

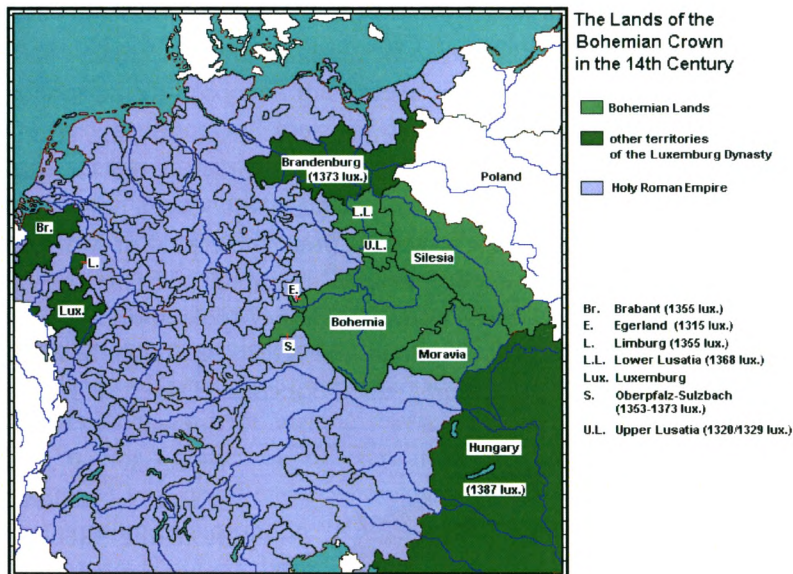
Aleš Brožek: A Vexillological View of 1848 – the Year of the Revolution in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown.

Abstract: *The author presents the flags and badges which were used in March 1848 when meetings were held in Prague, on which a new election for the Bohemian diet was demanded. When tensions between German and Czech nationalists grew quickly between April and May 1848 a lot of flags appeared in the streets and they are therefore discussed. A lately discovered flag project for Federation of Bohemian lands of April 1848 is shown to the public for the first time. The lecture continues with the description of the bunting on the first Pan-Slavic congress in Prague and that of the flags flown on the barricades during the Pentecostal uprising. Finally, the lecture deals with the less known flag proposals for the Austrian Federation as they were prepared by the constitutional committee at the Reichstag which was relocated from Vienna to the Moravian city of Kromau in the end of 1848.*

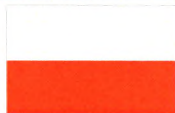


From 1815 to 1848, Austria under the ministry of Prince Klemens von Metternich, dominated European politics as the leading power of both the German Confederation and the Holy Alliance (Austria, Russia and Prussia). Unchallenged abroad, the reactionary Metternich achieved peace at home through ruthless suppression of all liberal or nationalist movements among the people in the Habsburg Empire. News of uprisings in Italy and then of the Parisian revolution in late February

1848 galvanized opposition groups not only in Hungary, but also in Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia.



These three administrative units of Austria were called Lands of the Bohemian Crown because the Kingdom of Bohemia consisted of three main components, Bohemia proper, the Margraviate of Moravia and the Duchy of Silesia (the Margraviate of Lusatia was acquired in the 14th century but lost during the Thirty Years' War). All these countries had their heraldic symbols. Bohemia had the silver lion of Bohemia on a red shield, Moravia a checkered red and white eagle on a blue field and Silesia a black eagle wearing a silver crescent adorned with clover



trefoils at each end and a cross in the

middle on its chest on a golden shield. These arms were proudly displayed by the kings of Bohemia practically until 1526, when Ferdinand of Habsburg was elected to the Crown of St. Wenceslav, making all lands of the Bohemian Crown the property of the House of Habsburg.

