

# **On the brink of revolution.**

## **The revolutionary events of 1848 in Sweden and The Netherlands.**



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## Chapter 1 – A historical non-event

At the moment of writing, violence is bursting in the Ukraine. This may or may not be referred to as a revolution in the future. The recent so-called Arab spring of 2011 is seen as a revolution in the Middle East and Northern Africa, and is compared to the Spring of Nations of 1848. In the newsfeeds concerning these events, one country has triggered my attention. In Morocco, demonstrations started. After the king decided on constitutional changes, the worst discontent seemed to have died down. This situation seems to be comparable to the constitutional changes in the Netherlands in 1848, or the calm in Sweden countries, which seem to have remained largely unaffected by the revolutionary wave in Europe. The question raised by this is: How was it possible that some nations were able to stay clear of the revolution that was going on around them?

The revolution of 1848 was a special revolution in many cases. Unlike other revolutions it was preceded by a period of, mainly internal, unrest. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century European countries were combatting each other, a great international congress that brought forth the restoration after Napoleon, seemed to decrease the tensions between countries somewhat. The relaxation of relations between countries was however replaced with increasing tensions in the homeland. Liberals demanded more freedom of expression and trade, to further develop themselves and their nation. A growing group, of what Marx and Engels would later become to call the *class of proletarians*, was living in extremely bad conditions in countries already in the process of industrializing. In 1848 a disruption of violence started in Paris in February, this approximately coincided with the release of the communist manifesto. The 'crowds' seemed to know how a revolution had to be waged and it quickly spread to other countries on the continent. Not only the start of the revolution was uncommon, also its result. The revolution of 1848 is commonly referred to as the *failed revolution*. This is because the republic, for which often had been called during that revolution, was not achieved in most countries. Of the countries that experienced unrest in Europe, only France would end up with a temporary republic.

Discussing and comparing two revolutions requires mentioning the fluidity of the term 'revolution'. Multiple theorists on revolutions, like Theda Skocpol, might argue that the two cases I have chosen to compare cannot even be called revolutions.<sup>1</sup> Sources on especially the 18 and 19 march 1848 weekend in Sweden usually refer to it as *kravaller, oroligheterna* or *röst*. All of these terms are closer to unrest than actual revolution. The strict definition that Skocpol applies to revolutions does not allow us to research many revolutions that are commonly called a revolution. Other theorists use a broader definition, which allows us to look at the 1848 events as well. As mentioned before the 1848 revolution is referred to as the failed revolution. An interesting term since a revolution normally implies a change. A failure to change would be a somewhat historical non-event unless we apply the theory of Charles Tilly. He split the event of revolution in a revolutionary situation and a revolutionary outcome.<sup>2</sup> A failed revolution can then be seen as the presence of a revolutionary situation without the succession of the intended revolutionary outcome. Analogously the prevention of a revolution, that I want to use as case in the Netherlands and Sweden, can be seen as the failure of the intended goals in an early, or premature, stage of the revolution.

The fact that both countries did not develop into a full revolution, make it important to identify that there was actually a revolutionary situation, or a possibility for one. Skocpol, believes that 'successful social revolutions will probably emerge from macro-structural and historical contexts.'<sup>3</sup> Jack Goldstone for instance discusses demographic changes in society as a cause for possible revolutions.<sup>4</sup> But after the 1970s there was an increasing interest for the cultural factors in history. Eric Selbin published an argument for putting agency back in the historical research.<sup>5</sup> In chapter two about the revolutionary situation, I will discuss the causes for the revolution. Because the coverage of this chapter consists of the largest part of Europe in a period from Napoleon to the revolution itself, a purely agency approach would make an incomprehensible document. A structural view to

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<sup>1</sup> Skocpol sees a real revolution as one radically changing a societies structure. Therefore according to here only France 1789 Russia 1917 and China 1949 are revolutions. See: T. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A comparative analysis of france, russia and china*. (Cambridge 1979). p. 3, 4, 33

<sup>2</sup> C. Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Oxford 1993). p. 10

<sup>3</sup> Skocpol, *States and social revolutions*. p. 5

<sup>4</sup> J.A. Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion in the early modern world* (Oxford 1991).

<sup>5</sup> E. Selbin, 'Revolution in the real world: Bringing agency back in' in: J. Foran ed., *Theorizing revolutions* (London 1997) 123. p. 133

demography, politics, and economy will be used to give insight of the 'status' of the affected countries. Contemporaries would also have though more structurally about the events that had happened a couple of years earlier, albeit in more detail than I can apply in this paper. During the revolution of 1848 there were countries that were more affected than others. Some countries, like France and Germany will always be referred to when discussing the 1848 revolution. Others like England and Spain are mainly said to have been out of the revolution. The Netherlands and Sweden can be placed in a third group that is hardly ever mentioned when discussing the 1848 revolution. Both countries were however not completely unaffected by the events that happened around them. After looking at the run up to the revolution on a Europe-wide scale the macro-structural view on the Netherlands and Sweden can be looked at in more detail and compared to the situations of the countries where the revolution would, and would not happen.

Only after it is assessed that the approach to 1848 in the Netherlands and Sweden were comparable to that of the countries where the revolution eventually would take place, is it possible to ask the question of how it was prevented. This will be the main question for the third chapter. Therefore the goals of the contenders have to be clear. Eric Selbin's argument to 'put agency back in historical research', inspired me to have a more in depth look at the roles of both kings, Willem II of the Netherlands and Oscar II of Sweden, in preventing the revolution from breaking out in these countries. Not only the roles of the kings, but also other cultural factors such as the organization of the turmoil and the role of the newspapers in the unfolding of protests will be discussed in the chapter on preventing revolution. This agency approach to the results would also make sense, since the fact that the larger structural causes for the 1848 revolution were already assessed as comparable to that of the countries where revolution did take place. They can therefore never explain the difference in outcome of the events between countries like France, Austria and the German states on the one hand, and Sweden and the Netherlands on the other. To find a difference of comparability the events and actions of the most important leaders of the European countries have to be addressed again before Willem II and Oscar I can be compared. A big change of 1848 is well known to the Dutch. This change was the introduction of the constitution that still is the basis for the current constitution. Its main effect was

that it disarmed the king politically by giving him judicial immunity and at the same time made his ministers responsible for the actions of the king. The king was initially opposed to the change. With looking for aid at the Belgian king, William II showed that the issue was so important to him that he wanted to ally with the enemies of the 1830s, over the problems at home. But then his approval came practically overnight when tension started to build. Building tension in this case was far from comparable to either France or Germany, because there were no casualties in the Dutch revolution, save a couple of windows. Looking at Sweden in context of the 1848 revolutions is even harder a case than for the Netherlands. In most lists of general sources such as Wikipedia or the Atlas to World History.<sup>6</sup> Sweden is not even mentioned as affected by the unrest. The king, Oscar I, was a Bernadotte whose father had come to inherit the throne after being a minister of the army of Napoleon.<sup>7</sup> Coming from France, and leading a dual monarchy of Sweden-Norway, the family Bernadotte was not unfamiliar with the concept of revolution and this may have aided the king in his decision making towards the troublemakers. Still, according to some, thirty people died in the unrest that took place in Stockholm on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1848.

