts for the
Ossolineum Library, to which he also gave financial support. Not until spring 1848
did Batowski show any interest in politics. He signed the March 18 Polish petition
to Emperor Ferdinand and soon after joined the newly founded Polish National
Council (Rada Narodowa) in Lvov, ultimately serving as chairman of the executive
committee during its last months of existence. After the Austrians bombarded Lvov
in November, 1848, to quell the popular unrest (which led to the dissolution of the
National Council and ended organized political activity in Galicia for over a
decade), Batowski returned to bibliophily.

Batowski’s diary covers only one year: the politically turbulent 1848. He usually

Ludów na ziemiach polskich, ed. N. Gsiórowksa (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy,
1948), pp. 267-346; and “Sprawa włościańska w Galicji w 1848 r.,” Przegląd Historyczny, 38
(1948), 61-126. Kieniewicz also compiled a volume of documents on 1848 in Poland, major
portions of which cover Galicia: Rok 1848 w Polsce: Wybór źródł (Wroclaw: Ossolineum,
1948). Mention should also be made of two articles, likewise occasioned by the centenary of
1848, which assess source materials: Antoni Knot, "Miscellanea źródłowe do dziejów 1848 r. w
Galicji," Sobórka, 3 [1948], 191-211; and Marian Tyrowicz, "Zródtła do dziejów rewolucji 1848
r. w Galicji," Roczniki Humanistyczne, 1 (1949), 303-319.
2. Vostochnaia Calitsiia nakanune i v period revolutsii 1848g. (Lvov, 1965).
3. Ukrainska polityka ks. Adama Czartoryskiego przed wojną krymską (Warszawa:
Ukraiński Institut Naukowy, 1937).
4. Češ a Poláci v 1848 roku, 2 vols. (Práha: Slovanský ústav, 1947-48); and Slovanský
sjezd v Praze roku 1848: Sbírka dokumentů (Práha: Nákladatelství Československé Akademie
Věd, 1958).