Though Czech speaking inhabitants were exposed to strong germanisation in the next 3 centuries, the majority of the German population still lived in the border areas whereas the Czech population occupied mainly the countryside. Unlike Brno, the capital of Moravia, where the majority were Germans, Prague, the capital of Bohemia, was mostly inhabited by the Czechs even though they spoke more German than Czech in Prague offices and in the streets in 1848. Moravia showed less national cohesiveness than Bohemia. Therefore it was



Bohemia and especially Prague where radicals from the “Repeal” group issued a call in Czech and German for a public meeting at the St. Vaclav’s (Wenceslav) baths

to draft a petition to the emperor for reform on 6 March 1848. The gathering, held on 11th March, and the committee meetings organized by the St. Wenceslas and later National Committee with a prevalence of the Czech national representatives became the principal venues for liberal political action in Prague during the spring of 1848.

It seems that no symbols were used during this gathering and meetings before 15 March. The news of Metternich’s resignation and the abolition of censorship was disseminated to the public only in the early evening of this day and the proclamation of a constitution was announced by the Bohemian governor, Rudolf Count Stadion, from his private box in the Prague theatre at 9 p.m. It was already dark in the

streets and flag decoration could hardly be seen. The enthusiastic citizens of Prague therefore organized a torch parade.

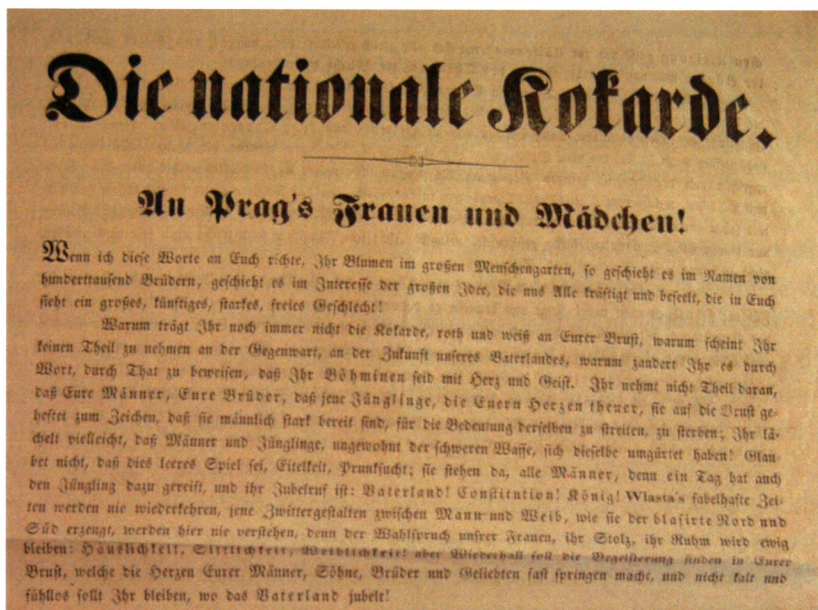
Newspapers described the situation on the following day, 16 March 1848, calling readers' attention to white and white-red cockades and ribbons which decorated the breasts and hats of Prague inhabitants in the early morning and those of people in other Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian towns later on ^[1]. White was considered to be a supranational revolutionary symbol because Italian revolutionaries wore white felt hats with a broad brim ^[2]. White and red were Bohemian colours derived from the Bohemian arms. It should be noted that Bohemian shopkeepers were very active in these days and offered also constitutional parasols in white or in red and white ^[3]. Large quantities of white and red fabrics were sold in Prague and elsewhere as these colours were used for making dresses and decorating shop counters. Information on the use of flags in these colours on 16 March is missing. Only one Prague newspaper "Bohemia" reports a white-red banner with an inscription "Konstitution" from this day ^[4]. Moravian newspapers reported that the Upper square of the Moravian town of Olomouc famous for its university was flooded by the crowds of students and their professors who were followed by great numbers of citizens. They wore white cockades and ribbons and listened to the Kaiser text on the constitution read by Vilém Schweidler, the mayor of Olomouc on 16 March 1848 ^[5].