Finally in chapter 4, I will conclude the paper with a look at the differences and similarities of the events in the Netherlands and Sweden to see if there might be a common trait for regimes in preventing a rising revolution, and get no further than the initial rise of tension. With a glance at the aftermath of the revolution in both countries the importance of the role of leadership and culture will exemplify the need to take an agency approach in the research of an historical event. But it also shows that understanding the situation precluding the detailed actions require a structural approach to have a basis for the comparison.

Sources I used for the research cover three regional subjects. Europe as a whole was described in the *Verfassungswandel um 1848 im Europäischen Vergleich*.<sup>8</sup> The other two were of course the Netherlands and Sweden. Which can be split in sources on the country as a whole, and sources on the kings. The main of these on the Dutch details were Aerts' *Land van Kleine gebaren* and Boogman's

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<sup>6</sup> H. Kinder, *Atlas van de wereldgeschiedenis 2* (Baarn 2009).

<sup>7</sup> E.H. Ulvros, *Oscar I: En biograf* (Lund 2007). p. 10

<sup>8</sup> M. Kirsch en P. Schiera, *Verfassungswandel um 1848 im Europäischen Vergleich* (Berlin 2001).

*Rondom 1848*.<sup>9</sup> More details on King Willem II were elaborately described in the recently released *Koning Willem II 1792-1849* by Van Zanten.<sup>10</sup> Sources on the Swedish events were much harder to find. First of all, the word 'revolution' is used less for these events in Sweden. Unlike the Dutch who use *Revolutie*, Swedish sources more often talk about, *kraveller*, *oroligheterna* or *upplopp*, none of which come close to the word revolution in meaning. The closest is *Marsrevolten*. The amount of detail on the March unrest of 1848 I required, has only been researched a couple of times, the most descriptive source on the events of 1848 or Marsoroligheterna is Mats Berglunds' *Massans röst*, he places these events in a broader book about in Swedish urban unrest in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> The biography *Oscar I: En biografi* by Eva Helen Ulvros was able to give me insight in the king himself.<sup>12</sup> More information about both king Willem II and king Oscar I were useful because the kings were such an important factor in de-escalating the situation, and with that in preventing the revolution from taking place in both countries.

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<sup>9</sup> R. Aerts, *Land van kleine gebaren; Een politieke geschiedenis van Nederland 1780-1990* (Nijmegen 2010); J.C. Boogman, *Rondom 1848. De politieke ontwikkeling van Nederland 1840-1858* (Bussum 1978).

<sup>10</sup> J.v. Zanten, *Koning Willem II 1792-1849* (Amsterdam 2013).

<sup>11</sup> M. Berglund, *Massans röst: upplöp och gatubråk i Stockholm 1719-1848* (Stockholm 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Ulvros, *Oscar I*.



## Chapter 2 – On the Brink

### 2.1 - Causes for Revolution

Elbaki Hermassi states that revolutions will demonstrate effect beyond their home state by influencing others, who support or oppose the ideals of the revolutionaries.<sup>13</sup> This was definitely the case in 1848. The first violence of 1848 started in January in Italy, and after a quiet period, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1848 unrest broke out in Paris after the government tried to shut down a banquet about reforms of the constitution. After France also the German states, Austria and many smaller countries fell prey to the turmoil. Frederick William IV of Prussia described the dynamics as a flood wave.<sup>14</sup> This flood wave happened without being directly preceded by a conflict between two countries. The period 1815-1853 was very peaceful and the *Concert of Europe* did all in its power to make sure that the continent would remain stable. It would not be until the Crimean war that they really failed to do so.<sup>15</sup> Instead of external pressure from other nations and governments, internal pressures seemed more applicable as a cause for the 1848 revolution. The revolution seemed to have started almost simultaneously from below in most countries of Europe. The arrival of the news of a revolution in Paris coincided with the translations of Marx' Communist Manifesto, which talked about revolution of the working class against the bourgeoisie.<sup>16</sup> Also the liberals, who could be seen as the main actors in the revolutions of 1830 had unfulfilled demands. With increasing industrialization they required more freedoms in trade and business from the conservative and mercantile governments. Besides these political possible causes for the revolutions economic and demographic factors should also be addressed. One of the most probable reasons for discontent, especially without the presence of a war, is a bad economy.<sup>17</sup> Jack Goldstein showed that a growing population in Europe, combined with a worsening of the

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<sup>13</sup> E. Hermassi, 'Toward a comparative study of revolutions', *Comparative studies in society and history* 18 (1976) 214. in: Skocpol, *States and social revolutions*. p. 4

<sup>14</sup> J. Breuilly, 'The revolutions of 1848' in: David Parker ed., *Revolutions and the revolutionary tradition in the west 1560-1991* (Abingdon, UK 2000) 109-132. p. 114

<sup>15</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 114

<sup>16</sup> K. Marx en F. Engels, *Manifesto of the communist party* (1848).

<sup>17</sup> H. Berger en M. Spoerer, 'Economic crises and the european revolutions of 1848', *The journal of economic history* 61 (2001) 293-326. p. 295

economy, could make that many people saw their previous expectations become unachievable and thus grow discontent.<sup>18</sup> Even though the population of Europe rose only slightly, the economy had been bad. This, combined with a strong urbanisation, could validate the theory for the local urban areas. Urban areas especially capitals are prone to revolutionary developments. This can be seen in the role of Paris in 1789 and the different capitals during the Arab spring. Campante, by stating that the place where a most effective spark for revolution could be found is in the capital, has also more generally proved it.<sup>19</sup>

France had suffered economically from the Napoleonic wars, many colonies had been lost and the potato blight of 1845 and 1846 made it worse. Basic supplies like food became very expensive. Also the German states had suffered heavily by the Napoleonic period. The concert of Europe was working for international stability. Internal stability suffered from it though. The concert came forth out of a desire to bring back Europe to a balanced system. It restored kings in countries that had become republican, and even made the Netherlands a kingdom, which it had not been before Napoleon. It also included the idea that the king should guide his subjects, and that the subjects should not mingle in state matters. This conviction that *the masses were unable of political action* on the nation's behalf, resulted from lessons learned about the (then believed) failed French-republican experiment of the end of the previous century. Many people who opposed policies of the state were imprisoned or punished otherwise for being a radical or republican threat to the welfare of the country. Therefore restored countries followed a repressive strategy towards discontent civilians. Leaders like Prince Metternich, foreign minister of Austria, worked actively, with use of special police, to capture people who raised their voice in opposition to the government of the Austrian Empire. This view was also used as argument against freedom of press. The importance of the demand for more freedom of speech by the people was underestimated by the governments of the day.

