

EuParl.net Newsletter

**EU
PARL
NET**

European Information and
Research Network on
Parliamentary History

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Dear readers,

The COVID-19 pandemic has battered the world for almost two years now, costing millions of lives and causing economic disruption and threats for social cohesion in many countries.

One would expect the legal and political debates on possible anti-epidemic measures to be exhausted by now. And yet, along with new variants of the virus, new political and social challenges arise. We are gaining an intense, yet often painful experience of new dimensions of the relationship between science and politics, information and propaganda. Democratic governments are considering and experimenting with unequal treatment of vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Protest movements across Europe take whole societies and political systems hostage of their own understanding of "rights" and "liberties".

Understanding political actors and, among them, parliamentary institutions remains to be one of the keys to grasping the development. Besides, it is always wise to see longer continuities and be aware of the history – and historical connotations – of the supposedly brand new phenomena. This newsletter brings you some suggestions for reading and information on projects that offer such historical perspective and thus some distance from the daily responsibilities.

Adéla Gjuričová

NEWS

On Science and (Dutch) Politics

On 16 November 2021, the Dutch Centre for Parliamentary History (CPG) of Radboud University, Nijmegen, presented the 23rd edition of the *Yearbook of Parliamentary History*, entitled *Science and Politics*. For long the role played by researchers and experts has not been as visible as in the recent months, when building national policies on the COVID-19 pandemic. The volume explores different historical and current stories of researchers as politicians, political parties or other institutions and their relations to experts, but also more general issues of technocracy and de-politicisation of politics.

During the book launch in the Hague, the Presidents of both houses of the Dutch parliament were presented with the first copies of the Yearbook. The



keynote speaker was Professor Jaap van Dissel, Director of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment and the government's chief advisor on the COVID-19 pandemic.





EuParl.net Board of Directors Meeting



An online meeting of EuParl.net Board of Directors was hosted by the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Science on 25 November 2021. The Board discussed last year's accomplishments of the network and its members, information on new projects and project applications, and planned common activities for 2022. Professor Stefano Cavazza's team at the University of Bologna has been formally adopted as member.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for 6 May 2022, marking the 70th anniversary of KGParl in Berlin.

Blog on Early Modern Parliamentary Culture

The [blog](#) of the Centre for Intellectual History, University of Oxford, opened a series of articles aiming at “recovering Europe’s parliamentary culture, 1500–1700”. Editors include Paulina Kewes, Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves and Paul Seaward. They hope to perceive different parliaments, diets, states, and estates in late medieval and early modern Europe “not simply as legal and constitutional structures, and not just as the stages for the political competition either of individual politicians or of social forces, but as these extraordinary intersections of political and other cultures. We want to think about them as cultural phenomena, a focus of attention that is reflected in drama and other literary works, as well as in buildings, archives and rhetorical practice; as ideas, to recognise that they are themselves political concepts of key importance in the formation of states and the modern mind; and as a European phenomenon, shared and



Polish Sejm, in Jan Łaski Statute, 1506

discussed as a common intellectual inheritance across the continent.”

Read *The History of Parliaments as The History of Ideas* by Paul Seaward [here](#), explore *The Proud Oxymorons of Venice’s Parliamentary Culture* by Filippo de Vivo [here](#), or consider *Conceptual, Digital and Parliamentary Turns in Intellectual History* by Pasi Ihalainen [here](#). And there is more!

The End of the Bonn Republic

A series of two workshops were held on 24–25 June and 12–13 November this year to explore the many dimensions of the transfer of the capital of reunified Germany from Bonn to Berlin in the early 1990s. What debates and formal steps preceded the very decision? How was this related to historical connotations of Berlin as the capital, to the symbolic content and the mental maps of different parts of Germany? Finally, did the resolution bring an end to a Bonn Republic? The [report](#) from part 1 and the [programme](#) of both workshops tells you more.



Ende der Bonner Republik?

Brown Parliamentarians?



