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„The revolution and its critics – the English politico-legal thought 1688-1716”

Summary

The work aims to analyse the English politico-legal thought in the period between the fall of James II's regime as a result of the Glorious Revolution, and the adoption of the "Septennial Act" (1688-1716) - i.e. during the revolutionary changes to the monarchy's functioning. The conservative politico-legal theories that dominated the revolutionary period are set against the depth of the real reorganization of the state-structure as well as against the logic guiding the actions undertaken by both the state authorities and the non-state pressure groups. By doing so, the work highlights a deeply problematic character of the decisions taken by the English political nation which resulted in the emergence of the first full-fledged parliamentary system of power. The analysis also shows the paradoxical consequences brought by the fall of the prerogative-based model of royal power, as well as the ramifications of Westminster's active engagement in the exercise of governmental power. It is shown that, far from being but a simple transfer of authority, those consequences led to the inclusion of the whole body politic (represented in Westminster) into the dynamics of political and economic life, which in turn questioned the relevance of the old analytical categories such as the traditional ideal of the unity of commonwealth, ruled by objective norms of a rational legal system. From the perspective of a discrepancy between the conservatism of the employed language and the revolutionary character of the actual institutional changes, there are shown, for the first time in the Polish scientific literature, the crucial problems associated with the emergence of the first form of parliamentary government (i.e. the questions of political party, legislative contingency, lobbying). Due to the contemporary widespread character of parliamentarism, the relevance of the critique of its most controversial areas analysed in the work, exceeds the narrow historical context in which it was originally formulated.