These causes for revolution were not fully present in England. Important factors for revolution were present in England but on a much smaller scale. It had lost much less in the Napoleonic wars; on the contrary it gained many colonies

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<sup>18</sup> Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion in the early modern world*. p. 9

<sup>19</sup> F.R. Campante, *Keeping dictators honest: the role of population* (Scriptie School of economics Singapore management university, Singapore 2009).

from for instance the Dutch, in that period. The industrial revolution produced slums with heavily impoverished people living in them, who were very unhappy about their situation. The state on the other hand, was wealthy enough to give in to some of their most important demands. In 1815 it had introduced Corn Laws by which the government tried to keep up the high profits it had won on this product during the war. When hunger struck Europe because of the potato blight in 1845 and 1846 it was able to undo these Corn Laws without too much damage to the states finances and to keep the population from being alienated from the government.<sup>20</sup> Beside that, the political system had incorporated a way for the population to sound its discontent in an institutionalized way trough the reform act of 1832. This caused the Chartist movement to persuade their members not to use violence when they petitioned for wider suffrage on April 10<sup>th</sup> 1848. Which in its turn meant that even though the government was tense about the developing situation the chartists never posed a revolutionary threat.<sup>21</sup>

Also Russia did not have problems with the 1848 revolution. Russia missed the large towns, and “bourgeois” population that gave the potential of forming *crowds*, which had the ability to gather and exert force on the government.<sup>22</sup> Beside that, it had a very repressive system on the farmers living in the country thus giving them no chance for uprising until the revolutions at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Spain was a totally different story. It matched many of the triggers found in the rest of Europe. The economy had been weak since the Napoleonic times, government was unstable and Carlists were opposing the Queen. A reason that the 1848 revolutions did not affect Spain could be the fact that it was already so entrenched in a civil war, between the government and the Basque, that the themes of 1848 could not be identified.<sup>23</sup>

## **2.2 - The Netherlands**

The golden age of the Netherlands was far behind, and most of the Dutch were still dreaming of their former glory days in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But the early nineteenth

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<sup>20</sup> R. Quinault, '1848 and Parliamentary Reform', *The Historical Journal* 31 (1988) 831-851.

<sup>21</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 835

<sup>22</sup> Campante, Keeping dictators honest. p. 5-7

<sup>23</sup> D.R. Headrick, 'Spain and the Revolutions of 1848', *European Studies Review* 6 (1976) 197-223.

century had nothing of the former glory days left. As a part of the Napoleonic empire the Republic had lost many of its overseas colonies to the English. And with the restoration it was reduced to a medium power in Europe. To ensure a counterweight to the power of France it was decided that to the former enemy's north there would be one country, The United Kingdom of the Netherlands. It was a monarchy under king Willem I and consisted of The Netherlands, Belgium, the grand duchy Luxemburg, and the duchy of Limburg. After the 1830s, when Belgium split of from the Netherlands, it got reduced to a small country. These continuous setbacks decreased the Dutch morale to an all time low. Politically the nation stepped away from its position in the northern alliance and started to distrust its former allies, such as England. The loss of colonies, the debt from the French time and the separation of Belgium created another problem for the Dutch economy. Since the days of the Hanseatic League the Netherlands had been the main transit route for colonial products to reach the German states.<sup>24</sup> The Zollverein was opposed to the way the Dutch were able to gain profits from their transitory position but unable to do anything against it, until the separation of Belgium. After that the Dutch had lost their monopoly position and had to reduce their prices, i.e. their income on the Rhine trade.

The costs of the mobilisation of the army in the period 1831-1839, by which King Willem I hoped to force Belgium back, through force or deterrence in the concert, were enormous. These two factors made that the economy was in a deplorable state. In 1844 the kingdom was nearly bankrupt and minister of colonial affairs Jean Chrétien Baud thought the best option might be to join the German states in their *Zollverein*.<sup>25</sup> There would be no future for a country as small as the Netherlands. Because of a 127 million guilder loan at three per cent, minister Van Hall was able to pay off its more expensive loans. The interest costs decreased from 44 million in 1844 to 36 million in 1848. The state was however still running solely on borrowed money. Its deficit was running close to a 200% of the gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>26</sup> The bad economy was noticeable throughout the country, but less for its elite consisting mainly of people living of their interest yields and through loans, than in the lower social strata. Tariffs made sure that

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<sup>24</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 11

<sup>25</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 13

<sup>26</sup> Aerts, *Land van kleine gebaren*. p. 92, 381

food was still sold abroad, while people were starving at home. The number of *bedeelden*<sup>27</sup> increased from 10% in 1842 to 15% in 1847.<sup>28</sup> In 1847 the situation was so bad that a ship loaded with food supplies was attacked in Harlingen. The mayor and many bakeries were targeted after that. Because of the suddenness and incomprehensibility for many people, rich citizens started to throw money out of their windows to please potential 'visitors', and dissuade them from breaking an entry.<sup>29</sup>

Many believed that a change in the organisation of the state was needed to solve the economic problems of the country. Since the French time up until the separation of Belgium, the people and Estates General had followed the king and his government without much opposition. In the 1840s opposition started to grow. The opinions were however split on how to go about the constitutional changes. Holland, the main province of the Netherlands, made its money predominantly by trade, and had particular interest in lowering the tariffs to make international trade easier. Growing ports like the one in Rotterdam also came to think in these more liberal ways. Other parts of the country were more dependent on state institutions such as the *Nederlandsche Handels Maatschappij* (NMH) and remained conservative. The king tightly controlled this company. Because of a monopoly on goods from the Dutch East Indies, its revenue accounted for a quarter of the state's income. This made it possible for the region of Twente to keep its main source of work, the textile industry, going.<sup>30</sup> Also in provinces Brabant and Limburg the more conservative line would aid their interests better. There was however a graded appreciation of faith. Formally there was a freedom of religion in the Netherlands. Catholics had to pay extra taxes though. Liberals were in favour of equalizing the way the state treated both religions. Because of large catholic minority (almost 40%) in Brabant and Limburg they were open to a liberal change even though it might serve the Amsterdam region better. All because it might relieve them of their position as second-class citizens, including their extra taxation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> These are people requiring charity for their subsistence.

