



„RECALL: A Study of Central European Places of Memory for Collective Remembrance”

2023-1-HU01-KA220-HED-000154286

Module Title: Revolutions of 1848 - Spring of Nations and Seeds of Freedom (*Topic 15*)

Target Duration: 46 minutes (video) + 15-20 minutes (e-learning tasks)

Target Audience: University students, researchers, and history enthusiasts

This module explores the interconnected revolutions of 1848 in Central Europe as a decisive turning point in the birth of modern political nations. It examines how reform movements, peasant uprisings, liberal constitutional programs, and national demands converged across Galicia, Hungary, and the Czech lands—while also exposing deep social and ethnic divisions.

The first part situates the “Spring of Nations” within the broader European revolutionary wave. From Paris to Vienna, Prague to Pest-Buda, the collapse of the old order created space for demands for constitutional government, civil liberties, national representation, and the abolition of serfdom. Yet the revolutions were not unified. Czech and German national programs clashed; Hungarian leaders struggled with the autonomy demands of Croats, Serbs, and Romanians; Polish aspirations were divided by social tensions between nobility and peasantry.

A central case study is the Galician Peasant Uprising of 1846. Led by **Jakub Szela**, peasants attacked hundreds of manor houses in what became known as the Galician *rabacja*. Austrian authorities manipulated rural grievances to undermine a planned noble insurrection in Kraków. The uprising revealed the explosive social dimension of nationalism: peasants did not automatically identify with Polish noble patriotism, and class tensions could override national solidarity. Later cultural memory—from **Stanisław Wyspiański’s** *The Wedding* to modern historiography—reinterpreted Szela alternately as traitor, social avenger, or tragic symbol of unresolved injustice.

The Hungarian Revolution of March 15, 1848 marked a different path. Inspired by **Lajos Kossuth’s** reform program and the activism of **Sándor Petőfi**, revolutionaries in Pest demanded constitutional government, civil rights, and national sovereignty. The April Laws established a responsible Hungarian government under **Lajos Batthyány**, abolished serfdom, and laid the foundations of a civic state. Yet armed conflict followed: imperial counterattack, nationality tensions, and finally Russian intervention under Tsar Nicholas I led to surrender at Világos in 1849. The executions of the Martyrs of Arad and Batthyány became enduring symbols of national sacrifice.

In the Czech lands, liberal reform, journalism, and civic associations flourished in 1848. **František Palacký’s** “Letter to Frankfurt” articulated a vision of Czech state rights within the Habsburg framework rather than German unification. The Prague Slavic Congress and the June Uprising expressed both pan-Slavic cooperation and opposition to centralization. Although suppressed, these events shaped Czech political culture and later national memory.





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The module concludes by analyzing how 1848 was remembered and politically reinterpreted in later regimes. During Dualism, Kossuth became a national cult figure; after World War I, memory merged with Trianon trauma. The communist regime attempted to appropriate 1848 as a proto-social revolution, while suppressing its liberal and independence-oriented dimensions. In 1956, revolutionary symbols—Petöfi’s poem, the Twelve Points, national cockades—returned as living political language. Thus, 1848 became not only a historical event but a recurring reference point in Central European struggles for sovereignty and civic freedom.

Overall, the module treats 1848 as both a shared European moment and a set of divergent national experiences—where ideals of liberty, equality, and nationhood collided with social conflict, imperial geopolitics, and competing memories.

Primary Goals of the Module:

- Situate the Central European revolutions of 1848 within the broader European revolutionary wave.
- Explain the interaction between liberal constitutionalism, national awakening, and social conflict.
- Examine the Galician rabacja as a case study of peasant revolt and manipulated counter-revolution.
- Analyze the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence as a model of constitutional transformation and armed struggle.
- Explore the Czech revolutionary experience and debates over federalism versus German unification.
- Investigate how nationality conflicts complicated revolutionary unity.
- Assess foreign intervention (especially Russian military aid) in suppressing the revolutions.
- Examine how later political regimes reinterpreted 1848 for their own legitimacy.
- Connect the memory of 1848 to later events, including 1956 and twentieth-century democratic movements.

EU Key Competences Addressed in This Module:

- **Cultural awareness and expression** – Understanding revolutionary symbols, poems, monuments, and commemorations as elements of shared Central European heritage.
- **Critical thinking and digital literacy** – Evaluating competing narratives (liberal, nationalist, social, communist) about the meaning of 1848.
- **Social and civic competence** – Recognizing how constitutional rights, parliamentary government, and abolition of serfdom became foundations of modern citizenship.
- **Democratic competence and pluralism** – Reflecting on how ethnic tensions and social divisions limited revolutionary solidarity.



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Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Describe the main causes and goals of the 1848 revolutions in Central Europe.
 - Explain how liberal, national, and social demands intersected and sometimes conflicted.
 - Summarize the events and consequences of the Galician Peasant Uprising of 1846.
 - Analyze the political program of the Hungarian March Revolution and the significance of the April Laws.
Outline the course and outcome of the Hungarian War of Independence (1848–49).
 - Interpret František Palacký’s federalist vision and the significance of the Prague Slavic Congress.
 - Assess the role of Austrian and Russian intervention in suppressing revolutionary movements.
 - Compare the social composition and aims of Polish, Hungarian, and Czech revolutionary actors.
 - Distinguish between immediate revolutionary achievements and long-term constitutional transformations.
 - Analyze how 1848 was mythologized in national memory (Kossuth cult, Martyrs of Arad, peasant legends).
 - Evaluate how later regimes (Dualism, Horthy era, communist period) reinterpreted 1848 for political purposes.
 - Reflect on how the ideals of 1848—civil liberty, equality before the law, national self-determination—continue to shape democratic discourse in Central Europe today.
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