Andreas Schulz of KGParl features in *Aufarbeitung des Nationalsozialismus. Ein Kompendium*, a volume exploring how historiography, justice, museums and memorials, as well as ministries and legislatures have dealt with their Nazi past. His study *Brown Parliamentarians? On the National Socialist Past of the German Bundestag* summarises the existing research and points to productive perspectives and methods, that have not yet been applied in comprehensive examination of the phenomenon.



The Downfall of Federations

The Czech Journal of Contemporary History published a special issue dedicated to Socialist federations – the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, their institutional transformations from the mid-1980s, and their demise after 1989. Ivan Sablin focuses his lens on non-Russian women MPs in the Congress of People’s Deputies, the Soviet semi-freely elected super-parliament

introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev. Jure Gašparič explores what the opinion polls said about Slovenian adherence to Yugoslav identity in the 1980s, and about the twist to open support for Slovenian independence. Finally, Adéla Gjuríčová and Tomáš Zahradníček explain “the hidden spacial nature of Czechoslovak federation”. English summaries are available [here](#).

Parliament and Time

The [most recent](#) issue of the Slovenian journal *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino / Contributions to Contemporary History* published an article by Jure Gašparič on the perception of time in modern parliament. It understands time as a crucial commodity that had to be managed rationally in politics. The perception of time coincided with the need to regulate it and adjust to reach the required speed. The study contains an analysis of the modern legal and procedural manipulations with time, of the changing quantity of MPs’ work and, in particular, of the perception of time among deputies as expressed in their speeches (using corpus linguistics and the siParl 2.0 text corpus). We are keen to read an English translation!



The Kremlin Palace of Congresses during the Second Congress of People’s Deputies, Dec. 12–24, 1989

PROJECTS

Seeing the Big Data in Context

Pasi Ihalainen of Jyväskylä University has launched his Academy of Finland Professor Project on *Political Representation – Tensions between Parliament and the People from the Age of Revolutions to the 21st Century*. An international and multidisciplinary team is expected to analyse extensive corpus of digitised parliamentary records from Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. The language-sensitive approach combined with expertise in political history is expected to bring new findings on

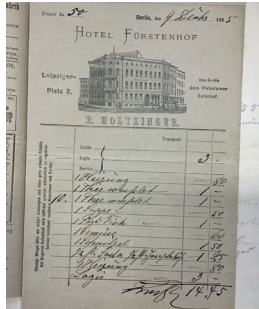


parliamentary legitimacy, political representation and popular sovereignty.

Check the [project website](#) for detailed description and publications.



What Do Private Letters Tell us on Public Matters



Hotel bill of Friedrich Clemens von Ketteler, Member of the Reichstag (1885)

The Lives of Parliamentarians 1871–1918, a new venture launched by KGParl in 2021, focuses on sources which have hitherto been ignored by historians, namely private correspondence of members of the Reichstag and the Prussian House of Representatives with their relatives and friends.

The analysis is expected to contribute to a more subtle understanding of the social and cultural grounds for parliamentary representation. The project explores the decades after the foundation of Imperial Germany when the parliamentary mandate turned from a voluntary activity into a quasi-professional career.

The joint project of the KGParl and the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in Munich is funded by the German Research Foundation.

Parliament-Flavoured Coffee

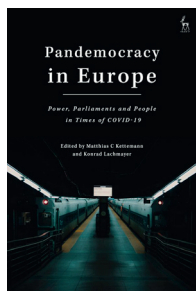
The online platform *CLARIN Café* wishes to establish an informal and interactive space for discussion for researchers, lecturers, students and experts to meet and share their experiences and insights related to the CLARIN digital infrastructure. The ParlaMint project working with multilingual parliamentary data had been completed earlier this year, but it regularly joins the CLARIN Café to present its results and publications, and to discuss their application and relevance.

Programme of coming meetings and further details are available [here](#).