<sup>28</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 46

<sup>29</sup> Aerts, *Land van kleine gebaren*. p. 100

<sup>30</sup> M. Wessels, *De Nederlandse traditie van vrijheid: Een vruchtbare voedingsbodem voor de hervormingen van 1848* (Den Haag 1998). p. 135

<sup>31</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 35

When he ascended to the throne King Willem II showed himself a man who 'faut marcher avec son siècle'.<sup>32</sup> His progressive aspirations are questioned however and more often the king is described as a "knightly" king more than as a statesman. He opposed his fathers ruling ways and during the separation of Belgium even showed he rather wanted to be Belgium's king than that of the Netherlands. As the hero of Waterloo he had some popularity in the country but he was unable to convince the new government to crown him king of Belgium. Until 1843 the king was still secretly planning on recapturing the southern Netherlands. He believed that a country as small as the Netherlands was not viable in the surrounding of powers such as England, France and Austria. During his youth in exile he got the idea that his state had to at least be as large as the current Benelux, and saw himself on the throne of France as well.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.3 – Sweden

Just like the Netherlands, Sweden had lost its position as a great power after the Napoleonic wars. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, much of its landed possessions had been lost. The biggest loss had been in 1809 when Finland, which was actually a part of Sweden, was given up to Russia.<sup>34</sup> Sweden still felt pressured by their Russian neighbour but not as bad as the Dutch felt their foreign pressure. Under the new king Charles XIV the country started to prosper again. The Union with Norway was working out and a sense of grand-Scandinavian pride was in the senses of both the people and the king.<sup>35</sup> This made Oscar I, Charles' heir, support the Danes in their war with Prussia in 1848.<sup>36</sup> This war was however not on Swedish soil, and supported by Swedish and Norwegian volunteers,<sup>37</sup> thus the pressure on the state because of this war was relatively light. Other international events caused more animation. The news of the revolution in Paris reached the Swedish press by the beginning of March. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March a reader comments on the events in Paris in the liberal paper *Aftonbladet*, the redaction of

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<sup>32</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 17

<sup>33</sup> Aerts, *Land van kleine gebaren*. p. 82, 83

<sup>34</sup> A.H. Barton, 'From warfare to welfare state: Sweden's search for a new identity', *Essays on Scandinavian History* (2009) 256-267.

<sup>35</sup> P. Hallberg, 'Mirrors of the Nation: The construction of national character and difference in the historical writings of E.G. Geijer', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 26 (2001) 25-52.

<sup>36</sup> Barton, 'From warfare to welfare state'. p. 256-266

<sup>37</sup> Ulvros, *Oscar I*. p. 202

the paper concludes the comment with an observation that a revolution in Sweden would be good to improve freedom there as well.<sup>38</sup> It pressured the government to start the debate on suffrage again. Because of the events in Paris and the increasing unrest on the subject in his own country, Oscar I wanted to bring together a committee to discuss the question of representation. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March the conservative court chancellor Von Hartmansdorf posted the annunciation. Two days later the liberals in Stockholm organized a banquet.<sup>39</sup>

Another aspect that did put pressure on the Swedish society was the economy. Industrialisation in Sweden ran behind. Whereas the industrial revolution in England is roughly dated between 1750 and 1850, the Swedish industrialisation only started round the 1840s.<sup>40</sup> Working conditions for the young men and women there were usually so poor, that if they had enough money they tried to leave. More liberal ideas in the government potentially aided the second wave of emigrants who left for the US in this period.<sup>41</sup> These emigrants mainly consisted of young men, who could have aided in strengthening the country, had a solid industry been in place.<sup>42</sup> The main source of the Swedish economy consisted of agriculture and the sale of wood and iron. The mercantile view of the government on the economy was not able to better the states finances. Which became worse. The increasing technological conditions in England and the tariffs made it harder for the Swedes to create a positive balance for their treasury because the English became less depended on the Swedes for steel. Nor did the country have a big colony to utilize for income, as did the Dutch. One thing they did have in abundance was land. And the country was big enough to provide for itself in food supplies and basic raw materials.

According to Selbin a culture of violence can make certain cultures more prone to revolution.<sup>43</sup> The Swedish culture is normally viewed as one of low violence. This traditional view is however countered by the study of Mats Berglund, who in his book *Massans Röst*, shows eight instances of large-scale

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<sup>38</sup> J. Perényi, *Revolutionsuppfattningens anatomi; 1848 års revolutioner i svensk debatt* (1979). p. 50

<sup>39</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 356

<sup>40</sup> L. Magnusson, *An economic history of Sweden* (New York, NY 2000).

<sup>41</sup> S. Carlsson, 'Chronology and composition of Swedish emigration to America', *From Sweden to America. A history of migration* (1976) 114-148.

<sup>42</sup> A.-S. Källemark, 'Swedish emigration policy in an international perspective 1840-192', *From Sweden to America: A history of migration* (1976) 94-114.

<sup>43</sup> Selbin, 'Revolution in the real world'. p. 131

street-violence in Sweden from 1719 until the March Revolt of 1848. With this study he also shows that street violence was not as uncommon as previously thought. The smallest things can be an incentive for violence in a culture (like that of the workers) where violence is common, alcohol available and social control is no longer working, a combination that existed in the living areas of the Swedish labourers. Sweden had its share of turmoil in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1810 Field Marshall Axel von Fersen had been lynched during the crown prince's funeral.<sup>44</sup> And with the unreliable yield of every year, hunger problems became quite consistent in the 1840s.<sup>45</sup> Berger and Spoerer have indicated the possibility of growth in grain prices as a factor for the start of the 1848 revolution with economical comparisons of several countries in Europe they connected the intensity of economic problems with that of the intensity of the turmoil.<sup>46</sup> It would be too much to follow the conclusions of their article in full because in the scale they eventually find, some irregularities exist. Sweden is for instance listed lower than the Netherlands and England was listed higher than Russia and Spain. These last countries did not see unrest related to the 1848 ideologies, but were also countries that were way less calm than England.<sup>47</sup> In the mean time industrialisation started in the large cities of Sweden and many youngsters from the rural areas went to the cities in search of work.<sup>48</sup> Because of all the moving people the traditional social control that existed in the villages was lost and, especially among the workers, problems with rules and alcohol abuse increased.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 257

<sup>45</sup> For an English summary; 'Ibidem' p. 417-428

<sup>46</sup> Berger en Spoerer, 'Economic crises and the european revolutions of 1848'. p. 293

<sup>47</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 313, 314

<sup>48</sup> Magnusson, *An economic history of Sweden*.

<sup>49</sup> R. Ambjörnsson, 'Den Skötsamme arbetaren or the conscientious worker', *Libraries & Culture* 28 (1993) 4-12.