The wearing of white-red cockades and hoisting of white-red flags continued also in the following days. It is interesting that practically no flags in Pan-German colours appeared in Bohemia and Moravia in March 1848 in spite of the fact that such a flag flew from the St.



Stephan Dome in Vienna already on 10 March 1848 and that Emperor Ferdinand I hoisted this flag from the window of Hofburg castle on 13 March 1848 ¹⁶. Even the German population in the border areas proudly wore white-red cockades and hoisted white over red Bohemian flags. A certain Hlaváček reported from the famous spa town of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) that crowds of people gathered there spontaneously on 17 March 1848 and two white over red flags appeared in their centre as if by magic. After two hours the streets of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) seethed with men, women and children, all with white-red cockades. Anyone lacking a cockade had one given. In the meantime a new procession with two large flags of white and red in the front was formed in another town part ¹⁷. After the constitution was proclaimed in Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad), another town in Western Bohemia famous for its spa, the majority of houses flew white over red flags and everybody had hats with cockades. The news from Teplice (Teplitz) reported that crowds of inhabitants decorated with a “National cockade” gathered to see Metternich leaving for England on 24th March 1848 ¹⁸. The white-red cockades and flags were considered to be symbols of Bohemia, not that of Czech speaking people at that time. Therefore R. Maršán ¹⁹ stresses that there were only two Bohemian towns Liberec (Reichenberg) and Cheb (Eger) where Bohemian colours were not used in March 1848. The national guard in Liberec (Reichenberg) carried white ribbons instead of white and red cockades and flew black over yellow Austrian flags instead of Bohemian ones. Cheb (Eger) hoisted few Bohemian flags, most flags were Austrian ones accompanied by Saxon and Bavarian symbols.

The wearing of Bohemian cockades was promoted in newspapers and leaflets. The newspaper “*Bohemia*” ¹⁰ published an article by Fridolin Freiherr Wend called “*Kokardenrede*” (The speech of cockades) where Prague was described as a town which turned young, looked like milk and blood, white and red were seen on the breasts and heads of different people, from a tinker to the professor of philosophy. J. E. Hickel published a leaflet entitled “*Die Nationale Kokarde*” (The national cockade) and devoted it to the ladies and girls of Prague who did not wear this symbol. At the beginning he asked why they were not wearing



the cockade on their breast, why they did not show that they were Bohemians. He enthused about wearing the national cockade in public places, they should be proud of wearing it in the theatre or in society [11].

A more serious article discussing the right order of colours in the Bohemian cockade was published in the Czech journal "Věda" of 21 March 1848 [12]. This article can be ascribed either to Czech Librarian Václav Hanka or to V. Hynek Poděbradský as it is signed only by initials W.H. Its author mentions that red and white are also colours of Tyrol, Limburg and Henneberg and that most of the cockades in use were red in the centre and white in the outer part. However, as the Bohemian lion is white and not red, the proper Bohemian cockade should have the white centre according to him. Cockades from this period kept in Czech museums do not follow his advice as some of them have a red circle, the inner ring white and the outer border also red.

Another occasion was proper for flying flags in March 1848. On 19 March 1848 the delegation left Prague for Vienna with some demands including a united annual Diet for Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian

Silesia. The houses and towers of Prague were dressed with branches and Bohemian flags. Even the locomotive was decorated with the Bohemian lion and white over red flags [13]. The train stopped in some towns where the delegation was welcomed cordially. According to the newspaper “*Bohemia*” [14] „A deputation with a national flag“ waited for the delegation in Poděbrady, the representatives of guilds with guild banners gathered in Pardubice, most houses in Ústí nad Orlicí flew „constitution flags“. When the train reached the border of Moravia on 21 March 1848, the delegation could see a large white over red flag and an obelisk made from branches [15]. Bohemian flags flew from Prague houses also on 27th March 1848 when the delegation came back from Vienna. After the population of Prague was informed of the unsatisfactory answer by the Kaiser to their demands, flags quickly disappeared from official and later on also from private houses [16]. It is necessary to mention that Moravian representatives, the majority of whom were Germans, did not support a united Diet for Bohemia and Moravia and that supporters of this idea in Brno (Brünn) were in a difficult position. According to the newspaper “*Národní Noviny*“ they expected that a group of students would come from Prague to win the Moravian people over to unification and they prepared a white over red flag with the Bohemian lion and the Moravian eagle linked by a linden wreath. Many Moravian Germans responded to it and on 7th April 1848 they reached the railway station in Brno with a flag containing Pan-German colours [17].

