

Jana Magdaléna Májeková

Urban Political Elites in Pressburg (Bratislava) during Dualism (1867 – 1918)

Subject of the PhD thesis

The subject of my thesis are urban political elites, particularly members of the municipal committee in Pressburg in the period of dualism, so-called virilists and elected representatives. I use the term "urban political elites" in a narrow sense, derived from the new system of formation of the municipal committee in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. After the Compromise (1867), Cisleithania (Austria) and Transleithania (Hungary) were governed by separate parliaments and prime ministers and had different developments of their legal systems. In the Hungarian part of the Monarchy, implemented laws de facto slowed down the democratization process, e.g., the right to take part in public affairs, voting rights and access to communal politics. Law no. 42/1870 on the Organisation of municipal administration, known as the first municipal law, was approved in August 1870, and its implementation was completed in the year 1872. According to the new law, Pressburg (a former free royal city) became a municipal city, and the formation of the self-governing body was significantly changed.¹

The municipal committee in Pressburg consisted of 186 members, including 93 virilists and 93 elected representatives. The system of virilism changed the principle of creation of the selfgoverning body, which until then was based only on an election. Since 1872, half of the municipal committee was made up of virilists, i.e., persons who obtained their mandate according to their property, or amount of their state tax. They were adult citizens with the right to vote during parliamentary elections, who lived in the territory of the municipality. However, the system of virilism opened the way to local politics for a higher number of local intelligentsia and wealthy persons. Reorganization of the municipal committee was based on the principle of wealth and education.

¹ 1870. évi XLII. törvénycikk a köztörvényhatóságok rendezéséről. In MÁRKUS, Dezső (ed.). *Magyar Törvénytár 1000 – 1895. 1869 – 1871. évi törvénycikkek*. Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1890, 9. kötet, pp. 211 – 221.

Aims of the PhD thesis

The aim of the thesis is to analyse and characterise Pressburg political elites in the years 1867 – 1918 based on the structure of the municipal committee in terms of creation of a selfgoverning body (virilists and elected representatives), occupational structure of its members, and their membership in local political clubs. The thesis deals with the family ties and marriage strategies among municipal representatives. An important part of the thesis are findings on activities of members of the Hungarian parliament elected to represent the city of Pressburg, who were in the same time members of the Pressburg municipal committee. Emphasis of the thesis is placed on the legal, political, economic, and social aspects of the city milieu and the actions of urban political elites.

My aim is also to verify the following hypotheses: the system of virilism was a way of restricting access to municipal self-governing bodies; the Hungarian Liberal Party received significant support mainly in non-Hungarian regions (and thus also in Pressburg); Pressburg was developing as a centre of trade, education, and tourism; religious and political orientation had an impact on the formation of family ties; signs of elite status involved membership in the local elite associations and political clubs, a network of contacts, and charity; etc.

The thesis includes appendices containing photo-documentation, family trees of selected families, and a database of members of the municipal committee in Pressburg. The database contains the names of the members with information on their occupation, place of residence, position, and mandate period in the committee, and thus serves as a tool for analysing the structure of the committee. However, it might also prove useful to other researchers who would want to find out if a certain person was politically active in the city.

Methodology

In my thesis, I use several methods based on its focus. I analyse the professional structure of the municipal committee through biographical and statistical methods, which are characteristic of prosopography research. I evaluate numerical data graphically and supplement them with examples of chosen representatives and their careers. I also use genealogical methods and analysis of family ties of Pressburg political elites. I am interested in relationships at the generational level (father – son, father-in-law – son-in-law),

but also the strategies, which influenced creating family relationships. Another method is an analysis of contemporary discourse, by which I try to determine how the activities of city representatives and political associations were perceived in the local press. The aim is to characterise the political behaviour and strategies of the members of the municipal committee as presented by the editors of the local press, and thus to find out what the contemporary discourse was in relation to the representatives of local politics.

As for sources, I analyse archival documents of the municipal committee, address books, local periodical press, and Hungarian laws, which I compare with the legislative practice in Pressburg.

Conclusion

In the period of dualism, the mechanisms for obtaining a mandate and the composition of the municipal committee changed. The observed development was mainly a consequence of two factors: a) the system of virilism applied in self-government since 1872, b) the electoral law from 1848, which was amended in 1874. Both legal regulations had a common denominator: the restriction of access to self-governing representative bodies based on wealth and education. Requirements for a successful political career were family and personal ties, social status, charity, financial background, level of education, choice of profession, and membership in elite associations.

An important issue of my PhD thesis was the formation of political clubs in Pressburg. Clubs were formed primarily due to political orientation towards a specific political party. During the period of dualism, Pressburg was considered the stronghold of the Deák Party, after 1875 known as the Liberal Party. According to Hungarian historian András Geró, some regions maintained certain political preferences for a long time. As for the significant support of the Liberal Party, he assumed that it was mainly obtained in non-Hungarian regions.² In the case of Pressburg, where mostly residents who spoke German as their mother tongue lived, this hypothesis can be confirmed. Another key issue of the thesis was the analysis of the structure of the municipal committee in Pressburg. It showed a gradual development of changes, which mainly reflected the profiling of the city as a centre of trade, crafts, education, and tourism. During the period of dualism, the share of tradesmen, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs in the field of services increased in the committee.

To sum up, the asset of my dissertation lies in clarifying the system of virilism in urban politics, analysis of occupational structure of the municipal committee and activities and career progression of local representatives, functioning of state political parties at the local level, political strategies, and analysis of family ties in the Pressburg municipal committee during dualism.

Contact:

Mgr. Jana Magdaléna Májeková

Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences

Klemensova 19, 814 99 Bratislava

janka.majekova@gmail.com