## Chapter 3 – Critical decision making

### 3.1 – Reactions by European leadership

According to Tilly a revolution is happening at the moment that a group transfers its authority after violence or the threat of violence.<sup>50</sup> This transfer of power is approached as a transfer of power between static concepts. This means that the dynamics, caused by the revolution, within the liberal and conservative movements themselves are not taken into account. Thus it could be stated that, because many states returned to a government ruled by the conservatives after the revolution, the 1848 revolution was a failed revolution. In assessing whether a transfer of authority had taken place three mainstream ideologies are regarded. First the radicals, or later socialist / communist groups had definitely lost the struggle.<sup>51</sup> Marx found that the population was not able to take the control that he had intended when writing the manifest. Later he would argue that achieving universal suffrage would suffice as achieving the communist goals, because the workers could then assert power on the nation through official channels.<sup>52</sup> But also this aim would take until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to substantiate in Europe. The second ideology is liberal. The liberals were also active in the uprisings of the 1830s. With the revolution of 1848 they seem to have gained more of their goals such as, a wider suffrage, and several freedoms like freedom of press and regulations towards a *laissez faire* in the economy. Most of the liberals could also be connected to a new ideology, nationalism. These motives were especially present in the decentralisation of the Austrian Empire and in an opposite (centralizing) way in the German states.<sup>53</sup> The final and third political strand was that of the conservatives.<sup>54</sup> They were connected to the kings and their followers. Because of the concert of Europe they were also connected to the idea that they wanted to return to the old way, with their restoration. The main conviction of the conservatives was that a country should be ruled by 'wise men' who would be able to make decisions for the better of the whole nation. According to them the French

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<sup>50</sup> Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992*. p. 8

<sup>51</sup> Breuille, 'The revolutions of 1848'. p. 116

<sup>52</sup> K. Marx, 'The Chartist movement' *New York Tribune* (August 25 1852).

<sup>53</sup> Breuille, 'The revolutions of 1848'. p. 118

<sup>54</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 120

revolution of 1789 and its results in the disaster of the Napoleonic wars had shown that the 'general population' was unfit to do so.

This believe caused that in France, even after the July revolution of 1830, not many people had the right to vote. Approximately 250,000 people paid enough direct taxes to be eligible for the vote. This was about a fifth of the voters of England.<sup>55</sup> The fact that so many citizens were not allowed to vote deprived them of an institutionalized way of voicing disagreement. Disagreeing workers and students organised banquets in favour of reforms throughout the country and were planning on a final *grande banquet* in Paris in February 1848. The French king, Louis Philippe, and his minister Guizot were getting restless about the discontent and decided to close down the banquet. This was the spark that lit the fire. Shouting '*Vive la Réforme!*' workers and students started a militant protest against their king and armed National Guard joined their ranks. The replacing of Guizot by Molé with a task to look into reforms seems to have been insufficient to quieten the crowds and Louis Philippe decided to flee to prevent him from finding the same fate as Louis XVI had before him in 1793. This left the country open to reformers of the so-called second republic. Only with the election of Louis-Napoleon, the later emperor Napoleon III, in 1852 would France turn back to its more autocratic form of governance.

In Austria the chancellor Metternich followed the events in Paris with interest. A large minority in the empire wanted to separate from the empire for a long time, the Magyar called in Buda for their own country. Inspired by the quick and successful revolution of the French in Paris they marched on Vienna. And also unsure about his fate Metternich fled the capital. The news of the chancellor fleeing sparked nationalist groups throughout the empire in its turn. The decentralizing regions became however smaller and unable to aid each other in their fight for self-determination. This would eventually become their undoing because Franz Joseph the new Emperor of Austria started to regain control of the small pockets of resistance one by one from June on. All the nationalist pockets had some fighting chance in the cities, but because they mainly consisted of students, were not able to create a manoeuvring army of workers. The workers stayed loyal to the original

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<sup>55</sup> Quinault, '1848 and Parliamentary Reform'. p. 832

authorities because they did not understand the nationalist concept that the students were fighting for.

In the German states Frederick William IV was, just like his father opposed to a constitutional monarchy. When turmoil and agitation crossed from the south he quickly ordered the army to prepare suppression of the demonstrations. Then, to everyone's surprise he changed his mind and went liberal. The same thing happened in the Netherlands, as we will see later. The freedom Frederick William IV gave his assembly would turn out to be too much. Regretting that he let the assembly take control of the government, in ways he disliked, the king decided to firmly take back control. In the meantime a German assembly had started in Frankfurt. This nationalist group tried to unite the German states either under the rule of the Austrian emperor or under the rule of the Prussian king. Until 1849 the German Assembly was free to debate. When they offered the crown of the German lands to Frederick William IV, he was tempted to accept it. This would strengthen his control over the German lands vis-à-vis Austria. There was one thing withholding him from accepting the crown though. He would have to accept it from the assembly, thus meaning that he accepted a crown from the people, and not from god. Because accepting the crown implied accepting a constitutional monarchy the king declined and the German states remained separate for some more years.

### **3.2 - King Willem II**

When the uproar hit Dam Square in Amsterdam on March 24<sup>th</sup> 1848 the constitution had been a point of discussion for quite a while. In the 1840s at the start of his royal career King Willem II showed himself very progressive. His brother-in-law, the tsar of Russia, disliked the fact that he read liberal magazines such as *Journal des débats* and *gazette de France*. The king gave in to demands from liberal politicians and at a meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1843 he even showed himself open for changes in the constitution.<sup>56</sup>

Rudolph Thorbecke, a law scholar and liberal did not believe this statement. In 1841 he had already made a study on changing the constitution in a very liberal way, including ministerial responsibility for the actions of the king. Thorbecke

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<sup>56</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 44

believed that a shock was needed to change the constitution in the Netherlands. Since 1813 no law had been changed if it was not for external pressure, or in case of an emergency. This was also the case with the minor change in the constitution of 1840 after the separation of Belgium.<sup>57</sup> 1844 would be the year of change. Thorbecke and eight of his liberal companions, called *de negenmannen* (the nine men), put in an amendment for change of the constitution. In the meantime the king had grown more conservative and got furious by the attack of the liberals and states never to approve of the proposition, 'al ware het schavot ernaast'.<sup>58</sup>