Towards Illiberal Constitutionalism

The rise of authoritarian governments in Poland and Hungary, and of far right and populist movements across Europe has sparked concern about the liberal democratic system in general. *Towards Illiberal Constitutionalism in East Central Europe: Historical Analysis in Comparative and Transnational Perspectives*, a new project supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, has brought together historians, legal scholars, sociologists of law and political scientists to look for a historical, interdisciplinary, practice-oriented and comparative perspective of the region from WWII to the present. The modes of rejecting liberal constitutionalism will be examined in light of historical references, intellectual sources and various critiques of “judicialisation” of politics.

BOOKS/SOURCES



KETTEMANN, Matthias C. – LACHMAYER, Konrad (eds): *Pandemocracy in Europe: Power, Parliaments and People in Times of COVID-19*. Bloomsbury 2021

GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla: The many faces of European parliamentary cultures: Revisiting the latest research. In: *Czech Journal of Contemporary History / Soudobé dějiny* 2021, 28(3), [open access](#)

IHALAINEN, Pasi – SAHALA, Aleks: Evolving Conceptualisations of Internationalism in the UK Parliament: Collocation Analyses from the League to Brexit. In: FRIDLUND, M. et al.: *Digital Histories: Emergent Approaches within the New Digital History*. Helsinki UP 2020, pp 199–219, [open access](#)

IHALAINEN, Pasi: A Finnish socialist female parliamentarian stopped on the Dutch border: the (de)politicization of Finnish women’s suffrage in Dutch battles on votes for women. *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 133 (1): 53–75, 2020, [open access](#)

SABLIN, Ivan – BANDEIRA, Egas Moniz (eds): *Planting Parliaments in Eurasia, 1850–1950. Concepts, Practices, and Mythologies*. Routledge 2021, [open access](#)

CONTI, Gregory: *Parliament – the Mirror of the Nation: Representation, Deliberation, and Democracy in Victorian Britain*. Cambridge UP 2019

GANGHOF, Steffen: *Beyond Presidentialism and Parliamentarism: Democratic Design and the Separation of Powers*. Oxford UP 2021

RECKER, Marie Louise: *Parlamentarismus in der Bewährung. Der Deutsche Bundestag 1949–2020*. Droste 2021



TRUTKOWSKI, Dominik: *Die ausgehandelten Revolutionen. Politische Kommunikation in Parlament und Öffentlichkeit beim Umbruch zur Demokratie in Spanien und Polen*. Droste 2021

ERKKILÄ, Ville – HAFERKAMP, Hans-Peter (eds): *Socialism and Legal History: The Histories and Historians of Law in Socialist East Central Europe*. Routledge 2021

PAHASER, Tejas: Federalism, Representation, and Direct Democracy in 1920s India. *Modern Intellectual History*, FirstView 2021, pp 1–29

JENKINS, Lyndsey: ‘Housewives in the House’: Labour Women MPs in Parliament, 1945–1951. Lecture, open access at *The History of Parliament* [blog](#)

SAVE THE DATE

70 years of KGParl. Book presentation and discussion. **6 May 2022** Berlin, Bundestag.

Socialist Constitutionalism and Diversity Management since the 1970s. **12–13 May 2022**. Heidelberg. Further [info here](#).



BOOK SUMMARY

The Long Electoral Year 1990



GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – ZAHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš (eds): *Dlouhý volební rok 1990 ve střední Evropě: Očekávání, koncepty, praxe* [The Long Electoral Year 1990 in Central Europe: Expectations, Concepts, and Practice]. Prague, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2021