April 1848 was the month when Pan-German flags appeared also in Prague. The famous Czech journalist Karel Havlíček Borovský warned against the use of Pan-German colours in Prague with the words: “He who will be the first in hoisting the German tricolour, will face the consequences when another tricolour (i.e. Pan-



Slavic tricolour) will fly“ [18]. F. J. Schopf [19] reported that many Prague inhabitants wore German cockades of black, red and gold on 10th April 1848 and it was considered offensive. Robert Maršan [20] writes even

about a so called five-day cockade revolution and claims that wearing of Pan-German cockades in Prague before 8th April 1848 was very rare and was considered a provocation. The first conflicts occurred during the constitution fete in Stromovka park on 9th April which went on the next day in the centre of Prague (Přikopy) and at the university. Czech nationalists countered by wearing small silver flails and maces (symbols of weapons used in the Hussite wars) which were fastened to their hats. The Germans did not want to give way. Those who previously lived in Germany gathered in the Prague hotel At archduke Stephan on 10th April 1848 in the evening and decided to ask Czechs for the right to wear Pan-German cockades. This demand was supported by the fact that Bohemian cockades were worn in German-speaking towns in Bohemia. A larger meeting was called to the hall in the hotel At the court de Saxe by Prague Germans on 11th April. They complained of bad behaviour by some Czechs, spoke of the necessity to join Bohemia and other German-speaking areas in Austria with the German Reich and not to deter the wearing of Pan-German colours. The attempts of lawyer Johann Kliebert and bookseller Alois Borrosch who were German members of the National Committee to dissuade the others from wearing Pan-German colours were futile. The participants in this meeting adopted a resolution to suspend the wearing of Pan-German colours for 48 hours and to write a complaint regarding the wearing of Pan-German cockades and the insufficient number of German members in the National Committee next day. The complaint was discussed in the National Committee in the presence of Ludvík Ruppert, representative of Prague Germans, on 13th April 1848. German noblemen and Czech-speaking



members of the National Committee refused to accept the wearing of Pan-German colours, Count Franz von Thun pointed out that wearing them was an unfortunate demonstration, as the Bohemian colours were a symbol of unanimity between Czechs and Germans. The famous historian and

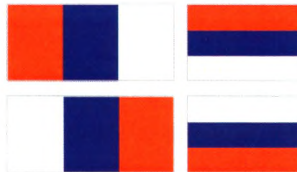


politician František Palacký stressed that the wearing of a cockade could be a national or a political statement. The wearing of Pan-German colours could be construed as an intention to break away from Bohemia. The preliminary resolution composed by Count Albert Nostitz expressed the wish not to wear the Pan-German colours. The final resolution was defined in the meeting of the National Committee on 14th April 1848 where many Germans were invited. After a long discussion where Germans called for conciliation and where a threat arose of the appearance of the Slavic colours, the delegation of Germans from the hotel At the court de Saxe gave up wearing the Pan-German colours voluntarily and were accepted as members of the National Committee [21].

Seven days later a remarkable article appeared in “*Pražské Noviny*” [22].