The king moved back and forth between progressive and conservative action. A British diplomat wrote in a letter to his government 'that the great weakness of the King... is acting on impulse.'<sup>59</sup> Pressure by the Frisian estates on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July to make at least some statement on a change of constitution did not help. Because according to Willem II a constitution is an agreement between the king and the people he said he could not merely allow rules to be imposed on him. And to the disappointment of parliament he did not address the subject on the King's speech of the 21<sup>st</sup> of October. When the king noticed that the discontent grew even further, he decided that he would aim for a review of the constitution in due time. The still conservative parliament supported him in this on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1845 and the nine-men's proposal was disregarded.<sup>60</sup> After this disaster Thorbecke wondered if even external forces would be able to pressure the government enough to make the required change. Disillusioned he asked some allies '*Maar wie zegt ons dat zij, in stede vuur uit steen te slaan, ons niet even besluiteloos als thans zal vinden... Dat ons een groote hervorming wacht, daarvan ben ik overtuigd. Maar zal zij ons eigen werk zijn, of zal zij het werk van vreemden zijn?*'<sup>61</sup>

Opposition did not only reside in the parliament but also in the population. Discontent was easiest to find in public writing even though there was

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<sup>57</sup> Zanten, *Koning Willem II*. p. 472

<sup>58</sup> Even if the alternative was the scaffold in: 'Ibidem'

<sup>59</sup> J. Stengers, 'Das Belgische Verfassungsmodell von 1831 und die holländische un luxemburgische Verfassung von 1848' in: Martin Kirsch en Pierangelo Schiera ed., *Verfassungswandel um 1848 im europäischen Vergleich* (Berlin 2001) 285-304. p. 290

<sup>60</sup> Zanten, *Koning Willem II*. p. 478

<sup>61</sup> But who tells us that, when fire slashes from the stone in our town, they will not find us as indecisive as now... I am convinced that a big reform awaits. But will it be of our making, or that of strangers? In: W. Verkade, *Thorbecke als Oost-Nederlands Patriot* (Zutphen 1974). p. 161

no freedom of press. The larger papers were subject to censure and risked fines if they wrote too harshly on the government's policies. Smaller papers and pamphlets were however uncontrollable. By staying small, these so called *lilliputters* were able to recruit discontented youth.<sup>62</sup> Their joint circulation was about three times that of *Algemeen Dagblad*, a paper with a large amount of subscribers.<sup>63</sup> One of the most important liberal journalists was Van Bevervoorde. This man from lower nobility was a more radical supporter of constitutional reforms. He had influence in the chambers and was able to muster large support by writing his papers and pamphlets. Unrest at home and the news that the smaller German states were allowing their subjects a constitution made the king decide to follow and remain on the liberal track. It is said that King Willem II might also have changed his mind to supporting the reforms after being blackmailed by Van Bevervoorde and a companion Van Andringa de Kempnaer, who probably threatened to go public on his love for men if he continued to oppose the constitutional reforms.<sup>64</sup> Whatever the key argument was, the King made a complete reversal in his views on the need for reform and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March he announced to the second chamber to be open for reforms.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March Van Bevervoorde organised a large protest on the Dam Square in Amsterdam to further pressure the king. It was more than a week after the king already publicly decided on reforms. The approximately 2000 demonstrators on the square were met by the king and after a conversation with the people who were present, the king left under cheers of the crowd. Save a couple of windows there was no damage done and the situation remained de-escalated.<sup>65</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> of March was also the day that Willem II notified dignitaries from Austria, Britain, Prussia and Russia that "Vous voyez devant vous un home qui de très conservative est devenu en 24 heures très libéral."<sup>66</sup> This time the king remained on his decided course. Against the will of large parts of parliament he aided the commission to look into reforms for the constitution.<sup>67</sup> He also elected

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<sup>62</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 46

<sup>63</sup> J.J. Giele, *De pen in de aanslag - revolutionairen rond 1848* (Bussum 1968). p. 10

<sup>64</sup> Zanten, *Koning Willem II*. p. 554

<sup>65</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 538

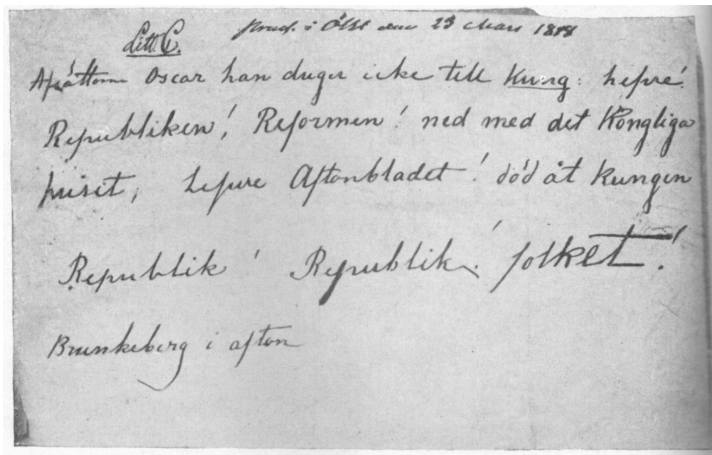
<sup>66</sup> Before you there is a man who from very conservative, within 24 hours has become very liberal. In: Stengers, 'Das Belgische Verfassungsmodell von 1831'. p. 289

<sup>67</sup> Boogman, *Rondom 1848*. p. 58

new members in the first chamber and persuaded them to support the reforms. Without these actions the new constitution would not have materialized.<sup>68</sup> A result of the continuous supportive stance that the King took towards the liberal reform movement was that these men decided to break with more radical people such as Van Bevervoorde. By breaking these ties they wanted to ensure the king that they were worthy of his support and would not go rogue on him. For the development of the constitution however, it meant that they could not go as liberal as some had initially aimed for. By any case, according to US diplomats in the Netherlands the possibility of revolution was completely gone after the 24<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.3 - King Oscar I

In Sweden on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March tension was rising and the police pulled down several placards, which were rallying the people to come to a demonstrative gathering near a banquet.<sup>70</sup> The gathering itself passed relatively calm and closed at seven in the evening. The the masses gathered and goldsmith Jacob Lenholm encouraged the people near the banquet to go for the chancellors' house and demand better representation.<sup>71</sup> As the crowd moved to Storkyrkobrinken, the address of the chancellor, more people joined and gathered stones to throw at the house. When they arrived the 20 policemen that were at the scene tried to arrest the worst troublemakers but got attacked and stabbed.<sup>72</sup> The nearby infantry awaited orders from their commander, who was at the opera with the king.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile the residents of



<sup>68</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 59

<sup>69</sup> P.R.D. Stokvis, 'Amerikaanse ooggetuigen over het revolutiejaar 1848 in Nederland'.

<sup>70</sup> Link for the image above 'Upprop för republik 1848' (versie), [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/19/Upprop\\_för\\_republik\\_1848.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/19/Upprop_för_republik_1848.jpg),

<sup>71</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 356

<sup>72</sup> J. Milld, 'Stockholmsupproret 1848' (versie 14 January 2008), <http://www.janmilld.se/historia/2/1848.html#2>, (6 may-2014).