The volume revisits events that date back thirty years. In retrospect, the developments in 1989 seem straightforward. The old offices were taken by new people who stabilised the entire institutional framework of Central European states. This was accompanied by overall revival of the society, the strengthening of civil rights, and the preparation of free parliamentary elections. Yet, when looking at the period through the lens of historical sources, it becomes apparent that a number of additional processes were also under way. Long battle for supremacy broke out almost instantly between formal institutions and revolutionary roundtables, as well as among the new state actors, particularly between parliaments, governments and presidents. In some areas, it actually followed the agenda that the last Communist governments had already prepared: for example, part of the new legislation in Czechoslovakia merely consisted of amended proposals that were being drafted months before the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. When the leaders of the former opposition led by Václav Havel came to power, they did not have detailed plans on the matter. Anti-political thought contemplated a more radical departure

from all historical models, considering a democracy with plebiscite elements, though, in practice, only the approach to the presidential republic had seen the light of day.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the first free elections in 1990, editors Adéla Gjuríčová and Tomáš Zahradníček wished to primarily discuss the institutional shaping of democratic systems after the fall of Communist dictatorships. They intended to explore its starting points and expectations, conceptual and practical grasp of change, and to explore them as a technical, institutional and philosophical issue.

In the opening essay, Tomáš Zahradníček reflects on the establishment of institutional systems of new democracies in Central Europe: a simultaneous view of Czechoslovakia and Poland made it possible to identify some developmental features and answer the question of whether there was an apparent tendency to centralise power in these revolutions. The following section returns to the period prior to November 1989 in Czechoslovakia. Tomáš Vilímek summarises what the elections served and how they had already been prepared during the period of late Socialism in the 1970s and 1980s. In his chapter, Martin Štefek describes a fascinating, though still quite unknown, experiment that the Czechoslovak Communist Party resorted to in the Spring of 1989, when it decided to test the principle of multi-candidate elections in a series of by-elections. Jiří Suk explores the thinking of part of the Czech dissent on the values and forms of parliamentary democracy, consisting of astoundingly diverse and ungrounded ideas about its institutional set-up.

Much was already known about the central electoral race on 8 and 9 June 1990, which resulted in two chambers of the Federal Assembly and two republican national councils. Gjuríčová and Zahradníček have previously highlighted the existence of largely autonomous political societies in Prague, Bohemia, Moravia, and especially Slovakia, pointed to different electoral strategies for the individual parliaments, yet also to the peculiar transience of the result. At the federal level, it is apparent that the successful movements began to disintegrate virtually directly at the inaugural session of the Constituent Parliament, with President Havel choosing the Prime Minister and members of the government regardless of the elec-

tion result. Meanwhile, the National Councils in the two republics of the federal state followed up on variously advanced centrifugal tendencies revealing the national legitimacy and powers of the bodies at the level of each republic.

The publication complements the research with three electoral probes from, as yet, untreated or utterly unknown perspectives. First, Jindřiška Syllová relates the political negotiations on the choice of the electoral system from the beginning of 1990 to longer traditions and continuities. Then, Adam Hudek focuses on Slovakia and maps the local election dilemmas from the perspective of the Slovak national Communists. The third perspective is Jiří Pátek's art history probe that sheds light on the collection of negatives from the estate of Dagmar Hochová. After the first free elections, the outstanding photographer sat in the Czech National Council on behalf of the Civic Forum. Hochová moved around the meeting rooms and corridors with a camera. The presented collection contains the very first selection of her shots that are expected to bring to light entirely new facts about the two-year term of the Czech Parliament.

Altogether new research probes also form the last part of the collection. It moves from the usual central level to that of towns and villages, as their fate was also decided in 1990. It seems the decisions had a fundamental and long-lasting effect. Returning to the 1970s and 1980s, Jan Dobeš explains the motives and consequences of merging smaller villages into the so-called centre villages. Gjuríčová's chapter reminds that, at the end of November 1990, elections to local and city councils were held as well, though, in research and memories, these elections tend to fall into the oblivion. The extent of the transformation of the entire political and social context within the mere few months since the general election in June is extraordinary. The same applies to the municipal landscape, to which hundreds of new, re-established independent municipalities were added in the Czech lands. In the long year of 1990, the supposedly expiring National Committees carried out major ownership and economic changes. Therefore, the "big small elections" in November were no longer a referendum on Communism, but a party and public administration-informed struggle for a political future.