Fr. Cyril Kampelík



The idea of the unification of the Slavic regions engaged a forty-three-year-old doctor František Cyril Kampelík in so far that he wrote an

essay entitled “*A Word on our Constitutional Colour*”. He proposed to add blue to the Bohemian colours of white and red because “our Empire can stretch to the Danube and even to the Mediterranean”.

Since France used the tricolour of red, white and blue, his flag design should contain blue in the middle. According to him white stood for virtue and morality, blue for order and unanimity, red for freedom. The arms should contain white-red stars on a blue shield and their number should correspond to the number of nations in this empire. He summarised his ideas in his booklet [23] published on his own probably only a few days later. He stopped writing about an empire because he suggested unifying only Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Slovakia and proposed the name Čechoslava (Czechoslovakia) or Morava (Moravia) for this formation. The flag again had a blue stripe in the centre accompanied with white and red but Kampelík used also the term “ribbon” which could evoke thoughts that he meant horizontal stripes

and not vertical. He explained the use of the stars in the arms by the fact that they are used “by our brothers in Illyria” and heraldic lions and eagles come from barbarian times and must be rejected. More space was devoted in his booklet to greetings which should correspond to modern relations among people, e.g. Good morning, citizen. However, his ideas were not accepted and sank into oblivion.

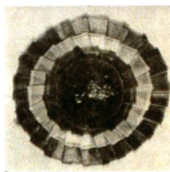


The period of conciliation and of not wearing Pan-German colours lasted in Prague only a short time. On 24th April 1848 the National Committee refused to organize elections to the German parliament and accepted the suggestion

of Antonín Strobach to fly Bohemian white over red and Austrian black over yellow flags side by side

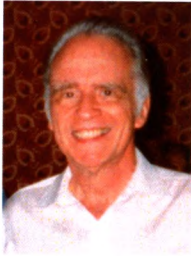
in order to express the support for an independent Austria [24]. At the same time count Matthias von Thun referred to the wearing of Pan-German cockades in Bohemia as a national betrayal. This infuriated some Germans so that they assembled to break all his windows. However, they did it mistakenly to count Leopold von Thun.

By mid-May all of the Germans had withdrawn from the National Committee, leaving it a major forum for Czech nationalist political activity. The Pan-German colours appeared again in the streets of Prague. Carl Georg Wolfrum, who came to Ústí nad Labem (Aussig) from Bavaria and had become a wealthy entrepreneur, mentions his business in Prague these days in his memoirs [25]. He found it a good idea to wear a hat with a Bohemian cockade on one side and a Pan-German one on the other side and to turn it according to how the situation changed.



To advance the cause of civil and cultural rights for all Slavic peoples in the Habsburg Monarchy, the historian František Palacký and other Czech leaders began in late April to organize a Slavic congress to meet

in Prague five weeks later. This event called attention not only to the problems of these nations but also to the existence of Pan-Slavic



symbols. Even vexillological sources refer to the importance of this congress in introducing the symbols of some Slav nations. W. Smith [26] claims that the

Sorbian flag was hoisted there for the first time and W. Tremblicky [27] mentions that the Ukrainian flag was flown for the first time at an international forum during the Pan-Slavic Congress in Prague. Some web

pages [28] even claim that the Slavic flag was proposed by the Pan-Slav convention in Prague in 1848. Sources (contemporary newspapers, books with reprints of records from the Pan-Slavic congress) that I studied, however, do not confirm the above-mentioned statements. That about the Ukrainian flag is probably accurate but the Sorbian and Pan-Slavic flags were in use already before this congress started and they were taken there with other Slavic flags. A Polish participant in the congress Seweryn Celarski described the course of his journey to Prague on 30th May 1848 with the following words: “at the head [of the procession] two flags of Poland and Bohemia (red and white) were carried by a Pole, the following flag was that of Croatia and Moravia (blue, white and red) carried by a Moravian” [29].