<sup>73</sup> J. Milld, 'Kravaller och attentat' (versie 14 January 2008), <http://www.janmilld.se/historia/2/kravaller.html>, (6 May-2014).

Storkyrkobrinken 9 all gathered in the room with the thickest curtains and shut the lights to protect themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Unrest like this was not completely uncommon in Stockholm. In the last thirty years the violence had increased though. 1810 could be seen as a break in the traditional culture of Swedish street rioting. Before that government representatives were usually able to join the rallying people and negotiate a solution. In 1810 an outraged crowd killed *Riksmarskalken* Axel von Fersen.<sup>75</sup> Despite the higher threat toward officials, king Oscar I decided, just like Willem II two weeks later, to meet the crowd and talk to them. A scene as in Paris 1789 could have developed, when the crowds forced King Louis XIV to humour them with the French cockade.<sup>76</sup> Instead the King stood fast and despite calls for reform, and even republic, no one dared to attack the king or his sons. At the end of the day the king left under cheers of the demonstrators. Because of the visit of the king, Infantry was finally able to protect Hartmannsdorf's house.<sup>77</sup> The rioters did not yet go home though; they moved on and smashed many other windows. Evidence shows that the uproar went fairly orchestrated. There is even evidence that orders were given, on paper, to leave the residence of the Russian diplomat alone.<sup>78</sup> When evening turned into night, general of the watch J.P. Lefrén faced the crowd once more and told them to go home. After this the violence quieted down.

March 19<sup>th</sup> 1848 was a Sunday, the traditional day of rest for the workers. For that reason it was also a day during which most papers came out. Talks of the previous day and strong wording in the papers must have quick-started the unrest after the morning mass.<sup>79</sup> The military, present from the morning, did not want to force the crowd away yet, out of fear for causing a greater disturbance. The crowd grew and yells got more aggressive.<sup>80</sup> Berglund found that some people might have paid coins to workers and children to join in the demonstration. *Republik och Frihet* (Republic and Freedom) were the main themes of the crowds' cheers. A little before five in the afternoon, the crowd started to move.

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<sup>74</sup> M. Jacobson, *Marsrevolten 1848* (Stockholm 2006).

<sup>75</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 267

<sup>76</sup> S. Neely, *A concise history of the French Revolution* (Plymouth 2008). p. 158

<sup>77</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 359

<sup>78</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 360-362

<sup>79</sup> E. Mrkalj, *Söndagsbladet och Folkets Röst - argumentationen i två radikala arbetartidningar i Stockholm kring 1848 års revolutioner* (Scriptie Högskolan i Gävle, Gävle 2013).

<sup>80</sup> M. Berglund, *Citizens, soldiers and popular unrest in pre-industrial Stockholm 1719-1848* (2008).

The passive approach had been proven insufficient to stop escalation for the third time. The main watch, who was now ordered to fire at the crowd rolled canons from the castle, placards were placed warning everyone that any unnecessary noise was prohibited and that vandalizing or attacks on the military or police would be met with life fire. Despite warnings and placards of the king, to not attack or in any way vandalize property, stones were thrown again.<sup>81</sup> Around 7 pm the first shots were fired at the crowd. Although some say that about 30 people might have died,<sup>82</sup> police reports indicate 18 civilians death. The actions that took place that Sunday evening also wounded some 80 people.<sup>83</sup> The unrest lasted throughout the night. A cloudless sky and a full moon were favourable conditions for the rioters because it made moving easy enough while they were still hard to detect and identify by the military. 3500 men infantry and 500 men cavalry had been called from out of town to restore order. By the 26<sup>th</sup> of March a militia had also been formed with the aid of citizens and labourers of the city.

Eventually the rest returned and the riots were over, but what effect did the unrest of that March weekend in Sweden have for the political developments of the country? Oscar I already held a more progressive policy than Willem II. Changes in his policies in the early 1840s compared to after 1848 are harder to detect. Two possible aims for the rioters in Stockholm should indicate the biggest change. First of these aims was the improvement of workers representation in the four estates. The king ordered a committee to form and discuss the representation question in the beginning of March 1848. This happened with the developments in France in mind and because of the pressure at home. But these changes started before March 18<sup>th</sup>, thus credits cannot be given to the rioters in Stockholm. The final change in the political structure would take until 1866, when the four-estate system was reformed to a two-chamber system.<sup>84</sup> Of these the Upper house, which was the chamber for the nobility, would eventually lose most of its power by 1886.<sup>85</sup> And it would take until 1918 for general suffrage to be accepted in Sweden.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 364

<sup>82</sup> Milld, *Kravaller och attentat*.

<sup>83</sup> Berglund, *Massans röst*. p. 364

<sup>84</sup> T. Nilsson, *Elitens Svängrum* (Stockholm 1994). p. 30-36

<sup>85</sup> 'Ibidem' p. 259-280

<sup>86</sup> D. Art, *Talking about a revolution: or why (most of) the west did not extend the franchise* (Scriptie Political Science Tufts University, Medford, MA 2012).



Another big issue for the demonstrators in the March-revolt was the current state of the Swedish economy and the position of the workers therein. Very short after the revolution most of the import tariffs were banned and a more progressive economy developed. This was something the king had been proposing for a while but which he was unable to get through the senate. With Gripenstad, as minister of finance, in the government it still took until the 1850s to reform Sweden's economic structure.

The call for dethroning Oscar and forming a republic, as it had been called in so many revolutions cannot be taken as the main goal for the revolution. It is more likely that this call was made merely to pressure the government into action. After increasing chaos, which Chalmers Johnson thinks needs to occur before people can see the solutions before them; the real problem could be addressed and dealt with.<sup>87</sup> The calls should thus be seen more like a tool with which to wage the conflict. In other revolutions a cry to get rid of the government, had been used in combination with violence to discredit the government in its entirety. With a government that was not able to full fill its primary task (safety of its citizens) it was easier to gain support on the apparently smaller scale issue that was the actual aim of the unrest.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> C. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston 1966). p. 57 in Skocpol, *States and social revolutions*. p. 12

<sup>88</sup> Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion in the early modern world*. p. 6

## Chapter 4 – Preventing Revolution

The events of 1848 can thus be considered as an almost Europe-wide revolution that had its outcome changed back fairly short after the initial gains of the unrest were achieved. The German states, Austria and France would be the epicentres of the unrest. Not all nations in Europe would be affected as much by the developments as those countries. Other countries would remain unaffected. I wondered why Sweden and the Netherlands were hard to find in the list of affected countries. It seemed that the Netherlands and Sweden had been prevented from getting dragged into the turmoil. To find out why, and how this had happened the research needed to be split between the revolutionary situation and the revolutionary outcome. To determine whether there was a potential for revolution at all in the Netherlands and Sweden I looked at the macro-structural and historical run-up to the year 1848 in several countries in Europe and compared them to the case countries. It seemed that the two countries had a comparable revolutionary potential to the 'epicentres' France Austria and the German states.