100. Bunkado v Karlově údolí



Prague newspapers ^[30] which report on the arrival of the delegates on a train on 30th May 1848 mention that the locomotive was decorated with Slavic flags and that our guests went to the island of Žofín where the congress took place. The Slavic tricolour and a Bohemian flag were carried in the centre of this procession. Flags of all Slavic peoples flew from the gallery of the hall in the island of Žofín, the Slav tricolour and the Bohemian flag were hoisted at both sides of a speakers' platform. According to W. T. Wislocki ^[31] who described the opening of the congress on 2nd June 1848 there was a black over yellow Austrian flag in the centre of the hall, accompanied by the flags of all Slavic nations in order to demonstrate the trends of the congress. A similar description of the congress opening can be found in "*Národní Noviny*" ^[32]. According to this Czech newspaper, the hall was decorated also with the arms of all Slavic nations and the stand and the table of the congress president were covered with Bohemian colours. As the order

of Slavic colours was not officially set, on 3rd June 1848 the Czechoslav section of the congress accepted the suggestion of Hanuš Kolovrat to use tricolours with blue in the centre. An objection that the Germans would be offended by wearing the Slavic tricolour, by Jan Dvořáček was rejected. The answer given was that the participants were carrying the colours of Austrian Slavs whereas the German colours were those of a foreign country [33].



The dealings of the congress were hindered by the revolutionary uprising which started in Prague on 12th June 1848. After six days of street fighting, artillery bombardments, and more than a hundred casualties, the reactionary military commander Alfred Prince Windischgrätz took control of the city under a state of siege and martial law was proclaimed. As newspapers did not appear during this uprising in Prague, we can only learn about flags which flew on the barricades from reports by F. J. Schopf published outside Prague [34], examinations of arrested people [35] and from drawings. Mainly Czech and German speakers, a group of students from Vienna and some Poles took part in the street battles. They used mostly white over red flags and Bohemian flags became again common symbols for Czechs and Germans. The famous defenders, however, were Theofila Dittrichová, a former waitress, and Franciscan Jeroným Jelínek who was depicted with a flag of uncertain design in his hands.

The provincial government dissolved the National Committee at the end of June and stopped all progressive plans. Martial law was cancelled only on 20th July 1848 because there was a group of 67 counter-revolutionaries (some members of town council and wealthy Germans) who supported Windischgrätz and martial law. This group was hated by the Prague inhabitants and was caricatured under a picture of a black over yellow flag with number "67" [36].



The situation in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown became even worse after the dissolution of the Imperial Diet in the Moravian town of Kroměříž (Kremsier) in March 1849 and after the reinstatement of absolutism. Objects reminiscent of the revolutionary year 1848 were seized and even Bohemian flags were rarely displayed in next twenty years.



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10. Bohemia, a special number of 20 march 1848, p. 1-2.
11. A copy of this leaflet is kept in the National Archives, Prague, file ST 1848, box 11, No. 820.
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13. Květy of p. 150.
14. Bohemia No. 46, p. 4-5.
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19. Franz Josef Schopf: Wahre und ausführliche Darstellung der am 11. März 1848 zur Erlangung einer constitutionellen Regierungs-Verfassung in der Königlichen Hauptstadt Prag begonnenen Volksbewegung und der hierauf gefolgtten Ereignisse. Leitmeritz 1848, 1. Heft, p. 27.
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34. Slovanský sjezd v Praze roku 1848 : sbírka dokumentů. Praha 1948, p. 247.

35. Franz Josef Schopf: Wahre und ausführliche Darstellung der am 11. März 1848 zur Erlangung einer constitutionellen Regierungsverfassung in der Königlichen Hauptstadt Prag begonnenen Volksbewegung und der hierauf folgenden Ereignisse. Leitmeritz 1848, 6. Heft, p. 27.
36. There was a denouncement saying that Karel Havlíček Borovský was a commander on a barricade at Pernštýn where a white over red flag flew.
37. Josef Jan Toužimský: Na úsvitě nové doby. Praha 1898, p. 630.

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