Looking at the run-up to 1848, several structural causes for the revolution could be identified in the countries where revolution broke out. None of the countries met external pressures like war, which is a common cause for revolutions. To get a forcible transition of power, a power shift needed to be visible. While that was not the case in Spain that was already in a civil war, many other countries in Europe met this definition. All these countries also experienced strong urbanisation because industrialisation was pulling more people to the cities, especially the capitals. Capitals were force enhancers in a revolution. Since Russia lacked this urbanisation it can be explained why revolution did not end up escalating there. Two other large factors could explain the potential for revolution in 1848. Both, a weak economy and a repressive attitude to opposition were present in all the countries where the revolution took place. They were also present in Sweden and the Netherlands.

Like other revolutions before 1848, the economy had always played an important factor in the developing of one. States on the continent had problems with the loss of production since the Napoleonic wars and with the bad harvests of

1845 and 1846. The economies of France, the German states and Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden started to industrialize. Large groups of workers and students moved to the towns. They would be the main actors in the demonstrations at the capitals during the 1848 revolution. Because of their dependence on the urban economy they would be the ones to notice the worsened economy. The economy only increased slightly after the potato blight of 1845 and 1846. Hunger riots could be seen on the continent in the 1840s. The population also rose slightly. These conditions do not completely agree with the theory of Goldstone, that a decline in economy together with an increase in population can trigger discontent. Because of the large urbanisation on the continent the same effects might have been achieved on a micro scale, where the cities preserved an explosion of population as compared to the rise in economy. Sweden was less inhabited with labourers and students than other continental countries because industrialization started late. The urbanizing dynamic was also present in Sweden, especially with the poor who wanted to emigrate. All had to go through Stockholm, bringing with them mouths to feed but no money. England had an earlier industrialisation and more economic flexibility. It had gained much money on the Corn Laws since 1815 and its economy wasn't as stretched as that of the countries on whose soil the Napoleonic wars had been waged. England's power at sea was unmatched by any other country on the world. This had also gained them some colonies during the Napoleonic wars. Some of those colonies used to be Dutch. The Netherlands had not only lost a large share of its income security through the loss of colonies, but also to the loss of Belgium and to its dealings with the Zollverein. Both the Netherlands and Sweden had seen a rising in food prices and the accompanied violence.

In the Netherlands and Sweden there was no institutionalized way to voice opposition. This was the same in the continental restored states where the revolution took place. In the countries that were restored after the Napoleonic wars the general opinion existed amongst the elite that the French revolution of 1789 had proven that 'the people' were not capable of governing in the interest of the nation. The elite believed it not to be their task to translate the will of their electorate into regulation, as we are used to now in our democratic states. They rather believed that it was their job to guide the nation to a better, more

competitive position in the international arena. They believed that because of their background they could judge what was best for all the countrymen. This approach to governance decreased the institutionalized methods by which people could ventilate their discontent. King Willem II opposed his father in this belief when he ascended to the throne in 1840, but grew more conservative as time passed. Also king Oscar I may have been less conservative in his outlook, but a system in which 'the people' in general could address an issue was only institutionalised in England with the reform act of 1832. Looking at these different structural causes we can make a comparison between the different countries in Europe. External pressure, dealings with internal opposition, demography and economy show that: At the outset of the revolution the Netherlands and Sweden were more comparable to the continental European countries that would witness the revolution than to the British, Russian or Spanish in their run-up to 1848.

The structural run-up to a revolution being comparable in France, Austria, the German lands, the Netherlands and Sweden, means that a cause for the difference in their development must lie in the reactions of their respective governments or leaders, a statement that implies an agency approach to the question of how the revolution was prevented in these countries. Of all the countries that had a similar situation, only two cases would not develop into a revolution. The biggest difference between the Netherlands and Sweden on the one hand and France, Austria and the German states on the other was the action of the leadership in the country. Both Louis Philipp in France, and Metternich in Austria eventually fled the country when tensions build up in their countries, thereby ceding control of the country, or parts of it, to demonstrating groups who had the possibility to radicalize. King Frederick William IV of Prussia showed that this choice to flee by Philipp and Metternich was fully one of the kings themselves. If it had been by structural causes, he also should have fled when unrest increased in Germany. His liberality towards the commission for the new constitution was however so broad that he had in fact also ceded power to another other entity. That the King of Prussia had been too liberal, and lost control of his parliament's actions is shown by the forceful way in which he took back control.

Both in the Netherlands and Sweden the kings did not allow their authority to be challenged. They showed willingness to change to a more liberal approach

requested by parliamentarians of their governments. But they did not react to yells to overthrow the monarchy and start a republic. Both Willem II and Oscar I faced the crowds that were demonstrating against them and left the scenes unharmed. They were even cheered by people in the crowds that were demonstrating against some of the kings' policies. In Holland Willem II decided to change his mind in 24 hours. The changes that were made in both countries eventually ensured a more open economic system and better representation in the governments. The new Dutch constitution was a big change in the position of the monarch in politics but not a real change in authority from one group to another. It was more of a shift towards parliament. In Sweden changes towards a free market were made, and tariffs were cancelled fairly quickly after the worst unrest had passed. On the subject of representation it took another 18 years before large changes in the constitution came into effect. In allowing changes to happen Willem II and Oscar I kept the authority in their hands. To prevent the developments from radicalizing too much, as had happened to Frederick IV, they would need to keep the strings tight. In the Netherlands some concessions were enough to make the reformers distance themselves from more radical elements. In Sweden it took Oscar I some stronger measures to prevent radicalization. He managed to stop further escalation of the demonstrations by ordering the soldier to fire into the crowds. Because of this decision nearly 20 people died according to the official reports. By calling in troops from out of town and setting up militias of government-friendly labourers, rest returned and Oscar I could control further developments.

Kings Willem II of the Netherlands and Oscar I of Sweden were able to prevent a revolution from happening in their own country. They remained in control while others fled, while allowing changes and keeping radicalization in check at the same time. They focussed on the demands from the demonstrators that were viable. Finding these comparisons would not have been able without understanding the motives and actions of both kings, supporting Selbin's call for bringing agency back in. A comparison would however not have been able without finding that there was a common basis that the countries started from. To find and research this broad basis would be undoable without the help of structures to paint the landscape in which the actual event took place.

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